

BEING A TEACHER IN ENGLAND:  
Teacher development in the biographies of three  
English primary school teachers

Master's thesis  
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tutkimuksessa tarkastelen kolmen eri-ikäisen englantilaisen alakoulun opettajan ammatillista kehittymistä elämäkerrallisen haastattelumenetelmän avulla. Tutkimusaihe on tärkeä, koska opettajan vaikutus koulun toimintaan ja kehittämiseen sekä lasten oppimiseen on merkittävä. Lisäksi useat kansainväliset vertailututkimukset osoittavat, että oppimisessa on merkittäviä haasteita tutkimuksen kohteena olevassa englantilaisessa koulujärjestelmässä. On merkityksellistä tutkia, miten opettaja kokee voivansa vaikuttaa työhönsä ja työssä kehittymiseen tässä kontekstissa, jotta voisimme lisätä ymmärrystä koulutuksen ja oppimisen kehittämishaasteista.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa opettajan kehittyminen nähdään sekä ulkoisena sosiaalistumisprosessina että yksilöllisenä oppimisprosessina. Avoimen elämäkerrallisen haastattelun avulla on pyritty tavoittamaan opettajien oma näkökulma siihen, miten he suhtautuvat muutokseen ja työssä kehittymiseen ja mitkä tekijät he näkevät keskeisinä omassa kehittämisprosessissaan.</p> <p>Elämäkertoissa nousi esille useita työn realiteetteja, jotka opettajat kokivat merkityksellisinä kehittymisen näkökulmasta. Ulkoiset, yhteiskunnasta ja koulujärjestelmästä nousevat paineet, kuten sitova valtakunnallinen opetussuunnitelma, työn arviointijärjestelmät, valtakunnalliset testit ja tarkasti vaaditut tuntisuunnitelmat aiheuttavat stressiä, väsymystä, turhautuneisuutta ja kohtuutonta työkuormaa, mikä opettajien mukaan heikentää luovuutta ja itsenäisyyttä ja vaikuttaa näin haitallisesti opettajana kehittymiseen. Myös koulun sisäiset ihmissuhteet, kuten suhde rehtoriin ja kollegoihin nähtiin joko rajoittavana tai kannustavana. Kokonaisuutena opettajat kokivat yhteistyön yhdeksi tärkeimmistä asioista kehittämisessään. Opettajat näkivät kehittymisen olevan vahvasti sidoksissa oman persoonallisuuden kehittymiseen. Aktiivinen elämä ja avoin suhtautuminen asioihin, vahva arvomaailma sekä omasta elämästä ja itsestä huolehtiminen nousivat merkittäviksi kehittämistä edistäviksi tekijöiksi. Huolta aiheutti suuri työmäärä, oman ajan puute ja liiallinen keskittyminen akateemisiin asioihin, mikä aiheuttaa sekä opetuksen että oppimisen kapea-alaistumista ja sitä kautta yksilöllisyyden ohentumista sekä opettajien että oppilaiden näkökulmasta. Opettajat näkivät kehittymisen ja muutoksen arvokysymyksenä: lasten perustarpeet menivät kaiken muun edelle.</p>	
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
3. CENTRAL CONCEPTS	8
4. CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT	9
4.1. School culture and collaboration promoting and restricting teacher development	9
4.2. Being a teacher in England	12
5. THE PROCESS OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT	17
5.1. Life-long learning – a learning process of an adult	17
5.2. The importance of reflection	19
5.3. Motivational aspects in teacher development	20
6. THE STUDY	22
6.1. The biographical method	22
6.2. The research process	25
6.2.1. A researcher's preconceptions of the subject	25
6.2.2. Choosing the teachers	26
6.2.3. The interviews	27
6.2.4. Analyzing and interpreting the data	30
6.2.5. The reliability of the study	31
7. FINDINGS	33
7.1. Contextual and social issues in teacher development	33
7.1.1. The strict national curriculum	33
7.1.2. Workload and time-consuming paperwork	38
7.1.3. Accountability and control in teachers' work	43
7.1.4. The national tests	45
7.1.5. The role of a head teacher	47
7.1.6. Collegial support and collaboration with other teachers	52
7.2. Teachers' professional development as an individual learning process	55
7.2.1. The importance of own time and space	56
7.2.2. Values and significant life experiences	58
7.2.3. Motivation and will to develop	62
7.2.4. Time and workload	66

8. CONCLUSION	71
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	78
APPENDICES	

## I. INTRODUCTION

A teacher's thoughts, values, beliefs and skills, in other words, what kind of perspective she or he has on teaching and learning, have significant effect on learning that happens in class and at school. For that reason, in the study of teacher development, the recent trend has been to focus on the individual development of a teacher. On the other hand, the cultural and social aspects of teachers' profession are, according to the current teacher development study (Hargreaves 2003), argued to have significant influences on teacher development. The purpose of this study was to find out how three English primary school teachers view their development and what, according to them, are the individual and cultural issues that motivate or restrict their development. The biographical interviews were used in order to examine these issues from a teacher's perspective. The analysis was conducted by organizing the teachers' thoughts into two major themes: contextual and social issues in teacher development and a teacher's individual development.

A teacher's development begins before the formal teacher education, when a future teacher is entering a school as a pupil, and, at its best, continues the whole life. Alongside a teacher's individual course of life there are cultural expectations considering education and school, changes in society and in education policy, as well as beliefs about adequate learning and teaching that vary from time to time. There have been remarkable changes in working life in general and the society is in the process of constant change. In today's rapidly changing world it is evident that the reproductive functioning of the educational system, that is argued to be the most prevalent approach to schooling still today, is ineffective. Instead, teachers and schools should be seen as global change agents (Namdar 1993: 177). According to Hargreaves, of all the professions, only teaching is expected to create the human skills and capacities that will enable people and organizations to survive and succeed in today's knowledge society, as well as in unpredictable future (Hargreaves 2003: 1). Consequently, teachers work under significant pressure and expectations are high. Moreover, teachers' profession is claimed to be in crisis in many places of the world (Day and Gu 2014: Introduction). For example, in many countries there is a shortage of qualified teachers and the level of teacher burnout is high. Furthermore, international test results, such as, for example, PISA, reveal that learning results are satisfactory in England and the gap between schools and areas is becoming wider all the time (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 133-134). At the same time, however, the resources and support that teachers need in order to be more effective, are limited or withheld (Hargreaves 2003: 2). Moreover,

as Hargreaves argues, the knowledge society in many places of the world, England among others, finds it difficult to make teaching a true learning profession, for teachers' autonomy of judgement is decreasing and unfair standardization and overregulation is increasing. Thus, in the present situation, when the pressure on teachers is increasing all the time, when teaching as a profession is argued to be of such vital importance for today's world and for the future and, at the same time, resources and autonomy of teaching are limited, understanding teacher development from teachers' own perspective becomes even more significant. In order to change teaching, we must truly understand it and the people who do it. Moreover, successful and sustainable development and improvement cannot be done *to* or *for* teachers (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 45). On the contrary, as Hargreaves and Fullan argue, it can only be achieved *by* and *with* them. It is valuable to appreciate teachers' own views in order to increase understanding of the issue. In this present study, the biographical method was chosen for that reason. In order to explore teacher development and its meaning in a teacher's life, as well as in order to gain a holistic view of teacher development in its contexts, a small-scale qualitative study was conducted using a semi-structured interview with a biographical perspective.

## **2. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of the study was to deepen the knowledge of teacher development, especially in the context of England. Through a non-structured biographical interview information was gathered about the ways of development, as well as about the issues that promote or restrict teacher development. Firstly, the collective, contextual and social factors that have influence on teacher development were analyzed. Secondly, teacher development was examined as an individual learning process, in which a teacher's personal experiences and motivation for growth will be discussed. In other words, teacher development was, on one hand, viewed as an external, social process, in which a teacher acquires cultural and political expectations as well as possibilities and restrictions of the profession, in other words, this view takes the context and culture of the profession into account. On the other hand, teacher development was regarded as an individual learning process, in which a teacher's life experiences and personal views and values in and outside school are

significant. Moreover, one aspect of the study was to reflect on the relation and connection between the personal and social aspects of the profession. For example, what kinds of chances a teacher has to develop in spite of the social restrictions? Secondly, how much a teacher works and develops his or her work according to his or her own values and beliefs and how much the expectations and traditions, as well as other people and their decisions determine a teacher's work.

So, the main question was to examine the process of teacher development in the biographical interviews of three English primary school teachers.

The main problem was divided into the following research questions:

Contextual and social issues in teacher development:

1. How does the school as an organization as well as education policy with its orders, beliefs and expectations influence teacher development?
2. How does collaboration with colleagues and other people at school support or restrict teacher development?

Individual aspects in teacher development:

1. What are the significant personal experiences and values in the individual process of teacher development?
2. How does a teacher see the development and its meaning and importance?
3. What kinds of restrictions are there in professional development?
4. What motivates or restricts teacher development?

In this study the main focus was on the development of thoughts, beliefs, values and the ways of processing and reflecting. Thus, this study did not investigate the development of practical or didactic skills, which have traditionally been in the interest of researches. Lately, however, in teacher development research the focus has turned into reflection and life-long learning: in many studies teachers are seen as researches of their own profession, who are continuously reflecting and processing their work and thoughts (Niemi 1989, Ojanen 1993).

The studies how life and experiences outside classroom and school affect teacher development were still rare a few decades ago (Ruohotie 1996: 209). According to studies, however, a teacher's life and work, as well as personal and professional identity are strongly connected to each other (Goodson 1992a: 16). Through biographical research it is possible to get a holistic view of a person and her or his life. What is more, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate emotional growth in other methods (Syrjälä 1985: 275).

It is important to appreciate teachers' own thoughts and ideas, since no-one else has such a vivid and thorough understanding about the realities of school and the profession. For example, we need to ask teachers what kinds of school reforms are relevant and meaningful from their and their students' point of view (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992: 5). Moreover, teachers should be able to tell, what kind of reforms and changes they find important and realistic (Niikko 1996: 109). However, teachers' opinions about important issues in education remain rather unheard, although they have key roles in practice (Estola 2003, 18). These sources of wisdom and memory from the profession should not be neglected and, moreover, professional development priorities must, according to Hargreaves (2003: 48-49), pay attention to processes of informal learning and personal growth.

On the other hand, it is argued that if in teacher development research the focus is only on personal issues, we cannot understand the cultural and contextual issues that surround teachers (Kauppi 1994: 99). As Miettinen (1994: 189) emphasizes, it is essential to take the whole situation, as well as the historical, political and cultural contexts into account. However, in such a short study as this, the changes in society and in educational system could not be analyzed very thoroughly, although they, undoubtedly, have effects on teacher development. However, some political decisions and regulations were analyzed, since they had an essential role in the teachers' stories.

I wrote the final research questions after the interviews, because I wanted to emphasize the issues that could be found in teachers' own stories. I did not want to restrict my view too early so that I would not see the subject "through a keyhole" (Rinne 1994: 63).

### 3. CENTRAL CONCEPTS

In this chapter I will shortly define some central concepts used in the study. Firstly, the concept “development” is essential. I use the concept mostly meaning teacher development. The concept “development” is problematic, since it is not value-free: it includes the underlying assumption of “becoming better”. Moreover, teacher development is not value-free in the sense that what someone suggests as a development, can for someone else mean regress. The concept of development in this study refers both to individual development and to teacher development in general.

Secondly, the concepts “teacher development” and “professional development” are used frequently. In this study both of these concepts refer to development that either happens at work or has an influence on a teacher’s work. It can, therefore, refer also to something that happens outside school, in free time, anywhere. The main issue is that a teacher finds it meaningful for her or his process of development or professional identity. That is to say, this study will concentrate analyzing the experiences and issues found in the interviews that have been significant for the professional development of a teacher. In other words, the whole life-story will not be analyzed.

Hargreaves (2003: 48) distinguishes the terms “professional learning” and “professional development” in the following way: professional learning is more or less learning knowledge and new skills, whereas professional development is a process in which teachers, through professional and personal development, build character, maturity and other virtues in themselves and others, making their schools into moral communities. It is something more than collecting course credits, which, according to Hargreaves, rarely reaches people’s souls. Also in this present study, professional development, rather, is seen as a personal path towards greater professional integrity and human growth.

## **4. CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1. School culture and collaboration promoting and restricting teacher development**

Although teaching as a profession has traditionally been rather independent and sometimes a teacher works rather isolated, teachers are a part of a wider community of school and society. In recent years in teacher development research, instead of concentrating only on individuals, it has become more common to view the school as a community in which collegial and other social relationships play a significant part in teacher development and a school and its staff as a team confront the change and the need to develop (Sahlberg 1997: 107). This chapter deals with the issue how a teacher is in connection to the school community and what effects it can have on teacher development both in a positive and negative sense.

Many researchers argue that schools, like other workplaces, should become places that encourage teachers' professional learning (Sahlberg 1997: 110-111, Kauppi 1994: 103). According to Hargreaves (2003:17), in today's complex and fast-changing world, teachers should not work and learn isolated. He argues that it is important to engage in action and problem-solving together with colleagues or with professional learning communities, which enables them also to have access to explicit and tacit knowledge of others. In recent years, according to Hargreaves, teachers in many countries have become more experienced in working with their colleagues and learning from others. Carrie Leana (cited in Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 3) argues that positive interaction among teachers and between teachers and administrators make a significant and measurable difference in pupils' achievement. Leana has named this "social capital", which she contrasts with "individual capital" which is based on the idea of the power of individuals to change the system. Her argument is that a group is far more powerful than an individual. She continues that the development of an individual teacher is significant but the system will not change if teachers will not change in large numbers and unless development becomes a collective priority. This is an especially significant issue in the context where the teachers in this study are working. English school system has for decades been based on regulations and top-down decisions, which makes it challenging, if not impossible, for teachers to

change things alone. "The group is the key to change – and with professional capital as its armor and political capital as its ally, this group can become very powerful indeed (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 8). As a group teachers have better chances to change or resist the system.

Juuti (1994: 53-54) argues that there are two main problems in an organizational development. Firstly, for some teachers it is difficult to work together with their colleagues or other members of staff. Teachers who are professionally and personally developed have acquired a strong sense of themselves as teachers and as people (Hargreaves 2003: 48). However, as Hargreaves continues, since teachers are not working alone, it is important that teachers' senses of identity are secure enough for them not to feel flooded, invaded or overwhelmingly vulnerable when they are challenged, evaluated by or asked to work with other adults. Thus, in order to be able to co-operate teachers have to be mature, reliable and responsible (Juuti 1994: 53-54). Hargreaves (2003: 48) argues that well-developed teachers have as much self-confidence and openness in their professional relationships with adults as they have with children. In addition, he argues that it is essential to develop new and better relationships with adults as well as with children. The second problem in an organizational development, according to Juuti (1994: 53-54), lies in an organization itself, in its social hierarchies and culture of working. Juuti suggests that schools should become democratic communities, in which all its members are equal and have an equally vital role: head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents alike. He argues that the best, sophisticated schools, communities and organizations are capable of learning, capable of cooperating and willing to support the personal growth of its members.

As argued above, good relationships within school are important also for teachers' personal, professional growth. Good leadership, effective mentoring and varied experience are valuable issues in that. Hargreaves (2003: 48) suggests the way of mentoring, in which older, even retired teachers, would support their younger colleagues on a part-time or volunteer basis. This is only possible, naturally, if these essential sources of wisdom and memory are appreciated in order to keep older teachers motivated and engaged.

Sahlberg (1997: 110) uses the term a learning school or a learning organization, when he argues that a whole school should change as an organization. A learning school has a common vision and everyone works towards a common goal. Sahlberg continues that for an individual teacher a common vision offers support and new experiences and, in

addition, working together with different people is valuable for her or his professional development. However, as was discussed above, it is essential that a teacher has the capability and maturity to co-operate and learn from others, as was discussed above. Moreover, reflective thinking of an individual teacher is still needed in an organizational change. Without deep, personal reflection a teacher cannot be an active member of a learning organization, and change and continuous learning is not possible (Miettinen 1994: 210). Thus, as Sahlberg (1997: 110) argues, it is significant to investigate the learning process of an individual teacher in order to understand organizational learning processes. For example, teachers should have time and energy to discuss and share their ideas and thoughts. A true learning happens, when a person is constructing knowledge, which takes time and for which a teacher needs a peaceful place and mind.

Despite all pressure on change and development and frequent educational reforms, teachers are not always motivated on changes. Syrjäläinen (1992: 64, 1995: 107) argues that one reason for the lack of motivation is that school reforms are typically been brought to school from outside. Moreover, a school's own reforms can, according to Juuti (1994: 44), have similar negative effects, if they are not supported by teachers and if teachers feels that the reform is not discussed through together. Juuti claims that everyone in an organization should have the feeling that he or she has a significant role in a common vision and that he or she can work in a common project according to his or her own values and motives. However, he continues, it is sometimes difficult to create a common vision or discuss the common aims and objectives, especially in a big school, since there are always so many arguments to take into consideration. It is not always easy to combine everyone's individual dreams and the goals of an organization. According to Juuti (1994: 40), however, in a cooperative and democratic planning process in which everyone is valued, it is possible to find organization's goals meaningful and they become significant to an individual teacher.

However, even in the very best organizations not everyone wants to work towards common goals. Moreover, power relations at school can be too difficult to change. There are often people at school who do not want to change or develop, or people who want to dominate, control or criticize. In such case, a teacher who wants to develop professionally, can create her or his own communities, for example, with colleagues in other schools (Raymond, Butt & Townsend 1992: 155). Hargreaves (1992: 229-231) emphasizes that cooperation has to be voluntary and, in addition, at its best, a natural part of a teacher's work and, as such,

spontaneous and informal. Fullan (1993: 135-138) argues that supporting and motivating the development of an individual teacher is valuable, since it is the best guarantee for the organizational development. Fullan uses the term "inner learning" when he writes about individual development. The term "outer learning" refers to the organizational learning and includes an individual teacher's will and capacity to cooperate and learn together with others.

