

APPENDIX D

Narrative summary – Alfie

<p>Educational background</p>	
<p>Alfie is a male student in his early 20s. He has a 2:2 degree from a post-1992 university, but does not have any other additional qualifications. He said whilst at school <i>'things were average'</i> and that he had been told <i>'I could achieve better if I applied my energy to my studies rather than the social aspects of school'</i>. This was particularly so during the key exam periods during <i>'year 11 and in sixth form'</i>. Alfie did not have any particular things he liked or disliked about his school <i>'I favoured some subjects over other, most students do'</i>, but other than the subject he went onto study at degree level, nothing else stood out for him. As far as exams were concerned, <i>'they did not faze me...as long as I prepared I felt OK'</i>. He was the first in his family to go to university and had <i>'exceptional support from them'</i>. The decision to go to university was an easy one for Alfie, <i>'it was always on the cards...it was expected'</i>. In retrospect, his choice of university was a <i>'mistake'</i> as it <i>'was too quiet, too small'</i>. He also admitted that he did not <i>'put the effort in until the third year...and in my dissertation'</i>. Alfie would have hoped for <i>'a 2:1 but was pleased with a 2:2'</i>.</p>	<p>Q1 Q1 I1 I1 I1 I1 E E E E E E</p>
<p>In categorising him into one of three types; engaged academic, willing/strategic complier or reluctant complier, Alfie would fall into the group I define as a reluctant complier (see 3.7.2)</p>	
<p>Becoming a teacher</p>	
<p>For Alfie, being a teacher was not <i>'a big career option to begin with – I wanted to go into marketing and stuff like that'</i>. However, having had a short career in business, where he <i>'was getting nothing back'</i> he <i>'sort of went down the route of a TA (Teaching Assistant) too see how I enjoyed being in a school'</i>. Here, he <i>'saw the rewards straight away'</i> but he wanted to <i>'give and contribute more in lesson'</i> and therefore applied for and got a place on the PGCE course.</p>	<p>I1 I1 I1 I1</p>
<p>At the point of the second interview, Alfie had almost completed his placements and was <i>'struggling with the concept of September, I'm an adult, rather than September I'm a teacher, it's sort of I'm completely responsible for my life...I've still got mum and dad on speed dial and that won't be the case then [in September] as I will be responsible for everything...I'm feeling alright about it'</i>. Alfie had questioned <i>'am I doing the right thing because I have a huge list of things to do, I feel like I am getting nowhere, you feel like you are planning the lessons for the kids and then have a couple of bad days'</i>. There were positives too; <i>'the kids trust me, they know who I am and I can have a laugh with them, that just outweighs all the bad stuff when you've got a massive headache and you think "Oh bloody hell, I've got to get in" but it's nice to be accepted into the school now. Being accepted is the thing'</i>. He was looking forward to September <i>'when I can be me, in my classroom, in my school, with my identity rather than being a PGCE student'</i>. Alfie thought that you <i>'cannot be outstanding all of the time...I cannot be all singing, all dancing all of the time, there have got to be times when I cannot have a fantastic resource, a fantastic activity...we have something that is good here and then something else that is good ...just the consistency'</i>. He thought that had <i>'been a light at the end of the tunnel'</i> that he could do that <i>'I don't have to be amazing all the time'</i>. At an interview he realised <i>'I've become more confident in my choices, whereas before,</i></p>	<p>I2 I2 I2 I2 I2 I2 I2</p>