Hargreaves (2003: 17) suggests that teachers should be more effective at working also with other members of community, for example, with parents. To sum up, as Brown and Lauder (cited in Hargreaves 2003: 18) argue, it would be important to create collective intelligence, which means that intelligence is not scarce, singular, fixed and individual, but, instead, universal, multiple, infinite and shared. It means, according to them, that all are capable rather than a few and there is always more than one right answer. It also means that we can learn significantly from other people. In other words, it would be essential to increase cooperation, openness and communication with all members of community close and far: with colleagues and other staff members, with parents and political decision-makers and, what is more, with children and between them (Hargreaves 2003).

## **4.2. Being a teacher in England**

The wider societal context of this study is England, its school system, education policy and the status and meaning of teachers' profession in this culture. Formal education in England consists of two levels: primary school for pupils between 5 and 11 years, and secondary comprehensive school for pupils between 12 and 16 years (Osborn, Broadfoot, McNess, Planel, Ravn and Triggs 2003: 44-45). The majority of the schools are nonselective and comprehensive, which means that they accept children of all abilities and offer them a "broad and balanced curriculum" (ibid.). In primary schools children are taught by class teachers who cover most of their teaching and other curriculum needs, whereas at secondary level teachers are subject specialists (ibid.). As Osborn et al. describe, both primary and secondary schools are evaluated by external inspectors accredited by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted). In addition to state schools, there is also a small independent sector of schools which caters under 15 percent of pupils, are selective and charge (often high) fees (ibid.). They, however, also have some degree of government influence with regard to their facilities and operation. (Osborn et al. 2003: 44-45)

Before the year 1988, when the national curriculum was launched, teachers' work in England was rather independent and autonomous and nation's primary schools with their head teachers had freedom to arrange their schooling as they wished, together with local education authorities (LEAs) (recently renamed as local authorities (LAs), who were responsible for curriculum and professional support (Day and Gu 2010: 10). As Day and Gu report, apart from a minimalist core curriculum, LEAs and schools had considerable freedom to arrange work and the curriculum taught at school. In other words, before the national curriculum, a compact existed between government, parents and schools. Teachers were trusted and there was not much intervention by government in the issues of school governance, the school curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment (ibid.). Curriculum developments were locally initiated and managed or arranged by a National "Schools Council", governed together with teachers' associations and government. (Day and Gu 2010: 10, Osborn et al. 2003: 40-41) As the oldest teacher Martha describes in this study, in 1988, when the national curriculum was launched, all this changed (see also Day and Gu 2010: 11). The relationship between schools and government changed radically and thoroughly, which influenced all aspects of the teachers' work. Since then, schools have had to adapt to the new environment in education: curricula and school work are linked to the requirements of the market and the orders and regulations of national policy (Day and Gu 2010: 11, Hudson and Lidström 2002: 49-50). Ball (2013: 89) describes the following changes in teachers' profession after the national curriculum: suspicion of teacher professionalism and the need for systems of control and accountability. Moreover, he describes that schools and teachers were divided into the categories "poor" and "good" and "failing" and "successful", which was claimed to be important in order to provide parents with information for school choice. What is more, head teachers and governors were given control over the budgets (Ball 1994: 66). According to Ball, school income was dependent on attracting custom. In other words, in order to bring in more resources, schools needed to bring in more students. Ball argues that the underlying idea was to pressure senior managers in schools to behave in more cost-effective, flexible, competitive, consumer-satisfying and innovative ways, in other words, that market forces and more effective management would help raise standards in schools. Thus, also any failure to improve was argued to be a result of poor management and teaching (ibid.). Gewirtz (2002: 93) claims that this view is considered to be rather unfair, for it does not take into account, for example, the social backgrounds of pupils. For example, schools deemed to be successful are likely to attract high attaining and undemanding pupils, talented and skillful teachers and are adequately resourced (ibid.). Research shows that in England one of the major

criteria to choose a school is class based (ibid.). Thus, this market-based funding is claimed to have had a negative impact on social justice and growing differences between schools and between social classes (Hudson 2002: 148). On the other hand, Hudson estimates that cities and localities play an increasingly important role, they are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own well-being and future, which many of them have done successfully. Thus, in a positive sense, they suggest, these changes have resulted, for example, in closer relationships between schools and businesses and in the increasing importance given to education in local decision making and development. To sum up, these reforms in England have increased central regulation over curricula and assessment on one hand and given greater autonomy to schools in budget on the other hand, which has changed the tradition of professional autonomy in educational content and pedagogy and, moreover, established a quasi-market, which defines education as a consumer service (Osborn et al. 2003: 41).

It is argued that the reasons for these changes were the falling standards of England and the worrying results of international tests, as well as the need to increase economic competitiveness and social cohesion (Day and Gu 2010: 10). It was estimated that competency-based, results-driven teaching, payment by results, rules from the centre, decentralization of the management of budgets, planning, staffing, student access, curriculum and assessment would be a solution for these problems (Hargreaves 2003: 5). From teachers' point of view, as Hargreaves claims, these regulations place limits on teachers' autonomy and reward those who reach government targets and punishes those who do not. Moreover, teachers' capability to do professional judgements has been questioned (Day and Gu 2010: 9-10, Gewirtz 2002: 92, Hargreaves 2003: 5). Furthermore, schools, both teacher and pupil performance, were expected to improve according to curriculum standards and, the national tests at ages 11, 16 and 17 were launched to control this. (Day and Gu 2010: 12) Moreover, league tables of results are regularly printed in the media and parents are encouraged to choose a school based on their information (Osborn et al. 2003). Furthermore, as Osborn et al. describe, schools are regularly monitored by School Improvement Partners (SIPs), are locally set targets for achievement within a national framework of targets and, what is more, every three or four years there are school inspections by Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education). As Day and Gu (2010: 12), as well as teachers in this study, describe, there is a "naming" and "shaming" of schools that have satisfactory results (see also Ball 2013: 89). According to Day and Gu (2010: 12), they are labelled by a "notice of improvement" or in "special measures", which means that

these schools will be closed if they are not able to improve their results soon. On the other hand, schools that have excellent results are awarded with status "National Educational Leadership" and given more resources. Under the pressures of reforms, teachers' stress, morale problems and rates of teacher burnout have increased significantly (Hargreaves 2003: 5).

Since the year 2000, school inspections organized by Ofsted were introduced in order to evaluate schools and to check if they work efficiently in accordance of the national guidelines of the government (Hudson and Lidström 2002: 51). These inspections can have significant effects on teachers' work in England. If an Ofsted report is negative, it can be a devastating for a school. This makes many teachers fearful and too concerned about the reports. As a result, they change their practice so that it would please the inspectors (Brooks 2016: 26). According to Brooks, some schools even ask for a specialist support to help prepare for the inspections. Brooks argues that concentrating on the inspections and the fear of them can lead to greater uniformity and conformity in practice and a homogenous, instrumental approach to teaching. What is more, in 1999, guidelines for inspecting LEAs were introduced and Ofsted was supposed to check the quality of services they offer (Hudson and Lidström 2002: 51). According to Hudson and Lidström, this led to several questionable evaluation reports and resulted in the emergence of private contractors to run education services in some areas. For example, private companies began to take over the running of state schools, career services, teacher recruitment and other services that had previously been LEAs responsibilities. This development, as Hudson and Lidström argue, has been questioning local democracy.

According to Ball (2008: 86). in the years following the Education Reform Act in 1988, there were significant amount of other new reforms and initiatives in England around issues of school improvement and raising educational standards. For example, " a new national literacy framework", "national numeracy targets", "improved teacher training", "A fresh start for failing schools" and several other reforms (Ball 2008: 86). For example, as Ball informs, there were 47 education-related policies, initiatives and funding decisions in year 1997. According to statistics, in three years this amounted to a cash injection of £19 billion (ibid.).

However, despite regulations and testing as well as significant increase in money spent on education, learning standards in reading, mathematics and science place the United

Kingdom only a little above the OECD averages (Williams 2009: 7, cited in Day and Gu 2010: 13). On PISA, for example, England is as low as 24<sup>th</sup>. England has also some of the widest achievement gaps between children from different social backgrounds in the developed world (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 133-134). In addition, as Hargreaves and Shirley report, in UNISEF's comparison of child well-being England was the last out of 21 countries. Moreover, testing children more than any other country in the world, is associated with a high fall-out rate. For example, at 16, 24% of English pupils leave education, which is more than in any other country in the European Union (Williams 2009: 7, cited in Day and Gu 2010: 13). Thus, Williams argue that testing and league tables together with detailed national curriculum have taken creativity and joy of learning out of education. Children suffer from that in many ways. Moreover, teachers suffer significantly from constant directions, regulations and notes for guidance. For example, it is argued that teachers' autonomy has diminished and they succeed only by satisfying others' definitions of their work (Ball 2003, cited in Day and Gu 2010: 14). In other words, teachers have less control or independence in classroom decision making (Gilroy and Day 1993, cited in Day and Gu 2010: 13).

Michael Fielding (cited in Hargreaves 2003: 43-45) has criticized educational reforms in England for not providing place for values, for teaching how to live together with other people and care for others or how to live a happy life. In other words, the valuable issue that teaching is not only a cognitive and intellectual practice but also a social and emotional one is ignored (ibid.). Hargreaves and Shirley (2012: 76) argue that too much of the Anglo-American world has lost its wider sense of mission, which is especially evident in education. They criticize that the educational politics in developed nations, such as England, is concentrating mostly on tested literacy and mathematics. In every nation, they argue, children need a curriculum that is varied, challenging, complex and deep. Basics are important, but we should not stop there, especially in developed nations (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 77).

One problem in England is that in recent years the teacher education has mostly been rather short, for example, alternate certifications lasting only a few weeks or months have been offered (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 6). As Hargreaves and Fullan note, the reason for that is that England has difficulties attracting teachers to the profession at the moment and, moreover, qualified teachers leave the profession in large numbers after a few years in the job. There is a significant contrast to teachers' qualifications in the world's highest

performing nations, such as, for example, Finland, where teachers have a master's degree and the profession is still a rather attractive alternative among the best students.

A survey conducted by ETUCE (2011, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 28), which compared 5400 teachers in 500 schools revealed that teachers in the UK had the highest levels of burnout, second highest levels of cognitive stress, the second highest levels of workload and all these issues had a negative effect on their personal lives outside school. However, although there is a plenty of information available about the problems considering the educational policy and school system in England at the moment, the teaching crisis being one of the most significant and urgent, making effective and long-lasting changes is challenging (Day and Gu 2014: 28). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 9) argue that one reason for that is that there are several highly polarized groups in political battles over the future of the teaching profession.

However, it would be unfair and incorrect to claim that England is the only nation facing problems and changes described above. Teachers in many countries around the world are experiencing similar issues in the form of national curricula, national tests, external monitoring and standardized curricula in order to improve standards and increase parental choice (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 15). Consequently, much research on teachers' work and lives notes that the lowering of teacher morale, rises in stress and burnout are alarmingly common in many countries (Brooks 2016: 2-3, Day and Gu 2014: Introduction)

## **5. THE PROCESS OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

### **5.1. Life-long learning – a learning process of an adult**

There is a general assumption that there are different periods in teacher development depending on how much teaching experience a teacher has. One perspective to teacher development is to examine it as a growth from novice to expert. (Berliner, ks.Leino&Leino 1989: 16-18, Day and Gu 2010: 2014). This perspective is not used in this study because it underlines the assumption that one can automatically become an expert in one's profession. On the contrary, this study is based on the idea of a teacher as a researcher and on the idea of life-long learning. According to Kauppi (1994: 98), in a modern society

there were certain aspects in life that did not change. In the postmodern society, in the age of insecurity, one has to adapt into changing situations and be ready to re-evaluate his or her perspectives from time to time (Eraut 1997: 22) According to Eraut, it means, for example, that a teacher has to regress and become a novice again and try to find new and more meaningful practices and ways of teaching.

Moreover, in comparison to the tradition that examines teacher development as a development from novice to expert, the biographical method gives insights into the individual process of teacher development (Syrjälä, Estola, Mäkelä and Kangas 1996: 149). Moreover, it emphasizes the individual ways of experiencing different stages in one's professional development (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992: 8).

Teachers are expected to be committed to life-long learning. However, although professional development and growth in teachers' occupation is argued to be a necessity, it cannot be taken for granted (Van Eekelen, Vermunt and Boshuizen 2006). For example, recent studies concerning educational reforms have shown that the majority of such innovations fail because teachers abandon the new behavior and simply return to familiar, old routines (Van Eekelen et al. 2006). In other words, teachers' professional learning is not self-evident.

The phenomenon of "not learning" can be partly explained by the fact that many beliefs about good teaching and learning strongly influence teacher's behavior (Van Eekelen et al. 2006). Van Eekelen et al. suggest that such beliefs are usually formed during the early stages of a teacher's career and, therefore, found to be self-perpetuating and even immune to challenges caused by reason, time, schooling or experience. Clandinin and Connelly (cited in Brooks 2016: 20) use the term "sacred stories" to describe ideas and ideologies in the school culture that are so pervasive that they cannot even be recognized, named or defined. Moreover, they argue that much of their expression is hidden or implicit. There are also a range of official and unofficial discourses of what it means to be a "good teacher", which are prevalent and have an effect on teachers' individual views and practices (Ball, Maguire and Braun 2012: 139, cited in Brooks 2016: 28). Ball et al. argue that dominant school practices, outside expectations and, moreover, constant reforms and the rapid pace of change mean that there is little space, time or opportunity to think or act differently or "against".

## 5.2. The importance of reflection

This section deals with the important phenomena in the field of teacher development, which is the idea of a teacher as a researcher of her or his own practice (Kincheloe 1991, Ojanen 1993, 1996). Already in 1954 Haavio wrote that a teacher will always be a student and a graduate. The aim is that through researching her or his practice a teacher becomes more reflective and analytic and, through that, teaching and learning in classroom becomes more meaningful (Ojanen 1996: 52-53).

In this present study, the concepts “reflective teacher” and “teacher as a researcher” are seen as synonyms. A reflective, researching teacher has a capability of analyzing school practices, her or his own perspectives, beliefs and practices and, moreover, question them, if needed. In the trend “teacher researcher” a reflective thinking and attitude is viewed as a prerequisite for professional development (Kansanen 1989: 39). Another term used in this context is “inquiry” or “teacher inquiry” (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 99). Teaching is seen as a problem-based activity and not as self-evident or as a routine (Niikko 1996: 109).

Teachers have plenty of tacit, implicit knowledge of teaching, that has developed in practice. Nurmi (1993: 511) suggests that this knowledge is a teacher’s own theory; without it the work is not possible. She continues that through reflection and research this practical theory can become more visible so that a teacher becomes more conscious of his or her work and teaching. Moreover, a teacher becomes more aware of his or her own beliefs and values, in other words, his or her own theory. According to Ojanen (1993: 129) experience in teaching, traditions, school culture and authorities are the issues that make teaching routinized or even standardized. However, they should be questioned from time to time and, for that reason, reflection is a very significant tool in teacher development (Ojanen 1993: 129).

However, tacit knowledge of teachers should be valued more (Nurmi 1993: 504). Teachers are the ones who can best evaluate, for example, what kinds of political decisions and school reforms are useful and meaningful in practice and promote better learning and teaching (Ojanen 1993: 31). According to research (Åhlberg 1996: 95), teachers appreciate reforms that develop good practice, in other words, their thinking is rather practice-oriented which means that for teachers it is essential to get more knowledge about their own practice and context: school, class, students and their learning. What is more,

reflection and development should begin from a teacher's own initiative and interest and a teacher should set the goals for that (Brandt 1996: 31). Moreover, innovations and development should be based on realism so that also the restrictions in teacher's work are taken into account (Miettinen 1994: 148). Again, teachers are able to evaluate this best, and, therefore, seeing them as professionals and appreciating their knowledge and experience is essential.

Kincheloe (1991: 17) claims that many teachers naturally reflect their practice in a research-like manner: they plan, evaluate, reflect, question, experiment, examine and develop their practice all the time. Kansanen (1993: 50) uses the term "pedagogical thinking" when he refers to a reflective mind or reflection of an individual teacher.

To sum up, reflection is an essential part of teachers' profession and their development. Thus, the teacher as a researcher -movement is important. Moreover, it is essential to understand and value teachers' tacit knowledge, that is usually practice-oriented and, as such, often different from the knowledge that scholars have. Moreover, there are issues in school context that prevent mindfulness and reflection. It is usually not the lack of willingness by teachers, but as will be seen later in this study, a school environment that is overloaded with targets and tests, endless reforms and interventions (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 98).

### **5.3. Motivational aspects in teacher development**

The purpose of this section is to analyze the meaning of motivation in teacher development and, what is more, what issues motivate teachers to develop their work and what are the issues that restrict motivation. Motivation is, according to many studies, a significant issue in teacher development and a will to learn must be present before teachers engage in developing their work and thinking (Van Eekelen 2006: 408) However, it is important to explore teachers' will to learn, in other words, if teachers have motivation for professional growth and what are the issues that support or restrict it. At its best, teacher development is a self-oriented process that begins from a teacher's own initiative or motivation (Van Eekelen 2006: 408, Virtanen 2015: 38). In other words, a teacher has to define and begin the process. Moreover, success is more likely when we are, in Ken Robinson's (2009) terms "in our element", which means that we are engaged in something that is important to

us, about which we are intensely passionate and in which we are gifted at.

In addition to personal factors, there are many aspects in the work context that influence teacher development and a teacher's motivation to it in an either positive or a negative way. For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate a teacher's learning from a teacher's work and from the so-called community of practice (Van Eekelen 2006: 410). Van Eekelen claims that workplace conditions, as discussed more thoroughly in the chapter 4, are either conductive or obstructive to the professional development of teachers.

Ruohotie (1996: 207) in his research project "kasvutarveprojekti" found out that organizations vary significantly in how much they support professional development and innovations. He argues that encouraging, challenging and trusting atmosphere as well as stimulating and participating leadership together with rewards and feedback are the positive issues in an organization that promote professional development.

On the other hand, according to Ruohotie (1996: 207, 209), work itself can motivate or prevent professional growth depending on a worker's possibilities to influence on his or her work. Ruohotie continues that encouraging, independent and challenging profession as well as work full of variety is ideal to promote mental growth. In addition, he argues, in the sense of personal growth, succeeding or chances of succeeding are significant, since they have a positive impact on one's professional identity and self-esteem, make one strongly committed and motivate to set goals higher.

In addition, problems or difficulties in work often force to look for new solutions. Even the most experienced teachers meet situations that they cannot handle and which, therefore, challenge to learn new strategies (Dunderfelt 1998: 56). In other words, crisis can be positive in the sense of professional development.

Moreover, the following personal behaviors seem to be characteristic for teachers who have strong motivation to learn new things and develop professionally: the ambition to discover new practices, being open to experiences and other people, being pro-active, question-asking after performance, undertaking action to learn and recognition of learning processes and results (Van Eekelen 2006). Several other personal factors have been found to have influence on teacher development, such as, for example, a teacher's biography (Beijaard, 1995, Duffee & Aikenhead 1992, cited in Van Eekelen 2006). Perceived sense of

self-efficacy, some personality traits such as openness to experiences, tolerance of uncertainty, conscientiousness, manner of emotion regulation (Virtanen 2015), manner of knowledge growth regulation and reflection on experience (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999, cited in Van Eekelen 2006).

The sum of the issue is that there are several personal and contextual factors that influence teacher development and teachers' motivation or will to learn. However, as Van Eekelen (2006: 410) argues, teachers must take an active role in order to learn and motivation and a will to learn typically and at its best, precedes such active involvement.

## **6. THE STUDY**

### **6.1. The biographical method**

Alasuutari (1994: 74) emphasizes that when choosing a research method, it is essential to take the research question and -target into account, which means that a method is not only a way to collect and analyze information, but also, and more importantly, it is strongly related to a subject and to a researcher's view of a subject. When a researcher chooses a biographical research method, he or she assumes that it is valid to study a life of one person (Huotelin 1992: 38). A biography is an approach that enables a deep insight into an issue and it concentrates on small subjects (Alasuutari 1994: 30).

When studying a human being, research has to meet some special requirements. Varto (1992: 14) uses the term "serious research" when he deals with examining human beings. He means that when conducting a research study on a human being, one must not do any acts that objectify or manipulate a subject so that the very nature of human being, the holistic nature of human being, is destroyed. Biographical methods belong to the qualitative methods and, according to Varto (1992: 41), the significance of the qualitative approach, and the biographical perspective in particular, is that it values the subjectivity of an individual human being.

In this present study, the biographical method was chosen in order to obtain a holistic understanding of a teacher's work and life and of teacher development. According to Roos

(1987: 20, 30), no other research method gives such a holistic and vivid information of a subject as biography. He describes that biographies are theories of life. Moreover, a biography enables to see the connections of different issues, experiences and thoughts, which makes the interpretation more reliable (Alasuutari 1994: 78). In addition, biographies increase understanding of a person's past, present moment and future and, therefore, they help in examining a course of life and, through that, development in relation to other issues in a person's life (Syrjälä & Numminen 1988: 67-68). For example, teachers use their personality as a tool in their work and, therefore, their work and lives are connected in various ways. As Varto (1992: 45) claims, a biographical method gives insights into how personal life, free-time, hobbies, family, different experiences influence teacher development and, thus, biographies are needed to widen understanding of teacher development, in comparison to the studies that offer a narrow view of the subject.

In this study the biography is a subjective biography in the sense that it does not try to collect objective information about the subject. The subjectivity is an essential part of the research: the teachers' stories are based on their interpretation of issues (Syrjälä and Numminen 1988: 70). Moreover, as Syrjälä and Numminen analyze, subjectivity means that teachers choose what they want to tell and what they find meaningful. Moreover, the term "subject" is meaningful in this study, and in biographical research in general, in the sense that a teacher telling her or his own story becomes a subject of a research (Casey 1992: 188-189; Measor and Sikes 1992: 211). As Casey suggests, traditional power relations and roles change when a teacher is not just an object of a research study. In other words, as Measor and Sikes analyze, a significant aim of a biographical approach is that it gives a voice to a subject and, in that sense, it does not manipulate a subject too heavily.

The concepts "life-story" and "life-history" are central in biographical research. A life-story is a personal story, either written or spoken (Goodson 1992a: 243-244). The most typical is an open interview, in which a researcher has a passive role. According to Goodson, life-history is a biography, which includes documentary material, such as, for example, photos, letters or historical evidence. Measor and Sikes (1992: 209-213) call life-history a sociological biography and distinguish it from a life-story, that is based on subjective retelling. This study is based on interviews without any historical or factual evidence and, therefore, the interviews can be called life-stories rather than life-histories. The terms "biography" and "life-story" are used as synonyms in this study. Biography is a neutral concept and a suitable term to use in many different contexts. Life-story is another

term that is used in this study, since it illustrates the spontaneous nature of the interviews.

In this present study the biographical method is used for it is a valid and suitable method to study complicated issues of human nature. In other words, it meets the requirements of the research problem and -subject well. It is rather problematic to get valid information about teacher development without interviewing teachers. However, as Goodson (1992b: 114) argues, traditionally a teacher's practice has been in the center of research and a teacher's voice has often remained unheard. Goodson claims that in several studies a teacher has been regarded the same as her or his practice. There is a lot of research on teachers, but, however, many researchers argue that the biographical method has not been a typical method in teacher research, although a teacher's personal ideas and experiences have a significant effect on her or his teaching and, in addition, teacher development is an individual process (Goodson, 1992b: 114; Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi (1992: 51). The biographical method is a valid and suitable method to analyze a teacher's individual learning process.

The biographical method enables to examine the subject in its context and the reality is able to be seen as variable and rich. Alasuutari (1994: 73) and Lindroos (1993: 52) argue that when one is studying thoughts, ways of reflection, values or issues that a person appreciates or neglects, research material has to consist of a spoken or written text in which participants speak in their own words. In biographies participants usually talk about issues that are the most significant to them and, therefore, biographies can give information of what teachers value and what is less important to them (Vilkko 1990: 84). In order to understand teacher development, and, in addition, school development, we have to know what issues are important to teachers; on the whole, we have to know more about a teacher's life and thoughts (Goodson 1992b, 111).

In practice, the research method in this study does not differ significantly from a non-structured interview. The difference is, rather, in the way the subject is seen. In this study it is assumed that teacher development is a process that happens everywhere and continuously, not only at school or in class. It is linked to a teacher's personal life. Moreover, I hoped that I could find answers from the stories that teachers told and, therefore, I asked as few direct questions as possible. In phenomenology the slogan "zu den Sachen selbst" means that a researcher has to avoid making too strict assumptions or theories of a subject before study (Varto 1992: 86, Huhtinen, Koponen, Metteri, Pellinen,

Suoranta and Tuomi 1994: 157). As Varto and Huhtinen et al. claim, a researcher has to be open-minded in the manner that enables a subject to be seen as such, in other words, the subject must not be manipulated.

Through biographical research it is possible to study subjective experiences of one person. The perspective is introspective, in other words, a subject is studying him- or herself (Huotelin 1992: 19). Also for this reason biographical research has been regarded as phenomenological (Antikainen 1998: 72; Kari 1990: 24).

## **6.2. The research process**

### **6.2.1. A researcher's preconceptions of the subject**

In order to conduct valid biographical research, especially valid interpretation, a researcher has to be conscious of her or his own preconceptions and their roots (Moilanen 1991: 127-128). However, although it is impossible to be aware of everything that lies behind one's choices, it is important to aim towards consciousness, for it makes interpretation more reliable and, in addition, it aids a researcher to become aware of the limitations and narrowness of her or his own outlook (ibid.).

I lived in England with my family in 2010. My children were in a primary school there and I often visited their school. The main reason why I became interested in teachers' work in England was that I noticed that there are some similarities and, also, significant differences between Finnish and English teachers' work. I wanted to find out more about the lives and work of English teachers and, of course, I aimed to write my thesis statement about the subject later in Finland.

Because I had been working as a primary school teacher in Finland, I already knew a lot about teachers' profession before interviewing the teachers. Based on my previous knowledge, I outlined a base and themes for the interview and formed some key questions (Syrjälä 1985: 272). In addition, I gave the teachers, who had promised to be interviewed, a letter, in which I told about the study and its aims, and asked them to think about some issues and questions before the interview. The letter is as an attachment in the end of this work. However, I still wanted the teachers' own voices to be heard and decided that the

purpose of these questions was to support the interview, and if the teachers wanted to talk about something else, it must be important to them and, therefore, we would talk about it. As Pikkarainen (1996: 16, 22) argues, it is important to let interviewees speak freely. Moreover, I tried not to be too critical towards the teachers' ideas and thoughts. As Pikkarainen suggests, in biographical research it is important to accept teachers' thoughts as such and a researcher must not change or criticize them. However, when I did the interpretation of these interviews, I looked at them according to my own interests and from the perspective of teacher development. Moreover, in interpretation I analyzed the data rather critically in order to discover the essential issues.

### **6.2.2. Choosing the teachers**

After I decided to study English primary school teachers, I began to search for suitable participants. I wanted to interview teachers from different schools in order to get a richer view about the effect of a school and community on teacher development. The first teacher I interviewed was a retired woman, who I met in a local Anglican church. She was there doing voluntary work during the mothers' and toddlers' club that I visited with my daughter every week. I discussed with her and heard that she used to work as a primary school teacher and I asked her to participate in my study. She promised to be interviewed and seemed to be delighted that she was able to participate. I chose her because I thought that it would be valuable to interview an older teacher in order to obtain historical perspective in the subject.

The second teacher was a middle-aged woman. In that same mothers' and toddlers' club I sometimes talked to a man, who told that his wife is a primary school teacher. I told him that I was searching for teachers to participate in my study and the following week he told that his wife was willing to be interviewed and I arranged the meeting with her.

The third teacher I met in another mothers' and toddlers' club. She was there with her own son. When I told her about my study and asked her to participate, she was willing to do so. I chose her in order to have a younger teacher to interview.

I did not want to interview the teachers in my children's school, for I thought that they were too familiar to me. I wanted to interview people who I did not meet regularly, for I

thought that it is easier for teachers to speak freely, also about difficulties and other negative issues, if our relation was as neutral as possible. I argue that it was a good decision, for the teachers spoke very freely also about critical and difficult issues.

I have changed the teachers' names. They are all women and their names and ages are: Martha 68, Cheryl 44 and Kathy 34. All three of them had been working in many different schools and with different age-groups. Kathy was working part-time, as she wanted to spend more time with her three-year-old son. She was working in a small village school. Cheryl was 44 and had mostly been working in rather big schools in the city. She had recently changed school and found the change rather challenging. She worked in the previous school for eleven years. Mary was 68, a retired teacher who voluntarily helped at a school one day a week. She was also actively participating in different educational projects, for example, in a project that helped poor Hungarian children who had cancer.

### **6.2.3. The interviews**

Biographical research consists of either oral or written texts. An oral biography is usually an interview, as in this study. A biographical interview can be conducted using a narrative interviewing technique, which means that an interviewee can speak freely and there are no special questions to lead the interview (Roos 1988: 144). As Roos describes, this is also called an autobiography, for the person who is interviewed, decides what the interview deals with and in what form. An interviewer can ask supplementary questions if needed. According to Roos, another choice is an open topic-based interview, in other words, an interviewer controls the interview and guides it by asking questions that are relevant for the study. The interviews in this study are closer to this second method.

It is important to listen to an interviewee carefully. Moreover, it is vital to hear those significant issues that are not said aloud (Mesor & Sikes 1992: 214). As Mesor and Sikes suggest, nonverbal communication, laughs, pauses, gestures, stress and face expressions aid in understanding the message. In addition, an interview enables making supplementary questions. For these reasons, as Mesor and Sikes estimate, interpreting an interview can be easier than interpreting written biographies.

On the other hand, an interview is also a problematic method. Firstly, a researcher's effect

on the material is significant because a researcher asks questions and makes comments during the interview (Moilanen 1991: 125). In addition, the interaction and relation between a researcher and an interviewee becomes a significant issue and has likely influences on a biography (Huotelin 1996: 31). As Huotelin argues, there are no problems like these in written biographies and, therefore, written biographies are more authentic in this sense.

I chose an interview, for I supposed that it was a relevant way to collect information of the theme I was interested in. I valued the fact that I could ask supplementary questions during the interview. I also assumed that teachers would more willing to be interviewed than willing to write a biography and, actually, it was easy to find the teachers, and everyone I asked was eager to participate. In addition, an interview can be an encouraging situation for a teacher and a source of reflection.

When I asked the teachers to participate in the study, I told them that I would write a thesis statement by analyzing the interviews. I did not tell exactly what my study is about so that it would not lead or restrict them too much.

I wanted to interview ordinary teachers, with no special criteria. In Talis Tisenkopfs' (1995: 191) words: "I am not famous, but I have a good life story, which is worth telling."

I sent the teachers a letter, in which I told about my study, as well as about the interview so that they could prepare for it beforehand, if they wanted to. I wrote the letter, for I wanted to take the following issues into account: people who participate in a research usually want to have a rough idea what it is about and, for ethical reasons, a researcher has to inform them about it beforehand (Huotelin 1992: 65). However, it is important to avoid making too explicit questions or agreements before an interview so that it will not limit the story to deal with some special questions a researcher is interested in (Roos 1988: 144). In addition, I estimated that it would likely have a positive effect on the interaction, if the teachers knew something about the study and the interview beforehand. However, I emphasized that I hoped them to tell about their experiences as freely and openly as possible.

During the interviews I first asked teachers some general questions, for example, how long she had been teaching and in what kinds of schools she had been teaching. I also told once again the aim and purpose of my study and explained that I will not use their real names in

the study. I encouraged them to speak freely and emphasized that I am not going to use the information I receive anywhere else than in my study in Finland. After that the teachers began to tell their stories rather fluently and vividly. I asked some questions to guide them to themes I was especially interested in, however, my questions were open, so that the teachers had to answer them by using several sentences and the answers "yes" and "no" were not possible (Syrjälä 1990: 15).

I interviewed Martha first. The interview was conducted in the church where we met during the mothers' and toddlers' club. The place was peaceful and silent and the situation was relaxed. I recorded the interview, which lasted about two hours.

I interviewed Cheryl next. She came to my home after a school day. There were just two of us present. At first she was a bit nervous but soon she relaxed more and told very vividly about her experiences. The interview lasted almost three hours and was very informative.

The third teacher in this study is Kathy, who I interviewed during the mothers' and toddlers' club where we used to meet. The situation was rather harmonious because the interview was not conducted in the same room where the kids were playing. However, there were some interruptions when Katharina's son had something to tell to her mother. We also had a pause when she wanted to play with her son. However, this interview was also informative and lasted about two and half hours.

All three teachers were very talkative and spoke rather fluently. It can be argued that they had been considering and reflecting on the issues a lot. It was very interesting to listen to them and be able to learn from their thoughts. After some warm-up- questions they did not need any support. If they were a bit nervous at first, they soon relaxed and told versatile, lively and vivid descriptions about their personal and professional lives. The interviews included also several critical comments on teachers' work in England as well as sad and painful personal experiences. On the whole, I felt they were honest stories. Because I am a teacher myself and came from a different culture, the teachers were occasionally interested in my views, and, I told some of my own ideas, too.

#### **6.2.4. Analyzing and interpreting the data**

The analysis of a qualitative research consists of two parts: collecting significant findings and solving problems (Alasuutari 1994: 30-32, 42, 189). In practice, however, these stages are interrelated. According to Alasuutari, there is usually a plenty of material, which, however, is usually dealt with from particular theoretical and methodological perspectives. They are perspectives that a researcher has chosen. However, in qualitative research, as in this study, the perspective is open and is formulated completely when reading and analyzing data (ibid.). As Alasuutari suggests, this enables to take the interests and preferences of interviewees into account, in addition to a researcher's own interests.

I listened to the data once and after that I wrote it down word by word, adding everything I could make sense about. After that I read the material through several times marking important issues and underlining different themes, a stage which Alasuutari (1994: 31) describes as "searching for raw findings". Already when I was listening to the teachers during the interviews, I had found some themes that were vital for all three teachers. However, when reading and listening to the data again, I could find new themes and the data became more familiar. I tried to look at the data from different perspectives. After I had found a couple of themes that seemed to be significant, I searched for more examples and issues that were linked to these themes. In addition, I picked up the issues that were important for each teacher and, on the other hand, the issues that were significant from the perspective of my study.

Trying to find themes that were the most important is a significant stage in a research process. However, it is not an easy task. It is a process, in which an individual idea or comment is connected to something more general. These themes are named, in other words, a thematic title is formed (Tigerstedt 1990: 105). According to Alasuutari (1994), a researcher can decide, what issues belong to a same theme. He argues that they can be similar issues or they can be issues that handle with a same question but from an opposite view. Alasuutari emphasizes that there should not be very many themes in an analysis so that it is not too challenging to deal with.

The second stage of a qualitative research is solving the problem, in other words, the interpretation (Alasuutari 1994: 35-38). Alasuutari describes that a researcher searches for

clues from data in order to solve the research problem or problems. In addition, he suggests, a researcher can use statistics, other studies and theories as well as academic literature, which help to solve the problem or make the analysis more reliable.

I wanted to analyze the data by dividing it into themes. Firstly, I divided the issues that teachers were dealing with, into two groups: contextual and individual issues. This was done based on the view that teachers' profession includes two dimensions: on one hand, there is a teacher's individual development and, on the other hand, a teacher development is a social process in which culture and other people have significant roles. The data was equal to this assumption. However, it was not always easy to define, into which group a comment would belong, since the comments often had elements from both groups.

Next, I decided that in this study, I will not deal with the development of teaching skills, although the teachers talked about them, too. There are already a few studies dealing with these issues. In this study I wanted to concentrate on thinking skills and other processes that happen in teachers' minds.

According to Roos (1987: 42-44), finding themes from a biographical data means that a researcher tries to find the most relevant issues. When I formed the themes, I used Goodson's (1992 a/b) and Kelchtermans' (1993) ideas as a guide. Goodson (1992 a/b) argues that a teacher's personality and a teacher's life is very meaningful in her or his professional development. Kelchtermans emphasizes that both school as a physical and social institution and a teacher as a person are meaningful in teacher development. In addition, I wanted to handle with the teachers' own ideas and thoughts about development and change arguing that the most significant issue is to bring their ideas and attitudes into the discussion.

### **6.2.5. The reliability of the study**

As subjective documents biographies are problematic in the sense that they are not based on facts, in other words, biographies are not documents of what really happened (Vilkko 1990: 82). Vilkko argues that a life story is a story that did not really happen, rather, it is happening during the storytelling. Moreover, she claims that a biography is dependent on the interviewer and the situation and, what is more, it is culture specific, which means that

issues are typically dealt with in a way that is suitable and normative in a surrounding culture and community. What is more, stories are not photographic copies of life, because life cannot be simply presented by a text (Estola 2003: 20). Moreover, as Estola argues, teachers' stories do not always represent truth in the sense "what really happened", because they have been told in special circumstances as one version of their lives. What is more, as Eskola suggests, when a researcher re-tells and analyzes stories, he or she does it within the frame of his or her own life story. For these reasons, a teacher's voice can never be reproduced quite as it is.

There are issues in biographies that make them less reliable. Firstly, a biography or a life-story deals partly with issues that have happened in the past. When a person is telling her or his story, he or she has to do it partly based on memory. Roos (1987: 35) argues that biographies likely include many wrong and inadequate details. According to him, an interviewee may, for example, remember things in a more positive or negative way than they actually have been. Thus, it can be argued, that biographies give us both fictional and factual information (Rahkonen 1995: 146).

On the other hand, because memory is selective, people usually remember the most significant issues in the lives (Hyvärinen 1995: 127-128). However, according to Hyvärinen, some researchers believe that one cannot be sure of that, either. He continues that people can remember the most absurd, the most exciting or odd situations best, although they are not so significant. Moreover, the situation, in which the biography is told, has an effect on one's memory: one remembers things in the past according to her or his feelings at the present (Syrjälä & Numminen 1988: 72).

In biographical research, and in qualitative interviews in general, one cannot know for sure, how honest an interviewee is. Firstly, an interviewee may tell things that she or he expects a researcher wants to hear. Secondly, an interviewee's story may illustrate his or her hopes about an ideal life (Roos 1985: 65). It is possible, as Roos argues, that an interviewee wants to make up a life. A person may also have an incorrect image of him- or herself and about different situations (Alasuutari 1994: 84). Thus, it can be argued, that a biography is always one understanding of one's life and, therefore, a subjective document (Syrjälä & Numminen 1988, 71). Thus, as Syrjälä and Numminen claim, it is very important that biographies are not dealt with as objective documents. Syrjälä and Numminen continue that an interviewer cannot argue that one's experiences, feelings and

thoughts are not true: they are true to a person that experiences them. For these reasons, in this study, as in any similar study, it is important to trust that the interviewees have spoken as truthfully as they can. Moreover, a reader of this study can evaluate, if the researcher has told everything she can about the course of the study and if she has given an honest view of the subject.

On the other hand, the subjectivity, according to Syrjälä & Numminen (1988: 71), is the most valuable issue in biographical research. They suggest that biographies are valuable because they are personal documents and, moreover, it is an honor that a person wants to tell her or his story. Thus, it is important to respect a story that a person wants to tell.

In addition to the subjectivity of an interviewee, there is the subjectivity of a researcher that is problematic. No one can be free of preconceptions and evaluate an interviewee and data quite objectively (Varto 1994: 34). Varto argues that a person, also an interviewer, is active in the world, not a passive observer. Measor and Sikes (1992) emphasize that a researcher has to understand his or her own role and meaning and its ethical requirements. However, they argue that it is impossible to track all issues that have had an effect on a study and on an interviewer`s or interviewees` minds when conducting and interpreting interviews.

## **7. FINDINGS**

### **7.1. Contextual and social issues in teacher development**

The teachers in this study find the contextual and social issues rather significant in their work and professional development. The issues teachers dealt with were the national curriculum, workload and time-consuming paperwork, accountability and control, the national tests and social relations at school.

#### **7.1.1. The strict national curriculum**

This present study reveals, firstly, that the English teachers interviewed, as well as teachers in other studies dealing with the issue, find the national curriculum significantly strict and

restrictive (Brooks 2016). As described in chapter four (Ball 2013: 89), in Britain the government introduced the national curriculum in 1988 and this meant a significant change in teachers' profession. As Ball continues, structures were reorganized, curriculum control was tightened and education was more closely linked to business, work, science and technology. Moreover, teachers were constantly blamed for everything by governments, media and newly instituted league tables of school performance. As example 1 shows, the oldest teacher interviewed in this study illustrates the change in the following manner:

- (1) *The child-centered learning was very much the philosophy I followed when I started teaching. It didn't carry on, it couldn't because the government imposed all sorts of different regulations. But I have to say that until year 1988, for eighteen years, teaching young children, it was topic-based. So, we would take a topic like water and we would build all learning around that. We worked in groups, we sat at round tables, there might be some ability groups but the children were not aware of that. But there was a lot of integration. And I could see how children learned through connecting different strands of education. When it is all connected, it makes sense to them. Now, what happened in 1988, was that the government introduced a national curriculum. Up to that time, local authorities...would have their own curriculum and you were free to follow it. And if you were committed, it was good way of learning, it was the best way, I think. (Martha)*

In the example 2, Cheryl describes what teaching and learning was like before the national curriculum and how it changed.

- (2) *The teacher took his or her class and developed the children according to what she saw fit or he saw fit. And without having, we would have guidelines for standard but without having such firm standards that you had to achieve and you as a school were inspected upon. That the needs of the children were gated for (unclear), it was far more child-centered approach than this target-driven curriculum that we have at the moment. You felt that you were actually teaching the children's strengths and weaknesses, you were not teaching what the government said they should do. (Cheryl)*

Thus, as the teachers describe, the national curriculum had significant effects on their work, for example, in their independence and sense of professionalism. As Hargreaves (2003) suggests, after the national curriculum was launched, teachers began to feel deprofessionalized, they experienced a lot more work, too much regulation of their work and they felt that they could not focus on the issues that they found the most important, but, instead of teaching children, they had to concentrate on the bureaucratic and form-filling burdens of administrative decentralization. All these reforms reduced severely teachers' chances to make their own pedagogical decisions and took the flexibility and

creativity away from teaching and learning (Hargreaves 2003: 5-6). As Martha illustrates in the example 3, teachers felt that they barely had time to do anything else, for example, the topic based work, that they found meaningful and important. In addition, there was a plenty of interaction in class before the national curriculum, which, unfortunately, radically changed. However, Martha's comment about teachers' commitment before the national curriculum reveals also that not all teachers used their freedom and the sense of autonomy in the right manner before the national curriculum. Some were lazy and did not develop their teaching. However, after the national curriculum was launched, there were too many restrictions and no freedom for teachers to choose what to teach or do in class.

*(3) The national curriculum introduced in 1988 was very restrictive. And you had to follow those guidelines. In some areas it was justified. In the teaching of science. What it meant, so you had to teach Geography one hour a week, history one hour a week and so on. And it was very restrictive. So, we stopped doing the topic work, the integrating. The government issue guidelines, this is how you teach. And, and, we didn't have time to do anything else. (Martha)*

Moreover, teachers argue, as the example 4 shows, that the national curriculum emphasizes the importance of academic learning over other meaningful issues and skills. What is more, according to teachers, teaching and learning is controlled too much.

*(4) ---children become like sausages in a sausage factory when the academic things are appreciated too much and when it is controlled too much: do this, learn this and out you go. Whereas about 70 % of all learning is something else than academic things. I would like to have a bit like, let's just look around. --- Teacher decides let's learn about Victorians now. Or punctuation. There doesn't seem to be any purpose, why we are learning this? I would like to ask the children what you want to find out about? We can't do that. --- Because the teacher took his or her class and developed the children according to what she saw fit or he saw fit. And without having, we would have guidelines for standard but without having such firm standards that you had to achieve and you as a school were inspected upon. That the needs of the children were gated for (unclear), it was far more child-centered approach than this target-driven curriculum that we have at the moment. You felt that you were actually teaching the children's strengths and weaknesses, you were not teaching what the government said they should do. (Cheryl)*

Thus, according to the teachers in this study, the role of the government and the national curriculum is extremely significant in teachers' work in England. In the beginning of the interviews, all three teachers immediately began to talk about the government. Firstly, the government decides topics or themes that have to be taught in each grade. Secondly, the national curriculum is strict and every teacher is supposed to follow it in practice. What is

more, as the example 5 shows, government plans are not realistic from teachers' perspective and, furthermore, teachers claim that people who do those plans do not understand the practice of teaching and learning. For example, as the example 5 illustrates, one teacher, who was asked if there is something that frustrates her, replied that the government initiatives are very frustrating. They get started but after that there is not enough time to actually finish them.

*(5) You get initiatives started, nothing seems to the end in the UK, umm...and you know... you give it a go, it takes a lot of to start new initiatives, a lot of time to plan it and something else is in and you got to do that and something else comes. They are governments, governments initiatives, they are not really thought through, though. A lot of money is needed to plan them, but I guess nothing ever follow through in the UK. (Kathy)*

As Kathy claims, there are new initiatives started frequently and the initiatives are not realistic, which makes teachers' work frustrating. However, as Martha argues in the example 6, teachers' criticism and perspective was not taken into account and they were not listened to. As in other similar studies, teachers suffer from the lack of respect given to their expertise and professional knowledge (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 25).

*(6) But still, between 1998 and the next ten years, almost every week there was new government directive. We had a staff meeting, we have a new folder, we got to do this. And we, older teachers said that it wouldn't work but it wasn't listened to. (Martha)*

As argued above in the examples 5 and 6 and also in chapter five, the expectations that come from outside school, are often unrealistic from teachers' perspective. As the example 7 shows, sometimes a teacher has to neglect them because there is simply not enough time.

*(7) It's pressure that you know how this should be done, pressure that you know what is expected but you don't always have the time to do what is expected of you. (Kathy)*

Moreover, as Kathy in the example 8 describes, teachers have to prioritize according to their own knowledge of practice. It is also argued that in England outsiders, for example, policymakers, do not usually take into account the complexity of school life and the multitude of simultaneous tasks and demands teachers and schools face (Braun et al. 2010, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 24).

*(8) You have to prioritize, obviously not everything gets done. (Kathy)*

However, teachers estimate that the situation is not as bad as it used to be. The example 9 shows that, according to Kathy, the curriculum used to be even more demanding five years ago.

*(9) They have realized that there is not enough time for everything so now they are giving teachers a little bit more freedom. --- About five years ago there was a system that government had set a literacy hour and numeracy hour, very strict orders how to do the work at school. (Kathy)*

Also Martha estimates, as the example 10 below indicates, that the government has realized that the topic-based curriculum was a good way to educate children.

*(10) We are going back to that topic-based curriculum. In the recent years the government has realized that that is an effective tool for teaching children. (Martha)*

Kathy describes in the example 11 the effects that the very strict curriculum had on creativity and the sense of freedom from a teacher's perspective. This, fortunately, is also changing:

*(11) It took all the creativity, all freedom- I believe you need time to be creative. So, they have allowed now some creative space. (Kathy)*

Galton and MacBeath (2008: 5) claim that the word "delivery", that was earlier used in industry and during the last years commonly used in education, is argued to narrow a teacher's role between a body of required knowledge and pupil performance, narrowing her or his role to be a distributor of the national curriculum and taking her or his creativity and a sense of ownership. I asked Cheryl how much the national curriculum influences her everyday teaching and, as the example below shows, she answered:

*(12) Hugely, hugely. (Cheryl)*

On the whole, as the following example illustrates, the national curriculum has had significant effects on teachers' work and their development as well.

*(13) It was hard to develop after the national curriculum was launched. (Martha)*

Moreover, as the example 14 shows, there are new initiatives and orders coming frequently. Furthermore, the issues emphasized and valued depend on the officials working for the national curriculum. All these aspects have negative influences also on the continuity in teachers' work.

*(14) And there will be election in May and, ö, new government and this will all be thrown out. (Cheryl)*

### **7.1.2. Workload and time-consuming paperwork**

The second central finding of this study is that the teachers feel that they have too much work to do and the work is really time-consuming, in other words, teachers work also in the evenings and at weekends. As Galton and MacBeath (2008: 12) note: "Topping the poll in almost every survey of teachers' professional lives is the issue of workload." The key finding of Galton's and MacBeath's (2008: 19-20) study of the workload in 102 schools in England was that teachers' and head teachers' weekly working hours were 52 hours each week compared with around 45 hours for comparable managers and professionals in other occupations in the UK. As the example 15 illustrates, one reason for the workload is that teachers in England have to do very detailed planning about what they are going to teach in class, what their targets are and, finally, how they are going to achieve them.

*(15) The planning, the planning takes me ages! It has to be quite detailed planning. You have to tell exactly what you are doing, the questions you are going to make, the assessment criteria...then you have to make a presentation alongside. (Cheryl)*

Presentation means that a teacher has to make a presentation of the lesson, in which she describes what they are going to do in class. It has to be very detailed. For example, they have to explain what they are going to write on a white board in class. In addition, they have to assess children very carefully and have evidence on that, which also, according to Cheryl, as the example 16 reveals, is very time-consuming (see also Hargreaves 2003: 5-6). In the example below Cheryl describes the workload and her typical day in the following manner:

*(16) I leave the house at half past seven in the morning and it's lovely because I have only about five minutes' walk to school. And I leave school at about five. I come home, we eat, I bathe the baby, put the baby to bed and I start again at about eight o'clock and I work through till about eleven... about four evening a week. And I'm behind. Because, that's the planning. And then I have to do the assessment.*

*Assessing pupils' performance, we have to give clear piece of evidence, that takes quite a long time. And if a child has special education needs, we have to keep, umm, individual programs, I have to test them and develop programs for them and that can sometimes take quite a lot of time. (Cheryl)*

In England, the significantly thorough planning is not only for a teacher's use and for a school but there are outside inspectors who come to check teaching and planning every three years (Hudson and Lidström 2002: 51; Osborn et al. 2003: 44-45). Thus, head teachers want that the paperwork is done properly, since, as described in chapter four and in the example 17, schools are ranked by Ofsted according to the findings that their inspectors do when checking schools and teachers' work.

*(17) Often your planning is scrutinized by Ofsted. So, the school inspectors that come every three years and they will want to look in your planning and they'll make a comment and give you grade on your planning: inadequate, satisfactory, good or excellent. So, headteacher will often ask you to sustain this level of planning because Ofsted can just pop in. (Cheryl)*

Such a detailed planning has both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, as the example 18 reveals, it makes teaching more effective and when a teacher feels that she does her work well, it gives her pleasure, comfort and joy.

*(18) Planning helps learning because it helps you think in mind in detail and it makes you think how to stretch the more able and how to accommodate the less able. --- Dave (her husband) says I am a perfectionist, but I want to do good job. I need to prepare and I need to have, I can't just go and do it, I can't. And if it is well prepared, the behavior management is much easier, the children are more successful if it's well prepared. --- And you feel good that everything has gone well. This gives me joy. (Cheryl)*

On the other hand, detailed planning has negative effects on creativity. Firstly, as argued above, planning takes a lot of time, which makes teachers' work exhausting and time-consuming. Moreover, as teachers argue, one cannot be creative if he or she does not have time or energy to reflect upon one's work or if he or she is too exhausted to do that. Secondly, as the example 19 shows, detailed planning has negative influences on the sense of freedom and creativity also for the reason that there is not enough flexibility in the curriculum and for there is always someone who will control the plans. Thus, although head teachers and teachers in this, as well as in other studies, admit the importance of accountability, endless form filling and paperwork together with a constant pressure to justify one's actions cause a feeling of not being in control of one's own destiny (Galton

and MacBeath 2008: 9).

*(19) However, teachers cannot be creative in planning. There was more flexibility in early years' curriculum and I liked that a lot better. (Cheryl)*

One teacher describes in the example 20 how now as she is working part time she can do all the paperwork during the weeks she is not teaching:

*(20) That's because of the paper-work. I have more time to do the paper-work. (Kathy)*

Because she is working part-time, she can do the paper-work during the weeks she is not at school. From teachers' point of view, as also the example 21 illustrates, it seems to be almost impossible to work full-time and do the work well, because the paperwork is so time-consuming.

*(21) All the planning sides, it takes good few hours to do. And the assessment sides. Hmm, If I were working full time, I would start at eight a clock and finish at six and you would still do an extra hour in the evening. And many of the good teachers have decided to work part time because the work life balance isn't there. (Kathy)*

If the workload is too heavy, it arguably has negative impacts on teachers' professional development. As argued in chapter five, reflection is significant in teacher development. Teachers in this study, as in other similar studies, do not have time or energy to address the bigger picture of their work (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 74). When I asked one teacher if she feels that she can develop as a teacher and develop her work as she wants to, she answered:

*(22) I wish obviously more time and all teachers will tell you that. --- Time restrains (?), you can't develop your work very much. (Kathy)*

The same teacher describes below in the example 23 how she does not have time to concentrate on issues she is interested in or on issues that are her area of speciality, since she struggles with other time-consuming duties she is supposed to do.

*(23) I am a subject coordinator for science. I am working in a small school. But when do I have time to coordinate those subjects on top of everything else? That goes on a bottom of a pile. So there just is not time to do that. (Kathy)*

As argued earlier in this chapter, the teachers link time and creativity strongly together. As

the following example shows, a teacher needs time to be creative.

*(24) Working part-time gives me some creative space. I can think about things, umm, how I'm going to teach things, the things that inspire me to do with the topic or what we are doing. And just having a break from it allows you to be a bit more creative. (Kathy)*

Moreover, teachers feel that they should also have time for something else in life. A good work-life balance is significant, both for teachers themselves and for their professional development. As the example 25 shows, in this present study, as well as in Galton's and MacBeath's (2008: 10) three studies, head teachers and teachers constantly refer to the tensions between their home and professional lives. In England, teachers' pressure is claimed to be caused by centralized reforms accompanied by excessive bureaucratic procedures. However, research across the globe indicates that a teacher's life is more stressful than before and that there is a growing imbalance between teachers' professional and personal lives in many countries of the world (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 21).

*(25) It doesn't really give you a good work-life-balance" (Kathy)*

One teacher describes how the national curriculum with its strong emphasis on reporting and evaluating one's work, has negative effects on the interaction with children. She argues in the example 26 that before the national curriculum was launched in 1988, teachers had time to talk to children and concentrate on their learning, whereas after the national curriculum was launched, there was not very much time on anything else than paperwork and in this process, as Martha describes, both teachers and children lost something extremely valuable.

*(26) And paperwork just absolutely took over from the job. That became the most important thing. I had to report endlessly, endlessly. Every lesson, every lesson. You know, every evening you were up till, when it first came in, ten, eleven o'clock, paperwork. And children missed out. Because you were so focused getting your records up to date. There wasn't that interaction with children. A classic example, they told you what craftwork you had to teach, they would have a formula, this is how you do your craftwork. You have a sheet of planning, you have another sheet how you modify your plans. Then you begin to make your thing. Then you write the assessment about it all. And that was a craftwork. Whereas when we did craftwork and we sat around with children, you know, I bring in, what we are going to make. It is linked to the topic, say for instance, we would do the Tudors and we would*

*make a Tudor Crown for King Henry or something like that. And you would sit round and when you sit round with children you hear all that what's inside them. They talk about their home, they talk about what they've done they talk about their fears and their worries. Before the National Curriculum. And you knew your children so well, because there was time to them, there was time to talk to them, to interrelate. Whereas when the national curriculum came in, your interaction with children was: have we evidence of this, evidence of that and so on and we didn't actually have time to talk to children. And we lost something. We lost something very, very, very important. So, that was the big change. --- I think children learn best when they are interacting with you. They are sorting things out in their minds and asking questions...and that couldn't happen with the national curriculum. It was, we'll learn this today and next we are going to that. And it was not all joined up. It wasn't connected. (Martha)*

As teachers also in Galton and MacBeath's (2008: 26) study describe, many aspects of learning now feel to be done in a hurry, with less spontaneity and less time to talk to and listen to children, for many teachers, a crucial aspect of school education as well as the most enjoyable part of teaching. As Martha illustrates in the example 27, especially during the decades following the national curriculum - reform, teachers did not have time to spend with one another and with children any more. What is more, they were so exhausted that they did not want to. Moreover, she felt angry since she could not teach in the way she knew was a good practice.

*(27) I felt angry. I felt angry that I couldn't teach in a way that I knew was a good practice. In the evening, it was all paperwork. The lunch hour was paperwork. Whereas I would have spent time with the children or in the staffroom. In the early years we would go out together, we would go to the theatre, staff would go to the theatre. Or we would go into pub in a lunch hour, you know, and have lunch together. Whereas all that stopped because people were so exhausted, they were frenetic, they were frussled. (?) You know, schools were not relaxed places to be. In the second school, because the head recognized what is important, it was much more relaxed. As long as we fulfilled what the government asked. The stuff that wasn't important, we ignored. We could focus on the issues that were important in children's learning. And those staff relationships were much better. You could interpret the government guidelines in the way that was meaningful and purposeful. (Martha)*

However, as Martha describes in the example above, in the decades following the national curriculum there were differences between schools and, especially, between head teachers how strictly the government's guidelines were interpreted and followed. Concentrating on relevant issues made teaching more meaningful and purposeful for teachers and children. However, Martha estimates in the example 28 below that the school culture and curriculum will be more child-centered again in future. Moreover, she argues that teachers are now

listened to more than a few years ago. However, a head teacher has a significant influence on that.

*(28) But it's changing back, the child-centered curriculum. It was coming in when I retired, it was coming in. But I think now, teachers are listened to more. You know where there is good practice recognized. In my last years it was beginning to change. But it was dependent on the head teacher. (Martha)*

### **7.1.3. Accountability and control in teachers' work**

The third finding of this present study is that teachers do not have freedom to do their work according to their own preferences, since outside advisors, political decision-makers and other authorities control and restrict their work and freedom. In other words, as the example 29 indicates, teachers are monitored by colleagues, head teachers and parents, as well as outside advisors and inspectors, such as, for example, Ofsted. Teachers describe that it makes teaching very stressful. Stress is one continuous theme in many studies of English schools today (Day and Gu 2014: Introduction, Galton and MacBeath 2008: 9). Martha analyzes in the example 29 that in the beginning of the 1990s, as all this inspecting began, it was terrifying for many teachers, even so that many excellent teachers, for example, Martha's brother, decided to change career. Interestingly, teachers under stress were most likely those who had a strong sense of vocation, for the conflict between their personal and professional values and the reality of the new orthodoxy was too significant (Woods 1997, cited in Galton and MacBeath 2008: 16). Moreover, as noted in chapter four, various research studies indicate internationally that teachers are leaving the profession in large numbers and a significant amount of the teaching posts remain unfilled (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 7).

*(29) We had advisers to come in the classroom once a month. The government inspectors, they came every four years. But it was absolutely, for many people, it was terrifying. It was motivated by fear. Have we got the tickles up to date, have we got all the paper work up to date. --- He (my brother) couldn't cope, he hated the paperwork. So, he has come out of teaching. And a lot of good teachers left. It was so stressful. The pressure was enormous. --- The outside pressure in terms of the national curriculum, that, that put an enormous pressure on you. Once, when that came in, we were exhausted. You know, and we felt that it distracted from the children because we didn't have the same time to the children. So, that certainly changed my mid-career. (Martha)*

As informed in chapter four, soon after the national curriculum was launched, the school inspections organized by Ofsted were introduced to compare and evaluate schools (Hudson and Lidström 2002: 51). As the example below shows, teachers feel that the Ofsted inspections are often unfair and they argue that schools cannot be compared so simply.

*(30) And because we are inspected by Ofsted, and, you know, Ofsted follows the government guidelines so a school and parents, ö, look at Ofsted reports, parents will take the words of Ofsted about which school is good or satisfactory and that's not fair, because, umm, as with lot of education, Ofsted interpretation can depend on the inspectors... And that doesn't take into consideration the different cohorts (unclear) of children you can have. (Cheryl)*

In addition, as described in chapter four, there are lead tables in newspapers in which schools are ranked and listed according to their performance (Osborn et al. 2003, Day and Gu 2010: 12). Martha argues in the following example that all these reports that rank schools put a significant pressure on teachers.

*(31) Alongside all of this government intervention... all the schools were listed in the local newspaper and in the national newspaper, where they were in ranking. I hate these tables, because you can't take into account, you can't compare schools. For instance, the queen's school in Chester, they choose the children, they set a test. So, if you are comparing Queen's school, say, a state school, of course the Queen school get higher on the list. Now, they are value-added, they recognize this problem more. But even so, lead tables put a lot of pressure on teachers. Parents read them as take them as a really good guide but they are not. I think before the parents would co-operate. Now, almost nine times out of ten, the parents would say it must be your fault. There is a culture of blaming the teacher, whereas in the past. It is a blame culture... and teachers are very guarded. And everybody is watching that the school doesn't get involved in that sort of situation because it gets into the paper. (Martha)*

Teachers describe how they are suffering from the control of their work. As the youngest teacher Kathy illustrates:

*(32) As a teacher you are constantly monitored, aren't you. So, umm, the performance management who observe that... And you have targets to achieve, so they will look and scrutinize, plus other colleagues will scrutinize your plans and to be ready for the Ofsted to come in. (Kathy)*

As Kathy mentions in the example below, there are outside inspectors who control teachers' work. Moreover, other teachers and school leaders monitor them.

*(33) You have subject leaders, you have your senior management team, you have*

*the outside advisor that comes in. All of those people are monitoring what's going on in the school. They are those people who are looking to see your books, looking to see your planning, they want to see that what you are doing is there, they want to see evidence all the time, the photographs, the evidence has to be there that you are doing what you say you are doing. It can be stressful, yes. (Kathy)*

To sum up, this monitoring and control arguably has a significant effect on teachers' motivation, creativity and professional development in the sense that it makes teachers feel that they are not appreciated as professionals. It does not value their capability of making independent decisions and, furthermore, it makes them dependent on other people's arguments and decisions. As Kathy's description reveals, there are people monitoring and inspecting teachers' work both inside and outside school. Teachers feel pressure from these expectations and they cannot do their work as they would like to. They would prefer to have more freedom and, although they see the positive sides of paperwork, they would like to concentrate on something else, at least occasionally. When I asked Kathy, if she would do her work differently if there was no pressure she replied:

*(34) I personally don't because I plan well so that my lessons go well. But sometimes I feel that this week I would like to do something a bit easier, not to plan so much, not to do paperwork so much, but it is not possible to do that because they are always there, there is always that pressure. I just think that if they weren't there, there would not be the pressure all the time. If you want to relax a little bit on that paperwork side, the planning side but because you know it has to be there, then you have to do it the week after so it doesn't pay to fall behind. (Kathy)*

#### **7.1.4. The national tests**

Moreover, in England the national tests have a significant influence on teaching and learning. In addition, teachers argue that preparing for the tests takes a lot of time and energy. In that sense, the tests also restrict their freedom and creativity as well as function as a manner of controlling teachers and pupils. Cheryl, for example, describes in the example 35 how doing well in national exams is nearly the only issue that matters. Other work done at school is not appreciated as much and, what is more, is neglected if children do not do well in the tests. This, arguably, has significant impact on creativity and freedom both from teachers' and pupils' point of view. Teachers are generally worried of the pressure the highly-structured school day puts on children (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 28).

*(35) In the recent years, I've found that there has been quite a, aa, quite a heavy*

*shift from a child-centered curriculum and considering the whole child, but at the moment our curriculum is very very target-driven; the exam results are so important, at seven and at eleven (age). And if a school does not get, äm, the national expectation and a large proportion of children, if they don't get the national expectation, that school cannot be deemed, as, umm, good. You can provide everything for the children, you can provide stimulating curriculum, you can provide, umm, outside experiences, you can provide wonderful planning... but if your exam results are... (unclear:) not good enough, you cannot be a good school. (Cheryl)*

As can be seen in the examples 36 and 37, the teachers interviewed for this study are strongly against the national tests. However, although they have the best knowledge of children, their arguments are not heard.

*(36) This testing, it. has a huge, huge meaning in my work. --- I don't personally think this is a good philosophy. (Cheryl)*

*(37) Every term children have targets and you've got to see how to move to those targets and If they haven't moved to that target, why not. So, obviously, children aren't robots, they are not always going to make their targets and that's a big problem in teaching at the moment. The stress. And year six teachers are getting to that point where children are not reaching their end of key stage 2 targets and it's all falling on year six teaching because that's what is reported nationally. (Kathy)*

When I asked if the tests make learning any better, Kathy answered:

*(38) No, not at all. It is so political. If they took it away, it would free off so much more time and make make school nicer for children. (Kathy)*

Day and Gu (2014: 25) state the following argument about the problematic nature of testing: "The emphasis upon standardized tests and examinations and the development of new technologies to compare these within and across schools and countries (PISA, TIMMS) are said to have caused more emphasis upon teaching to the test in classrooms."

It is argued that all these different ways of controlling teachers' work, such as tests, Ofsted inspections, the national curriculum and outside advisors, as well as collegial inspecting and assessment, have negative impacts on teachers' professionalism. Cheryl describes the lack of professionalism in the following manner:

*(39) If a child didn't do well in the national tests in year five, the head teacher would ask the teacher why she didn't succeed, what went wrong, what was the planning? And I felt that it questioned my ability to teach. (Cheryl)*

Moreover, as Cheryl argues in the example 40, despite positive impacts of reflection, monitoring and planning, it has many negative effects on teachers' work, since it is so time-consuming and, moreover, is often misused to criticize and control teachers.

*(40) Reflection and monitoring and planning: it would be good if it didn't take such a large proportion of your time and if it was used to inform practice but in some schools it can be used to misjudge people and to criticize. (Cheryl)*

Moreover, teachers' tacit knowledge does not seem to be valued as it should be. The practical and pedagogical knowledge and understanding of teachers is often neglected. However, teachers likely understand better than, for example, outside advisors what a child needs in order to develop as a person. Instead of promoting deep learning and children's emotional engagement with learning and with one another, teachers are increasingly preoccupied with teaching children for standardized tests (Hargreaves 2003: 59). On the whole, instead of continuously learning to become a better teacher and to relate more effectively with pupils and others as a foundation to that learning, teachers are experiencing a lot of pressure to teach as they are told (Hargreaves 2003: 59). Teachers in this study and as was described in chapter four, many teachers in England are worn down by the loss of creativity, spontaneity and autonomy in their work, overwhelmed and overloaded with extraneous tasks, they have no time for classroom and collegial relationships or to care for pupils properly. In addition, they are constantly criticized. (Hargreaves 2003: 60-70) As a result, much research on teachers' work and lives alarmingly notes the lowering of teacher morale, rises in stress and burnout (Day and Gu 2014: Introduction) On the whole, as Galton and MacBeath (2008: 16) argue, in the English context teachers are rather inclined to voice their dissatisfaction and in research studies there can be found a significant amount of complaint about policy, pressure and deprofessionalization, yet, at the same time, as could be found also in this study, a compliance to the inevitability of the situation. It can be argued that teachers had become compliant, mostly accommodating imposed changes, surviving rather than developing professionally (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 16). They see several restrictions in their work that make professional development rather, if not too, challenging.

### **7.1.5. The role of a head teacher**

Social relations within a school community are meaningful in teachers' work and professionalism. In England the role of a head teacher is especially significant. In Cheryl's

previous school the head teacher had such an important role that when he retired, Cheryl wanted to change schools, although she had been working in that school for fifteen years already. As the example below shows, Cheryl's head teacher was an inspiring and a visionary sort of leader. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012: 139) argue that for good results both academically and emotionally and especially if a school wants to achieve profound changes, it is essential that school leaders make people believe that success is possible and people want to be a part of it. The secret of good leadership is also that people feel that they belong to the school and that their contribution matters.

*(41) The head teacher, I really, really did, I liked his philosophy. He was a very gentle man, who, am, just appreciated children. (Cheryl)*

According to the teachers, the role of a head teacher is very important. For example, Cheryl analyzes in the example 42 that a head has a significant effect on learning. What is more, Cheryl worked in a school that situated in a deprived area with many social and economic problems. As Hargreaves and Shirley (2012: 137) argue, leadership that manages to motivate and engage people to improvements and collaboration becomes absolutely vital in an environment where the system overall is not performing especially well.

*(42) In my previous school, there were number of head teachers, I think there were five head teachers during all those years. And each of them put their own philosophy. And the last head teacher was very dynamic and did, umm, did great improvements to the school so that the level of the children did improve dramatically. (Cheryl)*

It can be argued, that leadership can also help a community to keep its own vision in a situation, where the system is very demanding and restrictive, as in England in recent years and decades. In several studies, teachers describe how they have felt lost when they have not had a good leader (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 140). They argue that it is valuable if a leader can give them a sense of where they might be going and how to get there. In this sense, it can be argued that in England teachers are used to the idea of a strong leadership at school. It can be negative if a head teacher is using her or his power to criticize or blame others. However, in a positive sense, it also means that teachers are willing and ready to work towards common goals of the school community, not only towards their own independent visions. This is a valuable issue, since, as was argued in chapter four, schools should develop as organizations. As the following example indicates, head teachers in England have a lot of power and, unfortunately, they sometimes control teaching and

learning rather systematically.

*(43) The way he asked us to work was very much, um, test every twelve weeks, if the children haven't made progress, why not? And the curriculum was designed to work towards the test. And more planning to make sure you are teaching what was missing. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl mentions that she experienced a lot of pressure during that testing. As can be seen in the example below, she also feels that it questioned her as a professional and as a teacher.

*(44) You had to fill in a checklist that was quite detailed. (After test) --- If the children hadn't done enough progress, if they hadn't got that progress, then the head teacher would want to know why, what did you think about it and what was your plan and, um, that was, it was, I felt it was quite, a, it questioned my ability to teach. (Cheryl)*

Also Martha emphasizes the significance of a head teacher in an individual teacher's work. She argues in the example 45 that a teacher's position and work conditions vary significantly depending on the head teacher he or she is working with.

*(45) But I think now, teachers are listened to more. You know where there is good practice recognized. In my last years it was beginning to change. But it was dependent on the head teacher. (Martha)*

According to Martha, as the following example shows, a head teacher can have a negative or positive influence on teachers' work and atmosphere at school.

*(46) The head teacher for which I taught for twenty-six years was a very fear full lady. She was not easy to work with, that's why I left the school after twenty-six years. Um, she was a bully. She couldn't, she couldn't see what the important issues were with children. And she called to the office, why don't you do this, this, this? I said, I am looking at the children, what is important to them and she said, no, you do that. You know, and she was very fear full about coming in and checking. But we could justify what we did, there were ways to do it. (Martha)*

However, as the example 47 below shows, a good head teacher can, if he or she is capable or willing to do so, neglect some of the unrealistic plans and orders of the government and work in the way a school and its members see as a good practice. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012: 138) give an inspiring example of the Grange Secondary School in Northern England, where the head stood up to unfair inspections and the judgments of district staff,

when they were against the good practice and lacked the understanding of school life. Hargreaves and Shirley describe that this was to assert the school's own solution that they knew to be right to the children. In other words, it is important that leadership is courageous to challenge the authorities outside school when they do not understand the realities of teaching and learning. As Day and Gu (2014: Introduction) illustrate, school leaders, especially head teachers, play a key role steering their schools successfully through changing social and policy landscapes; "in enabling teachers to respond positively to the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in their everyday professional lives; and through this, to sustain their commitment, well-being and effectiveness in making a difference to the learning, achievement and life chances of children and young people". According to Day and Gu, leaders are needed who manage to meet and overcome the challenges of persistent policy reforms and shifting teaching and learning contexts as well as create favourable organizational structures and conditions which encourage collaborative efforts.

*(47) Whereas the second school where I worked for ten years, the head, she could see the wood for the trees. So, she said, we have a new folder from the government but we can't do this. Let's do this part and don't worry about the rest of it. She was able to see and that school was very very child-centered. It was a lovely school. They were able to take, what the government directives but plum (?) them into child-centered education. (Martha)*

Martha argues in the example 48 that good relationship between school members are crucial, since, otherwise, children suffer. She argues that it is especially important that there is trust between a head teacher and teachers, which means both that a head teacher has the expectation that teachers do good work and that teachers feel free to go to talk about any matter with the head teacher.

*(48) The relationship with the head and the parents and the trust and the trust of the staff is absolutely crucial. I think if that isn't there, the whole thing breaks down and the children are affected because the staff become anxious. And that's what happened in my first school when this new head came in. She wanted to dominate and didn't trust the staff. And sadly, there was some classes in the school and in one year, the deputy head had nervous breakdown and he left and he never taught again. He was frightened of her. And four of us left. So, five of seven teachers. So, that relationship with the head is crucial, absolutely crucial. And in my next school, I couldn't believe the difference. You know, the relationship was good, there was trust, there was an expectation that you would do a good job. If there were issues you could talk about it. If I was having difficulties, I felt, I was free to go to the head and ask: tell me about this, what is the background? It was resolved, because there was trust. (Martha)*

When I asked Cheryl if there is something that prevents her to do the work as she wishes, she began to speak about head teachers once again. As the example below illustrates, from her point of view it would be essential that a head teacher would have the same philosophies as she as a teacher has. A head teacher should also have the capability and intelligence of leading the community. Moreover, she emphasizes the importance of common targets, that a whole school would have the same philosophies and work together to reach them.

*(49) If it was a dream job, I would have a head (a head teacher) who had my philosophies but more intelligence and more understanding that why I've got them. Who would lead and it would be a whole school who had, which had the same, which had the same philosophies. --- I would like to have more my philosophy like treat others like you want to be treated, so I would like that. And I would like, um, I would like, possibly have a curriculum, I understand that there has to be a curriculum that we have to follow. But I would like, ö, some opportunities for children to choose and more, and more skills-based curriculum, through children's interests. Like if a child is really really interested in music, if that is her real strength. So why can't we use that as a strength and to do other skills in? (Cheryl)*

However, she understands that she cannot always follow her own philosophies if a head teacher or other colleagues have different views. She finds it valuable to be flexible. Moreover, in her comment in the example 50 one can see a significant feature of the school system in England. A head teacher has a significant role and a lot of power at school. In addition, a head teacher usually chooses a philosophy or a target for her or his school they follow. And everyone working in that school is expected to follow the same targets and agree with head teacher's philosophies. That is very different, for example, from Finnish school system, where every teacher can mostly follow her or his own values and teachers are not supposed to agree with a head teacher's ideas.

*(50) Through some philosophies that previous heads have worked for but I didn't necessarily agree with. But I also feel, ä, part of my personality feels that if I'm working for that head, it is their school, they have chosen to be responsibility for that, I've chosen not to. So, I'll follow their philosophy because I made the choice that I want to work in their school. If I disagree with them completely, I should leave. --- It is a part of my, a bad part of my personality that I don't think I am so strong, that I am quite willing to see what other people are doing. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl emphasizes the significance of support from a head teacher. According to her, as the example 51 below shows, it has a positive effect on teacher development and expertise.

*(51) This head that has just retired now, he was very supportive of, well he has a*

*very strong philosophy and he he is very supportive of staff development, that he wanted the teachers to become experts and he wanted the teachers to fulfill what was their wish, so, so, a couple of the staff are not ambitious but they have followed, ö, ö an expert teacher courses and training. ...they have got more qualifications in their area of expertise. Other heads I have worked for, have been, ö, have lead schools well but have not been supportive heads, some have been quite dictatorial and... aggressive. (Cheryl)*

On the other hand, some head teachers have been dictatorial and aggressive, which, as the example 52 shows, has had a negative impact on teachers' confidence and, thus, on willingness and courage to take risks and bring their own ideas forth. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 88) describe, in poor conditions of high fear and low support, teachers cannot or are not willing to invest in each other or in themselves. On the contrary, in supportive climates that encourage growth and risk taking, the chances of teachers investing in their own development are considerably greater (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 88).

*(52) It will erase your confidence, if, if you feel that someone is not wishing to support you but someone is looking for faults or looking for errors. Then your confidence dips and if your confidence dips, you tend to just, to, um, to follow. Um, middle ground and um, and of what is acceptable as a teacher. And you won't take risks. (Cheryl)*

### **7.1.5. Collegial support and collaboration with other teachers**

Alongside the strong influence of a head teacher, there are also other relationships within a school, that teachers claim to be significant for them. Martha estimates in the example 53 below that the collegial support and collaboration with other teachers has been very valuable in her work and her professional development. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 102) argue, teachers learn more and improve more if they are able to work, plan and make decisions with their colleagues. They claim that there is a biological basis of the importance of good quality relationships in maintaining a sense of positive identity, well-being and effectiveness in daily work and lives. In other words, we are wired to connect (Day and Gu 2014: 9). ” For teachers, social relationships and networks in and between workplaces bring intellectual, spiritual and emotional resources which they can use to enhance their collective efficacy and shared beliefs of professional control, influence and responsibility and, ultimately, improve the achievement of their students” (Goddard 2002, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 11).

*(53) With other teachers, in my first school, we actually did our lesson plans together. So once a week, we planned together for the next week. And I was in a senior management team and I worked with the head, the deputy and other teachers at school. So once a week, more than that, twice a week, we would discuss all the school issues. And I also had a good relationship with the teaching assistants. (Martha)*

Working with different people has been significant also for Cheryl. When I requested what has supported her development as a teacher, she replied:

*(54) Just working with different people. --- I think it is other teachers, going to other schools. Changing schools, seeing different philosophies and different schools. (Cheryl)*

The teachers participating in this study have been working in several different schools during their career, which can be rather unique experiences. As the following example reveals, especially in regards of social relations, teamwork and collegial support schools vary significantly from each other.

*(55) There are differences, I would say that small school is harder, because you don't have the support and there is a lot to do for each person. it's nice working in a small school, though. (Kathy)*

Furthermore, it is a significant matter that teachers share knowledge and teach each other new things. When I asked Cheryl, where she gets inspiration from and how she learns new things, she replied in the following manner:

*(56) From other people. there's sometimes a bit of luck that there, that a member of staff is particularly interested in something. So, um, at this particular school, there is a member of staff who is particularly interested in Math's. And so, some of the Math's initiatives that he's brought in are quite different. And then there is a teacher in year six who adores ICT. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl also estimates, as the example 57 shows, that mentoring would have helped, especially in the beginning of her career to develop as a teacher. She argues that there should be more mentoring during the studies already, and working alongside another teacher should be a common practice during the first years of teaching. A study of primary and secondary school teachers in New Zealand reveals that a key factor in enjoyment and retention in a teacher's work was a support from experienced colleagues (Day and Gu

2014: 77-78). As Day and Gu describe, many other studies have noted that the level of support from leadership and colleagues together with other workplace conditions are fundamental to the way teachers feel about their work, to their ability to promote pupils' learning and to their desire and commitment to their own development. Day and Du (2014: 88-89) report that recent European research on teachers found that the issues that had the strongest impact upon job satisfaction were "trust and fairness "in the workplace," the sense of community" and "meaning of work". Moreover, according to them, some researchers argue that a school culture plays a significant role in decisions to stay or leave teaching. Several studies prove that if a school protects the academic freedom of teachers and if they collaborately voice opposition where there is disagreement with education policies, teachers would be less likely to exit the profession (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 7-8).

*(57) I don't think college prepares you very well. I think it's too general. And I do think that for a job like teaching, I think, uhm, far more, uhm, mentoring and I think, I think that students should do a psychological degree to understand why people behave the way they do, the basic degree about understanding the mind, about understanding learning styles and understanding skills and behavioral, behavioral technics, I think they should do a basic degree on all that and I think they should do more mentoring and more working alongside another teacher, because I felt that the college doesn't tell us how to do things, the National Curriculum tells us what to do but how to do it, I don't think college really helped me at all. (Cheryl)*

However, as argued in the example 57 above, Cheryl finds working with other people and collegial support extremely significant for herself. She argues that mentoring could be valuable in the sense of teacher development. As the example 58 shows, according to her, mentoring should continue long enough in the first teaching years. She criticizes the current system in which a teacher is rather isolated in her or his own class. She also argues that teachers should be able to go back to college to find out more about things they find challenging. She is kind of suggesting that teacher education should continue after a teacher has gained some teaching experience.

*(58) I think there should be more mentoring. Because it can be quite isolating, you go into your room by yourself. Now they do teaching practices where you know, the students teach and somebody observes it. But I think that should be full year, and more time for reflection and more time to, you know, if you have that first year, as a mentoring year when I need to work alongside. You could then go off and things that you don't understand, you could go back to college and find out more. (Cheryl)*

Reflection is usually understood as an individual learning process, which helps a teacher to understand her own work. However, as the following example shows, Cheryl finds that also reflection is something that happens with other people. It is very informal and happens all the time. She finds that it is important to discuss issues with many different people with both similar and opposite views as herself.

*(59) I do a lot of reflection. It's when you have, (a long pause) I think sometimes just talking to other teachers, I think, ö, just talking to other teachers that how they view things and how they do things, I think, gives you ideas for reflection. And whether it would be talking to other teachers who have similar interests to you or whether it would be talking to teachers who are working with the same age range or working with other teachers who, um, have special needs as their specialism. Or whether it would be talking to other teachers who have completely opposite views to you. (Cheryl)*

All in all, teachers in this study value collaboration and estimate it to be one of the most essential issues in their development. Also in school development studies this idea has been supported study after study: collaborative schools are better than individualistic ones and teachers who work in a collaborative culture tend to perform better than teachers who work alone (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 112). Thus, school cultures, and especially school leaders, have a vital positive or negative impact on conditions that promote teachers' commitment and development (Day and Gu 2014: 91-92).

## **7.2. Teachers' professional development as an individual and inner learning process**

This chapter discusses the issues in teachers' lives that they mention as significant in their individual, professional growth. The issues that the teachers mentioned as meaningful in their personal lives outside school were: travelling and working abroad, becoming a parent and, furthermore, having strong personal values as well as taking care of their own well-being. Moreover, an individual relation and attitude towards learning will be discussed. For example, the motivation and will to study and learn will be analyzed as well as the issues that have an either positive or negative influence on that. Since teaching is not only cognitive and intellectual practice but also a social and emotional one, teachers should be able to pay attention not only to their continuous professional development but also to their own personal development. "It is through professional and personal development that teachers build character, maturity and other virtues in themselves and others, making their

schools into moral communities” (Hargreaves 2003: 48). Thus, in professional development of teachers, attention must be paid also on the processes of informal learning.

### 7.2.1. The importance of own time and space

Firstly, teachers find their own free time and the time spent in an enjoyable way very significant for them also professionally. It promotes creativity and makes their work-life balance better. For example, in the example 60, Kathy estimates that her year spent travelling around the world has been meaningful for her as a person and, moreover, as a professional. When I asked, if there is anything in her personal life that has been significant for her as a teacher, she answered without any hesitation in the following manner:

*(60) I took a year out to do travelling for a year, um, around the world. We were travelling for a year so that was good. (Kathy)*

Also Martha got new experiences and ideas by teaching abroad.

*(61) I decided, actually just when it was all changing in 1988, I decided to do something new. And I just, just to get new experiences in teaching. And I went to teach in Canada, I did an exchange. I went to teach in Calgary and one Canadian teacher came to teach in Cambridge and we exchanged houses. For one year. And that was valuable. In Canada the teacher's role was very clearly defined. I wanted to do some group work and I asked the head teacher if I could do some groupwork and he promised. It was like week 2, lesson 3, this is what you teach. It was a valuable experience. For one week, I went into an Indian reservation and taught in the Indian school. That was very interesting. (Martha)*

In the example 62 Martha describes how she also visited a school in Germany for a couple of weeks and has recently been working among disabled children in Ukraine. She estimates that travelling and working abroad has widened her views, has made her more aware, for example, it has helped to question the norms she has grown up with. This is a significant capacity in all learning and development: the ability and will to view issues from new perspectives. Moreover, she has learned new skills to handle with different people. Martha finds these issues significant for her personal and professional development.

*(62) And I travelled a lot. And I often went to schools. I have a friend in Germany and I went to visit school in Germany. Just a couple of weeks. And going to Canada, and it did give an insight to me about what was going on. I picked a lot of things, I used to have a little notebook. There are lots of things I wrote down. --- My experiences, so that I have been able to travel and, you know, working in different*

*communities, like I have recently been to Ukraine to work for children, disabled children in Ukraine. For two years I have been out there, I went last summer and the summer before. And just seeing those children and their needs, it sort of made me aware of needs. Because when you are living in different places, like I was in Canada, you learn new skills to handle with people. They are very useful when you get back home. I think I have been more aware. I think I have been aware of many more things, because you tend to accept what you have grown up with, it has been the norm. And family life and expectations and opportunities. (Martha)*

In the previous example Martha estimates that her time spent in other schools in different countries has been valuable since it has made her aware of needs, as well as aware of many new things. This is the sort of global awareness that some researchers argue to be essential in today's world. For example, teachers need to interact with teachers in their own school and area, but also globally with colleagues in other countries (Hargreaves 2003). As Martha's experience illustrates, it can be significant to a teacher's personal and professional development, for it helps a teacher to make fresh, new decisions and choices both at work and in personal life, even in family life.

Also other breaks in a teacher's career are valuable for her or his development. For example, as the example 63 shows, the year spent on maternity leave was significant for Kathy, since after that she had energy and motivation to do her work again.

*(63) After that year, um, that had maternity leave, it was quite nice to have something else to think about than just the children. (Kathy)*

Moreover, Martha argues in the following example, that it is valuable to have your own time; having something else to do and think about outside work is important. One has to be able to relax and switch off.

*(64) I travelled a lot to switch off and I was always involved in my church. And I sang in choirs and I learned to play the guitar and I read. But I did travel a lot. Because I was single. (Martha)*

As the example 65 illustrates, since teachers' profession is demanding and it is constantly in mind, Martha finds it important that a teacher is able forget it, for example, during the holidays. However, teachers in other studies have described that if a person is too exhausted and has too much work to do, it can be difficult to find time to switch off (Galton and MacBeath 2008: 29).

*(65) I would say, I used to be constantly thinking about it. When I was shopping, oh,*

*I could do that. For me, it was a pleasure. But you know, it is always on your mind, it is essential that you switch off sometimes. You have to be completely away from it. For young teachers I always say, go away, do something different. So that you are fresh when you come back in the beginning of term. (Martha)*

In addition, as also Kathy`s comment below shows, it is a very significant feature in teachers` stories that their work and life is connected to each other.

*(66) So, it`s always there. Constantly there. (the work) ... And I like to have something else to think about. (than children and family) (Kathy)*

### **7.2.2. Values and significant life experiences**

The teachers emphasize the significance of personal values and experiences outside school in their career and their professional development. According to Kathy and Cheryl, becoming a mother has been a significant experience both personally and from the perspective of teaching. For example, as the example 67 shows, it makes it easier to understand what little children are like and what can be expected from them. Moreover, Kathy estimates that she is more patient and understands parents better now as she is a mother herself.

*(67) Obviously, you do grow and you change as a person, um, having children yourself makes you realize that children who come to school are only little... you expect a lot from them when they come to your classroom, but they are little people, you can`t expect too much from them. I have to remember that, and when they go home, they are just little people still. --- Becoming a mother has made me more patient, I guess. And to see things from parents` point of view, I guess. (Kathy)*

Cheryl estimates in the example below that becoming a mother has been the most significant matter in her life, and she claims that this experience affects also her work. For example, she is more capable of looking at things from children`s perspective.

*(68) I do think having my own children, I don`t know what you think but having my own children, I constantly stop and think, is this the thing I want for my own child? Regarding just silly things, um, how they sit, would I like my child to sit next to somebody or, would I like my child to have some choice. And when my older son got older and I heard him speak about his school and what he liked and what he doesn`t like, that has influenced how I am, and, also the type of teacher he has liked and not liked. And the reasons... I have calmed down a bit because of him and what he thinks. So, I think having my own children has changed the way. (Cheryl)*

Having own children is also an issue that gives inspiration and happiness. When I asked

Cheryl, what gives her joy and inspires her, she answered:

*(69) My children. (Cheryl)*

Also other strong, personal values are significant in a teacher's work. Martha is a single person and does not have children. Instead, as she describes in the example 70, for her the Christian faith has been important. For her, being a teacher is a strong vocation and she desires to serve her pupils. She has been a very committed teacher. Several research studies note that moral purposes and ethical values provide intellectual, spiritual and emotional strengths, which help a teacher to be committed and resilient (Day and Gu 2014: 8). As Day and Gu describe, the sense of vocation, the inner calling to teach and commitment to serve distinguishes teaching from many other professions. They are also integral in enabling teachers to continue to be committed and maintain courage when the contexts of teaching are characterized by centrally monitored and controlled performance agendas and initiatives (Day and Gu 2014: 65). Day and Gu report that In the VITAE study in England most of the 300 teachers reported an initial strong calling to teach and continued enjoyment of working with children, which supports the argument that despite the challenges that English teachers face, their commitment and vocation makes them resilient. A recent teacher development study also reveals that embodied in teachers' vocational commitment was a strong desire for continuing professional learning and development (Gu and Li 2013, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 62).

*(70) Underlining all this is my strong faith as a Christian. And I have seen my teaching as a vocation, as a wanting to serve people. I see that very strongly. I have that longing to serve. To share my life really, to give what I can to people. And enable them to grow into fullness. --- Because I'm a Christian, it was a calling to become a teacher, not just a job. I had a longing to education. (Martha)*

Moreover, Martha estimates in the example below that taking care of herself and her own life is significant so that she as a person has something to offer to young people.

*(71) My being whole as a person, all rounded and well educated and well-travelled and enjoying learning, I see that as part of my job in giving to young children. (Martha)*

Martha's comment summarizes the main issues in a teacher's personal and individual growth and their significance in a teacher's everyday practice. A teacher's professional

identity is argued to consist of six elements: values, commitment, self-efficacy, emotions, knowledge and beliefs and micro-politics (Hong 2010 cited in Day and Gu 2014: 67). Thus, these psychological aspects, together with contextual issues, play an important part in teachers' work. As Day and Gu (2014: 35, 31) claim, teachers' emotional well-being can influence the energy they bring to their teaching, their motivation, commitment and care. As a result, this is likely to impact either positively or negatively on motivation, learning and behavior of their pupils. Day and Gu argue that without a strong sense of their own well-being teachers will find it difficult to increase the well-being of their students. Hargreaves (cited in Day and Gu 2014: 34) suggests that effective teaching demands the engagement of the head (the intellect), the hand (the pedagogical skills) and the heart (values, beliefs and emotions). He describes that these together make up "the person in the professional". Thus, teachers need to sustain strong emotional energy in order to be able to be effective and developing professionals. However, although there is a growing interest and understanding considering emotions in teachers' work, policies for promoting teacher quality, development and renewal rarely address the emotional aspects of their work (Day and Gu 2014: 34).

As this present study suggests, teachers have strong personal values and a lot of knowledge of good practice. However, their own ideas are not appreciated as they should be, on the contrary, they are unrecognized and silenced by the authoritarian discourse that emphasizes objective, academic and technical knowledge. That, arguably, has impacts on motivation and will to develop one's work. When considering a teacher's learning and development as an individual learning process and from then perspective of developing his or her own theory, the strict national curriculum, as well as other controlling issues, such as outside advisors and national tests, restrict a teacher's individual development. A teacher's own thinking is linked to practice, experiences, professional knowledge and values that she or he appreciates. For example, as can be seen in the example 72, Cheryl thinks that social skills are more important than academic skills. What is more, she argues that teachers and other school members should ask children what they are interested in. Thus, the practice in which someone outside school makes decisions about school issues ignores both teachers as professionals and children as learners.

*(72) Deep down I think that going to school is, seventy percent of it is for social reasons, to learn how to co-operate, to get on, to learn how to communicate with other people, to learn how to conform... and the actual academic, it is about thirty percent. So possibly, this keeping on check quite rigorously isn't in line with what I*

*think why we are there. --- Younger children have better curriculum. There doesn't seem to be any cohesion to it (Punctuation). Any purpose behind it, why? Why we have got to learn about Victorians? I would like to learn, to ask children, what you want to learn about? (Cheryl)*

As the examples 72, 73 and 74 show, teachers would like to teach in a more child-centered way. However, as they argue, it is not possible today because of the curriculum.

*(73) We could ask the children what their interests are and still find use for those skills. I can't do that because the curriculum says that year three we do Victorians...the national curriculum gives the range of topics and you can choose from them. (Cheryl)*

*(74) In child-centered learning the starting point was the children, what they knew already and we built onto that. So, they certainly were involved in the planning process. (Martha)*

Moreover, as the example 75 illustrates, Cheryl argues that it is the most important at school that children are happy, they are educated to become good citizens and they learn how to learn and, moreover, they get interested in learning. These are her values in teaching.

*(75) School is about finding out together. --- And it's funny, who is a good teacher. I would say a good teacher is someone who inspires. When Isak (my son) was in reception, and I taught reception so I knew the standard he should be up to when they left reception and Isak was far, far below what he should be. But, he had had a lovely reception year. He had made friends, he had had exciting experiences, he enjoyed going and I thought that the year was successful. And I thought that teacher is a good teacher because my son has been happy. He has been valued as himself. I just think that a successful teacher is somebody who is just inspired and interest who really has, has really got the children wanting to learn more and wanting to improve. Because later in life, it just has to be inside, you have got to have self-motivation. And I think as a teacher it's my duty to make sure that the people who come through my classrooms are good people, that can see that being unkind to one another is not acceptable. But that learning is fun, it's exciting, um. -- Deep down I think that going to school, in my opinion, I think that seventy percent of it is for social reasons. To get on, to learn... (Cheryl)*

However, as argued above, teachers cannot teach according to their own values. Cheryl thinks, it was easier when she was teaching in reception class, which is for younger children. As she argues in the following example, that is because their curriculum was more flexible.

*(76) It seemed easy to do, in the younger years, when you could, there was far more*

*flexibility about going with what they wanted. (Cheryl)*

### **7.2.3. Motivation and will to develop**

This section will discuss teachers' will and motivation to develop and learn and what issues increase or restrict it. According to the teachers in this study, the need to learn derives, for example, from a teacher's understanding of the changing world and the need for life-long learning. As argued in chapter five, research in the field support the importance of engaging in lifelong learning in order to sustain teachers' commitment to learning (Day and Gu 2010: 28). Cheryl argues that the will to change and an adaptive mind are essential both for students and teachers in this postmodern world. Moreover, as she claims in the example 77 below, her own attitude in learning has an influence on pupils' attitude on learning.

*(77) Children are delightful that if you show them that you want to learn from them, show your excitement, they get excited. And you show them that you are interested in finding out, finding out about what surrounds you. (Cheryl)*

What is more, as can be seen in the examples 77 and 78, Cheryl is very committed to support the learning needs of her pupils and their future needs. As Day and Gu (2014: 60) note, there is a significant amount of evidence which indicates that commitment to children's learning functions as a strong internal drive in teacher development over time.

*(78) And when they go out into the world, you know, a job for life is not likely any more... so you got to have more active mind and just open, to keep on learning. Like myself, I was just editing a video before I came here and I thought I can't, it's too hard. But I just have to, the world is so different nowadays. So, we just got to make children want to learn and not just stay still. --- I myself, I have to move on and learn new things, because otherwise you are not giving children the best experiences. If I can't edit a video, you know, and I can't show children how to create a forum on a, on a school website, if I can't show children how to set a blog, I'm not giving them a full education... Some of the skills I can...(unclear), are updated now. As teachers we just need to change quite quickly in order to show them this is possible. --- The children coming through our schools are our future. And if we don't change and develop, we can't help them in the world they go to. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl personally thinks that she learns best by doing things and reflecting upon it. As argued in chapter five, reflection, action research and inquiry are nowadays seen as an integral part of teachers' work and development on a continuing basis. As the example 79 shows, Cheryl estimates that practice, together with reflection, has taught her more than

studying in the college.

*(79) So, I think that possibly in the early days, I was very very naive and I think, um, that some children learn despite you being there, they will learn because they will. And I think that happened an awful lot in my early days. Just understanding the different, even just reading, the different ways a child can pick up words, whether it would be phonetics, whether it would be the look of the words... understanding all of those, I don't think college really showed me. --- But whether college did teach me but I wasn't ready to take it on board, whether it is my personality that I need to, possibly I am a learner... (unclear. Meaning: learn by doing) so I need to do it. (Cheryl)*

The teachers see that learning and studying new things is important as long as it supports practice and good learning of children. In other words, as described in chapter five and in the example 79 above, teachers' need to learn new things derives from practice and, therefore, it is essential that the range and quality of learning opportunities relate to their pedagogical and subject learning needs (Day and Gu 2010: 29). As the examples 80 and 81 show, teacher development seems to be rather practice-oriented and based on realistic facts about the classroom realities and time constrains.

*(80) I wish I had better resources, am, in an ideal world, you know how you want your lessons to be but you don't have the equipment, you know, it's very, games, fun activities but it takes time to make all those resources. Or to buy them you need money and place there to do that. So, it's not always as you want it to be. You just have to make the most of the resources you've got. And with the time you've got. (Kathy)*

*(81) I really really would like to learn more about cognitive abilities. Like why, why can some children learn and why can't some. And what is it? Yes, it would be studying. But, I think I might be quite a lazy person so that I manage to go to work full-time, I manage to come home and give my children some attention. I manage to see friends and family occasionally. I don't have any more hours in the day. And I would like to sleep (laughs). (Cheryl)*

However, teachers try to find time to study the issues they really find important and that they are interested in. As the example 82 illustrates, Cheryl, for example, reads a lot and would also like to study if they had time. She describes that reading is significant for her development by giving both practical ideas and ideas for reflection. Moreover, reading seems to be a social activity, too, since teachers share knowledge and ideas of good literature when they meet each other.

*(82) I read a lot of books about special needs. And it helps me a lot. It gives me*

*practical ideas and it gives me ideas for reflection. Often you will read when someone has mentioned something on a course or sometimes when you meet other people who are doing special needs and they will mention something. Or occasionally, I get a magazine, occasionally when I am eating breakfast, I read that. (Cheryl)*

At its best, as claimed in chapter five, a teacher's professional learning is self-motivated and self-regulated and consists of both intellectual and emotional processes (Day and Gu 2010: 28). Success is more likely when we are, in Robinson's (2009) terms "in our element", which means that we are engaged in something that are important to us, about which we are intensely passionate and in which we are gifted at. As can be seen in the example 83, Cheryl is willing to develop herself and her teaching when it supports her own interests and needs. Some researchers divide teachers' motivation into two categories: intrinsic motivation, firstly, is doing something since it is inherently interesting and enjoyable, "an inherent tendency to seek our novelty and challenges, to extent and exercise one's capacities, to explore and to learn." (Ryan and Deci 2000a, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 66-67) In contrast, extrinsic motivation comes from a need to attain a separate outcome (Ryan and Deci 2000b; cited in Day and Gu 2014: 67). For example, as the example 83 shows, teachers cannot always choose what they study. Extrinsic motivation is needed when they have to develop in the areas that are important but that do not interest them personally.

*(83) There is an element of me that wants to...I would love to do a master's in special needs or a master's in the cognitive abilities of a child's brain. But I'm not really that keen in finding out, a great deal about IT but I have to. And I am responsible to because I'm letting the children down if I don't. (Cheryl)*

Martha argues in the example 84 below that the demands of the national curriculum forced her to participate on courses she was not interested in or that did not help her personally to develop as a teacher. Moreover, she felt that teachers were on courses all the time, which was exhausting. She also describes in the example 84 that before the national curriculum learning and studying had been for her personal development and was, therefore, motivated by intrinsic motivation. After the national curriculum teachers had to attend courses they did not find useful or interesting, which was, as Martha describes, a big change.

*(84) We constantly were on courses when the new curriculum came in from the government. (after the national curriculum was launched) we had to go for endless courses. It wasn't that I wanted to go but I needed to go. --- Before that the studying was for my personal development, what I wanted to know personally. Sometimes I*

*would do a workshop on a Saturday, I would go to the local college. Maybe I would learn French, I would go to study about the local history into the museum, or I would go, if they put on a craft day, I would go so that I can pass on those skills to the children. They were more for my personal development. Yea, I often did things like that. And often visited places in the holidays. So, if I wanted to learn about a particular thing, I would go to museum for instance. It was more to my personal development whereas after the national curriculum it was I got to know this so that I'm able to teach this. That changed, that was a big change. I read books, too, but I am a practical learner, that's my learning style. (Martha)*

Nowadays teachers in England also feel a pressure to do more academic studying, as can be seen in the following example:

*(85) But it's coming in now that people even in a small primary school like mine, need to do master's (degree). So, my head teacher told me now that I need to start my master's degree, because, um, because of my role as regarding special needs. I'm considered a senior person in the school and it is considered if you are a member of a senior team, you have to have master's. And if I don't have it, then they can, not demote me, but take the special needs as a responsibility of me and give me, say, PE or history and I would have to develop my specialism for that. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl is enthusiastic about her job and hard-working and, in addition, she voluntarily works in her free-time. In the example 86 below, Kathy describes her life and work in the same manner.

*(86) When he has gone to bed, you know, you do start to think about your work and do the planning side of it, even on the weeks, that, am, that I'm not at work. (Kathy)*

However challenging teachers' work seems to be, as the example 87 shows, the teachers interviewed in this study would not like to change jobs. They would not like to do anything else. When I asked it, they answered rapidly: this is what they want to do.

*(87) I would go back to teaching if I could. I do love interaction and seeing children develop. (Martha)*

Moreover, although the interviewed teachers talked about restrictions in their work, they were, on the whole, rather used to its negative aspects and mostly satisfied with it. As the following example shows, Kathy, for example, would not do anything radically different, although she would get a chance to it.

*(88) "No, I wouldn't do anything radically different, no." (Kathy)*

#### 7.2.4. Time and workload

Teachers in this study and, as was argued in chapter four, many teachers in England are struggling with time. This question was shortly dealt with earlier in this chapter. However, in this section, the question of work-life balance in a teacher's personal life and its relation to teacher development will be discussed more deeply. Moreover, the question of teachers' workload and its impact on teachers' professional and personal development will be analyzed.

As can be seen in the example 89 below, Cheryl, since she is working full time and has a family, is struggling with time. She has the feeling that she does not have a good work-life balance. For example, she feels guilty since she has to work in the evenings and, in addition, during the holidays. She feels that she neglects her family, especially her older son.

*(89) As a mum, you always feel guilty, don't you. You know, I should really, I should be doing this...and I feel, very um, very uncomfortable, because in the evenings, you know, I come home, we eat as a family, which is lovely, then, I want to have some time with Noah, you know, we play together, but when I come downstairs, I rarely play with my older son, you know, we could play card game, we could play monopoly or, you know, we could do lots of things, but I don't. I get my laptop up and I start my work. So, I feel I neglect him. But I still think I'm lucky because I have the holidays that other working mums don't have. --- I love my job. But I would like to have better balance, I would like to have more family time and less working time. But I still have the holidays so I'm fooling myself if I say it's not a good balance. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl describes in the example 90 that she is working also during the holidays and in the evenings. That is, according to several studies, common among teachers in England (Galton and MacBeath 2008).

*(90) I'll work in the evenings. To catch up with the planning (laughs). (Cheryl)*

When I asked, if the work and family is enough, Cheryl mentions other things, that used to be important to her. However, as she describes in the example 91 below, she does not have time to them at the moment. That is not a positive issue. As was discussed earlier, teachers need to be able to switch off and do something outside work that helps to charge their batteries (Galton and Macbeath 2008: 29).

*(91) I used to, uh, I used to do quite a lot of artwork, and, äm, I like art galleries, I like sculptures, there is a beautiful sculpture park in Yorkshire. When we go holidaying with our children, we go camping and ... I said to Dave, when I retire and when children are grown up, we'll go to art galleries again. (Cheryl)*

What is more, as the example 92 reveals, teachers are concerned how the challenges of time and the continuous pressure affect their pupils at school. They wish that schooldays were more relaxed, although they know that they would not reach the academic targets then. However, teachers believe that children would reach other important targets if there was not that pressure all the time.

*(92) I would like that we would have more time and freedom at school, to, to relax a bit, to slow down. But they wouldn't then, possibly they wouldn't reach the targets they have to reach then. I don't think they would reach the academic targets but they would reach the targets of satisfaction that they possibly are not reaching now. (Cheryl)*

As many research findings have proved, external initiatives and pressure impact negatively on teachers' commitment and capacity to teach to their best (Day and Gu 2010: 132). Since teachers have too many duties during their school days and weeks, there is arguably not enough time to reflection. There are significant differences between countries how the teachers' need to reflect their work is taken into consideration. In many parts of Canada, for example, teacher inquiry is a priority and reflection is seen as integral part of teacher development (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 100-101). In Finland, teachers spend less of their time teaching than teachers in most other nations. As Hargreaves and Fullan describe, in England, on the contrary, teachers have a long day at school and, in addition, they have other tasks, such as planning and evaluating, that take a lot of time. They argue that there is not much opportunity to reflect or inquire into and adjust your practice over time. Moreover, if you are hostage to test results, you will not think enough outside the box in ways that would help you to develop your own practice or the whole child. Hargreaves claims (2003: 82) that when teachers have their time "stolen from them", one of the most precious things they lose is the time to learn, think and reflect. They do not have enough time to discuss their ideas with their colleagues, which teachers find extremely valuable for their development. What is more, as teachers in this study describe, they cannot find time to catch up with their reading that would interest them or would develop them professionally. The teachers emphasize the importance of charging batteries but they barely have time or energy to do that either. Moreover, external initiatives and pressure

impact negatively on teachers' commitment and capacity to teach to their best (Day and Gu 2010: 132). The teachers in this study were longing to have ownership of their professional development but, on the contrary, they felt the pressure of taking courses that someone else regarded as relevant and important (Hargreaves 2003: 83).

What is more, as Martha describes in the example 93 below, many teachers are exhausted, some even have to quit teaching due to the increased stress and burnout (Galton and MacBeath 2008, Hargreaves 2003: 5-6).

*(93) Teachers are exhausted, exhausted at the moment. Because of the restless nature of children, because of the paper-work, because of the demand of courses. You know, most teachers work every evening and at the weekend. And even in holidays, even in the six-week- holiday in the summer most teachers work the first ten days and the last ten days so that they get ready for the school term. (Martha)*

For example, as the example 94 shows, Cheryl finds it exhausting to develop all the time and she really seems to be struggling with the pressures of change, part of which she finds essential in order to be able to educate children for the future. She seems to be a very responsible person and committed. However, as Hargreaves (2003) points out, how can a teacher who is exhausted and cannot be creative in her or his own work, educate children to be creative and innovative.

*(94) I struggle, I struggle that to... I am forty-four, I've had enough. I don't want anything more. My brains are full, thank you. (Cheryl)*

Cheryl describes that she does not want to study or have any significant changes in her work, mainly because, according to her, work is already very demanding and she does not want any extra work to do. As can be seen in the example 95, also Kathy has the same feeling. What is more, as both Kathy and Cheryl claim in the examples 95 and 96, teachers' work is constantly changing. Thus, they think that there should not be the need and pressure to change all the time, because you have to change anyway.

*(95) Every year is different. You can't do what you have done last year. So, you are starting from scratch all the time. --- No, not at the moment, am, because as I said, job always changes anyway so it keeps me going and I don't get bored and I don't want any extra work to do, um, at the moment. (Kathy)*

*(96) Trends move very quickly on education. The multitude of different research is going on, isn't it at any one time ...and each government likes to pick out what they*

*see as trendy and that just vary depending on the who the secretary state for education is. So, the trends move very quickly now on education. When the national curriculum came out, we had this particular version, within two years it was revised, we had another revised version. And since then we have had at least, at least another two. The mass curriculum has been revised twice during the last for years. (Cheryl)*

Kathy argues in the following example that teachers cannot change all the time:

*(97) There is something to be said that you can't keep moving forward all the time because you never grasp or improve what you started. But, um, unfortunately, it does keeps changing (laughing). --- I think it doesn't necessarily make you any better (Changing all the time). There are some teachers that are very good teachers that teach the same year and year out and somehow get away with it. Possibly because they are good teachers and ultimately do good teaching and no one is going to question any paperwork. (Kathy)*

On the whole, according to the teachers interviewed in this study, teaching as a profession in England has changed quite significantly during the last two or three decades. As Cheryl describes in the example 98 below, before teaching used to be more practice-oriented whereas nowadays the analysis of practice, planning, paperwork and monitoring seem to be more central and it takes a large proportion of teachers' time.

*(98) Yes, there's far more, aa, analysis of practice, so it is not, when I first started, you delivered your curriculum and you taught children and teaching children was the all-consuming role. Teaching children was it and that's where most of your time went. Now, a large proportion of our time and our training and our staff development is, is, down to analyzing statistics, um, analyzing our own teaching, a lot of monitoring, um, um, analyzing planning and target setting. --- In the analysis, we are analyzing quite a bit of children's learning, as well as your own practice. --- When I first started teaching, you just did it. You just taught. And if the children didn't progress a great deal or if, ö, if you weren't a particularly successful teacher, there was no monitoring really of it, there was no, um, questioning. But now, we question our own practice a lot, we question... It's very time-consuming. (Cheryl)*

It is significant for teacher development that teachers analyze and reflect on their teaching and practice. However, according to teachers, there is too much of analyzing, paperwork and reflection. As the example 99 shows, it is too time-consuming and makes teachers exhausted. What is more, as argued earlier in chapter seven, teachers feel that reflection is not always used to inform practice but mostly, unfortunately, to control, criticize and misjudge. Moreover, Cheryl argues in the example 99 below that analyzing should concentrate on the whole school as an organization, not on an individual teacher, and it should take the cohorts of a school into consideration. Moreover, as she puts it, the

government targets should be questioned every now and then.

*(99) It would be good, if it didn't take such a large proportion of time. And if it was used to inform the practice and not to, um, in some schools, um, it can be used to, um, to misjudge people. To criticize. But it should be used to inform and develop teachers and good practice and develop teachers. And I really think that it should be used as a whole school development rather than in, as an individual education. Because as I said it doesn't take into consideration the cohorts, you know, at and, um, one teacher possible doesn't reach the targets and the talk is why not. We don't really ask if the Government targets are the right standard, is it too sterile. Um, I don't think it, I think that it should inform targets, inform practice, not... (Cheryl)*

As Martha describes in the example 100, during the last two or three decades teachers' occupation and their status has changed in many different ways in England. Martha argues that teachers are not as independent as they used to be, they do not have so much status and there are more and more challenging behavior problems at school. It can be argued that the challenging profession of teaching has become even more challenging.

*(100) In the early days, we were quite independent. And we did our own planning. So, that if you had an idea, so, well, as a whole school we would say that this is the topic, this is what, so we knew which areas we are going to cover. But how you interpreted that and how you did within that, was up to you as an individual. And you couldn't do whole class teaching effectively, you have to divide them to groups. No I do not think teachers are appreciated. I think teachers were more,... before they had a status within the community. Certainly, that's been totally eroded whereas today. And one of the biggest changes I have seen, I still go to teach once a week to do voluntary teaching. I think the biggest change I have seen in schools is children's behavior. What I found the most difficult, was the way children's behavior (?) has changed. Whereas you were able to control children quite easily. Now, when I go to schools, children are restless, they call out a lot in the classroom. aa, it's not easy to manage. And that, for me, has been the most difficult issue to handle. Teachers got to find strategies to engage their concentration. (Martha)*

## 8. CONCLUSION

The teachers in this study describe how the curriculum changes, constant reforms, unrealistic expectations and national tests have a profound impact on their practice. For example, the increasing pressures of accountability are taking teachers away from what they consider to be a good way of teaching and learning. According to Brooks (2016: 2), these feelings are common among teachers in England today. It can be claimed that there is a teaching recruitment and retention crisis at the moment in England since, for example, four out of ten teachers leave the profession during their first year (The Telegraph 2015, cited in Brooks 2016: 6). Galton and MacBeath (2008: 2) use the term the "intensification" of teachers' work, which means that, according to teachers, time-consuming initiatives control performance rather than increase pupils' good learning and development. In England, the Education Reform Act was introduced in 1988. One part of it was the national curriculum, which according to the teachers in this study, as well as other similar studies, has had significant, mostly negative, impacts on teachers' work and profession. Ball (1993, cited in Brooks 2016: 23) argues that the statement of the national curriculum as well as national testing have direct and indirect influences on teachers' pedagogical decision making, which means that the practice of teaching and learning becomes more and more standardized and controlled. According to teachers, they do not have the creativity and freedom they had before the national curriculum. Teachers feel frustrated and deprofessionalized and, moreover, exhausted. Their workload is too heavy, which, as teachers in this study describe, forces them either to work part-time or to limit their personal life so that they can cope with stress and the shortage of time. Moreover, the teachers describe that their relationships with students, colleagues, family members and even friends suffer when they do not have time and energy for personal contacts. This, arguably, has a negative impact on both teachers' and students' personal well-being.

Furthermore, in England it is not only the structure of the curriculum but also the policy technologies behind it that affect teachers' work. The curriculum is a policy technology used by governments to control and influence school practices. Moreover, this control requires inspection and assessment regimes for reinforcement (Isaacs 2014, cited in Brooks 2016: 23). Both the national curriculum and the other policy technologies around it limit and guide teachers' work and thinking. Brooks argues that the curriculum makes up teachers. However, as Brooks claims and as can be seen in this study, teachers and schools

can in some respect resist or contest this view. How a school responds and interprets education policy influences the work of individual teachers (Brooks 2016: 25). In this study this can be seen in the cases where a head teacher has strong own philosophies, which a school and teachers follow, ignoring or resisting irrelevant parts of the national curriculum and outside expectations. On the contrary, if a school does not support individual decision-making of its members, the national curriculum, national testing, outside control and pressure have significant effects on teachers' work and, what is more, their well-being. It, for example, does not leave enough time to analyze or reflect on their practice. These are significant issues that restrict teacher development and, therefore, they should be taken into account in educational decision-making in England today and in the future. As Bridges and Searle (2011, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 30) asked in their report: "Do we want our children to be taught by educators who are fresh, energetic and focused on their needs? Do we want to keep our good teachers in the work that they say they love, or do we want to watch them burn out and walk away?" Day (2004) argues that education policy in England has had significant effects on the work of individual schools and individual teachers. However, there are similar concerns considering teachers' work and profession around the globe (Ball 2012, Galton and MacBeath 2008).

This study of primary school teachers' professional development reveals and is in line with other teacher development studies in claiming that teacher identity is not static but can change and is context sensitive. This means that in order to understand teachers one should be able to increase understanding about the contexts teachers work in (Brooks 2016: 6). For example, school contexts have a significant part to play in shaping teacher identity and development (Brooks 2016: 20, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 20). This study, using the semi-structured biographical method, has increased understanding of the culture of teaching, in other words, the situational and social circumstances where teachers' work is carried out. Teachers in this study experience that political decisions, outside expectations and pressure that come either from outsiders or from a head teacher and colleagues, strongly affect their work every day and, moreover, limit their role in it. Unfortunately, according to this study, as well as several other studies in the field, in most arguments about school change and reform plans, teachers are seen as objects of reform, which undermines a view of teachers as professionals who have special expertise and autonomy over their profession (Brooks 2016: 21). Moreover, as Brooks argues, it creates an idea of a teacher as a technician whose practice can be easily and, as teachers argue, continuously, changed. Teachers' interviews in this study, as well as in other studies, note also that

whatever own admirable goals and values teachers have in teaching, they constantly have to neglect them and concentrate on other people's goals and expectations (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 36). Teachers regularly feel that they have no voice. In addition, they feel overloaded, exhausted, stressed and pulled in different directions. Moreover, especially when the pressure was the hardest in the 1990s, they felt isolated, because they did not have time or energy to communicate and co-operate with students and colleagues. I felt exhausted when I listened to the teachers. It is alarming how rigorously they are struggling with pressures that are enormous and often unfair. Moreover, there is always more to do, the work never ends. Lucky teachers have leaders who support them. Unlucky ones have leaders who are indifferent, controlling, negative or unfair in their criticism (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 30).

On the other hand, this study clearly illustrates that collaboration and co-operation with colleagues and other school members is significant also in a positive sense in teacher development. Hargreaves (2003: 20) argues that if teachers want to make progress as professionals, they have to learn to trust and value colleagues who are different from them as well as the ones who are more similar. Teamwork, learning from people who are different and sharing knowledge are the issues the teachers in this study mentioned as especially significant in their own development, and today these issues are seen essential for any change and development in schools and in society. The present study reveals also, that the role of a head teacher is rather important in English schools, both in a negative and positive sense. According to this study, a supportive head teacher with a strong own philosophy can in some regard protect teachers from overload and burnout resulting from unrealistic outside expectations. On the other hand, a head teacher can make things worse from teachers' perspective by controlling, blaming or criticizing teachers, who already are under significant pressures from other directions and suffer from heavy workload. On the whole, however, according to teacher research, there is more interaction and collaboration in schools today than in the past (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 42-45). In some places, experienced teachers are being used as mentors. Moreover, as Hargreaves and Fullan suggest, there are more and more studies, as well as awareness about the role of the leadership and school culture in teacher development. They argue that, at the moment, teaching is coming out of the shadows again and there is more recognition and support for teachers. Moreover, as teachers in this study note, the situation is not as bad as it used to be. For example, policy makers and teachers' associations are becoming increasingly aware of the problems and are aiming to retain the commitment and quality of teachers

(Day and Gu 2014: Introduction)

The three things that make people happy are "purposes", "power" and "relationships" (Hargreaves and Shirley 2009: 73). This means, according to Hargreaves and Shirley, that teachers feel confident and have positive emotions when they have clear, focused and achievable purposes that belong to them. Secondly, they feel happy when they are in control of their own work lives and, lastly, when they develop and achieve purposes in positive relationships with colleagues and other people. According to this study, working conditions at the moment in England do not support teachers' emotional well-being and happiness. Especially the importance of the two first elements, purpose and power, is ignored, which causes unhappiness among teachers and pupils. As Day and Gu (2014: 31) describe: "Without a strong sense of their own well-being teachers will find it difficult to promote the well-being of their pupils. Moreover, in the achievement of success, well-being arguably plays an important part."

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009: 71-72, 2012) suggest in their two books on educational change that teachers' profession should be seen in a new way as an equal and interactive partnership among the people, profession and their government. They argue that change should happen through democracy and professionalism rather than through bureaucracy and the market. Hargreaves and Shirley continue: "This means a fundamental shift in teachers' professionalism that restores greater autonomy from government and introduces more openness to and engagement with parents and communities." Research into successful primary and secondary schools (Day et al. 2000, Leithwood and Seashore Louis 2012, cited in Day and Gu 2014: 33) has revealed that they actually achieve success by paying attention to both academic and "well-being" needs of children. This is the message the teachers also in this study wanted to bring fourth.

Moreover, as teachers' profession is inspected from the contextual perspective, taking political and cultural issues and restrictions into account, one can notice that teachers' work and life is filled with different emotions, both negative and positive. Unfortunately, negative emotions, such as, for example, anger, frustration, feelings of stress and exhaust, are more dominant when teachers describe the contextual issues that restrict and control their work. Typical negative phrases teachers use in this present study are: "pressure", "struggle", "loss of professionalism", "loss of control", "work-load". Moreover, teachers refer to positive issues, such as creativity, spontaneity, fun, values and interaction as if they

were lost. This is typical language in contemporary English teacher research, which is rather worrying (Galton and MacBeath 1998: 31). Thus, it would be relevant to focus on emotional issues more thoroughly also in future studies.

As described above, listening to teachers and analyzing their experiences and thoughts was interesting but also rather depressing due to the restrictions, control, unrealistic expectations and the lack of trust teachers meet in their work. The teachers in this study illustrate how in the situation where they are controlled heavily from outside or by other colleagues, they do not have enough time or possibilities to pay attention to individual situations, children as persons or to create worthwhile educational practices they would prefer. Moreover, teachers cannot develop their work and practice or reflect upon it according to their own values and preferences. Many experts in the field of teacher development argue that teaching is in crisis (Hargreaves 2003: 125). As Hargreaves describes, in England the attractiveness of teaching as a career is fading fast, good teachers seek to retire early, dedicated young teachers leave the profession and it is already difficult to find qualified teachers to apply the positions available. However, it is important to recognize that the situation has probably never been ideal, and will never be in all aspects. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 49) suggest, the era of individual classroom autonomy in the 1960s and 1970s is often idealized and seen as "the golden age of teaching". They argue that, in reality, however, many teachers were creative and brilliantly effective, whereas others used the autonomy as a license to be ineffective. Moreover, many teachers taught in the same way year after year and did not develop their practice, although there was the autonomy to do that. They continue that the dilemma is, on one hand, avoiding too much prescription of pedagogy and, on the other hand, avoiding laissez-faire autonomy. In educational issues there should not be too much looking backwards, but trying to find the best and the second-best alternatives for the future. Hargreaves and Fullan argue that as we are now at crossroads in educational reform in many places of the world, the solution can go either way- things can get tougher on teachers, or it is possible to find a solution how to realistically develop a teaching profession that becomes more inspiring and challenging in itself. If the purpose is to improve teaching and encourage teacher development, the conditions of teaching that shape them have to be improved first, as well as the cultures and communities of which they are part. They claim, as teachers also in this study do, that leadership is essential: it is the kind of leadership that reconciles and integrates external accountability with personal and collective professional responsibility. Moreover, teachers should have time and resources to develop their capabilities to a high standard. The

situation, however, is not hopeless. Firstly, during the last few years many nations have turned towards the world's highest performing systems, for example, Finland, Singapore and Canada, to learn from their experiences and practices (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: xi). One of the most significant reason for their success, and also the main difference between these countries and other nations is the status and education of teachers. As Hargreaves and Shirley claim, the lesson learned from these countries is: "To be high achieving, educators in school systems need the right kind of purpose that inspires them, a strengthened professionalism that propels them forward, and a cultural and structural coherence that holds them together." The cultural and structural differences can be, however, so significant that it is not possible to copy these systems thoroughly. However, there are lessons to be learned. Secondly, there are several inspiring, positive examples of individual schools or school districts in England and around the world, that have courageously adopted a highly innovative change strategies within and occasionally against a national system of intense pressures for meeting the demands of data-driven improvement and standardized testing (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: xiii). Hargreaves and Shirley give an example of Grange Secondary School in an impoverished cultural minority community in the North of England, which based its curriculum on how its students learned best. They describe that the school worked as a strong community with inspiring leadership, parents and the local people. As argued before, a school working as a community and having a strong leadership, is the best and probably the only way to resist the existing outside demands and expectations. For example, in Grange Secondary School the head teacher stood up to unfair inspections and against the judgements of outside advisors when they did not seem to know or understand the school (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 138-139). Moreover, the inspiring, creative and visionary leaders in this school managed to make staff believe that this school could be successful and that things could be done. As this present study reveals, teachers can do rather little alone against the wider societal and political expectations in England, where the pressure to follow certain requirements is extremely high. A strong community can support them both professionally and emotionally to follow their own purposes and preferences, which is essential for their sense of autonomy and independence. On the other hand, nothing valuable will occur without the commitment and capability of thousands of teachers and their leaders, who, however, have ultimate control over how they teach their students every day (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: xiv). To sum up, there should be a call to reflect on and return to the most deeply held principles about high-quality teaching and learning and to learn from the successes of other countries. Schools and teachers face significant challenges when they

battle against pressures and standardized testing in the wider system and these pressures limit how far educators can go in promoting innovation and improvement. However, despite these restrictions, the success of innovative school communities is still considerable and inspiring (Hargreaves and Shirley 2012: 173-174). I have lived two times in England with my family and our children studied in two different primary schools in two different towns. My experience is rather positive in the sense that in both schools the whole school as a community worked towards common goals. They both had strong and inspiring head teachers and all teachers I met worked really hard towards the common goals of the school. The results were improving continuously and they both were regarded as excellent schools by Ofsted although both schools were situated in a deprived area of low social status. Thus, I strongly believe that there is hope and positive chances if a school as a community, as well as teachers as individuals have the commitment for that. However, the problems in teachers' status, work conditions and profession should not be ignored any longer. Moreover, teachers' education in England should meet the challenges of the profession and make sure teachers have the capability of reflecting individually and together with their peers.

To sum up, this study reveals that teaching like a professional and developing in one's profession in today's complex world, is not just individual development. It has three dimensions: improving as an individual, as a team and increasing quality across the whole profession (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 23). This study gives voice to three teachers and is thoroughly conducted with them, which is a very important starting point on the way to raise the standards of education in England.

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**Appendix 1:****The invitation letter for the interview**

Dear teacher,

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed for my study. I hope this study will increase understanding about teachers' work and thoughts. Before the interview you could consider the following questions. You don't have to make notes unless you want to. The purpose of the questions is to help you remember things.

How did you decide to become a teacher? Can you think of any people and/or influences that were important in your decision? How did you find the studies and the first years of teaching? Do you think you have developed as a teacher during your career? How do you think you have developed, what have you learnt? What is important in this development, for example, what has influenced or influences it? Have you recognized any issues or realities that prevent you from developing yourselves or your teaching? Is change and development important as a teacher? What things in your work make you sad or angry? What issues bring you pleasure and satisfaction? Do you feel you can do your work as you wish to? Are there some issues that restricts that? What things in your work or in your life give you strength?

I am pleased to be able to interview you and am waiting for hearing your valuable and unique thoughts!

Yours sincerely,

Heidi Löppönen

**Appendix 2:****The interview plan**

1. How did you decide to become a teacher?
2. Studies and the first years of teaching
3. Do you think you have developed as a teacher during your career?
4. How did it happen and what did you learn?
5. What issues have negative/ positive influences on development?
6. How would you describe the meaning and importance of development?
7. What makes you happy/sad/angry?
8. What gives you strength?
9. Do you feel you can do your work according to your own preferences?