<p><i>with my mentor, I felt I had to justify them before I could do them, but now, I will be able just to do them. If it goes wrong, then I can deal with it, it's my fault'. Later in the interview Alfie told me he 'wanted to be in a school where I can be experimental and shine rather than been there done that or they don't appreciate what skills I've got'.</i></p>	I2
<p>First Teaching Placement</p>	
<p>Alfie's first school placement was in a large, city centre comprehensive school with 'an above average proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals' (Ofsted 2009:3). Approximately 10% of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 20% with special educational needs (ibid).The school has specialist status in Business and Enterprise and has two special units on site. The Ofsted report showed that the school was graded satisfactory and as such, there was a monitoring visit by the inspectors in 2011. At this point, the school was deemed to have 'made good progress' (Ofsted 2011:1) but concerns were still apparent regarding the GCSE results which were 'well below the national average' (ibid).</p>	O O W O O O
<p>Second teaching Placement</p>	
<p>Alfie's second placement was in an 11-16 school situated in a coastal town in the South West of England. The school became a designated Specialist Sports College in 2001. Ofsted inspected the school in 2007, and judged it as requiring significant improvement. As a result, it was inspected again in 2008 and described in that report as a 'smaller than average' school with the 'percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities above the national average' (Ofsted 2008:3). Following this inspection, the school was judged to be 'providing a satisfactory standard of education' (ibid:4). Against this, was the impending move for the school to become an academy. This was to be linked to a larger educational charity, incorporating four other academies from the surrounding area. The process took longer to be approved by the Governing bodies than was anticipated and resulted in a 'frustrating summer... with news of the delay...and [resulting] disappointment' (School website). It eventually opened as an academy in spring 2011 under a new name.</p>	O W O O O W W W W W
<p>Prior to commencing their second placements, the trainees shared their feelings and thoughts about their first school experiences. Another trainee had been to this school and had not enjoyed her time there. As a result, Alfie was very anxious and indeed almost unwilling to engage in a positive way with the placement. After much discussion and indeed some persuasion, he agreed to go. In the second interview, he admitted that <i>'I struggled with placement B, but on reflection it was not half as bad...I would be happy at the school without the mentor...I would like to be me rather than his sidekick'.</i></p>	PT I2
<p>Alfie's conceptualisation of the Ideal teacher</p>	
<p>In his first interview, Alfie spoke about the need <i>'to keep calm...not to shout...to be fair...and not act shocked if they [the students] say something completely inappropriate'.</i> He thought it important that the students <i>'know where the boundaries are...but also to have someone they can relate to...[can] interact with the kids and have a skin where it all bounces off'.</i> Alfie was aware of getting <i>'the work life balance right'</i> but also knowing that <i>'the buck stops with me...I am responsible for x number of students and their learning for that lesson and if I don't get it across then that's them failed'.</i></p>	I1 I1 I1

By the time of the second interview, Alfie thought that *'relationships were key, and that before you get into the topic, the coursework or anything, you need to build a relationship. You need to be approachable'*. He did not think that he had changed his view on what makes a good teacher, but just that *'everything needs to be transparent...not just with exams, but with lesson outcomes, the classroom environment...so they [the students] can do what they need to'*. He also thought it important to be *'clear about explanations'*.

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During the second interview, I introduced prompt cards (emboldened in the following paragraphs) for Alfie to rank order or disregard as he wished, to stimulate discussion about key characteristics of his ideal teacher. First on his list was **flexibility**, Alfie thought this important *'because you never know, whatever lesson you've planned what really is going to happen'* then **social service** *'you need to be socially aware of things'*, followed by **standards** which *'you can't let them slip which leads onto regulation and you've got to be a **reflective practitioner** to be able to **make judgement**, and having the **skill**, and **knowledge** of how to do that and then you start teaching and without all of that, I believe that you will get nowhere, you will just talk to the class and that nothing will go in and they won't know anything.'* He then put **theoretical knowledge** and finally **technician**. Alfie decided to disregard **autonomy** as *'we don't have any'*.

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Imagined future career path

Alfie had initially *'sort of in my head, given myself a target, that by the time I am 30 I want to be a Head of Year or Head of Department...I would really like to do that'*. He would like it to be *'my ideas that filter down into the scheme of work, that it's my ideas for things'*. Alfie wanted to *'be known by all of the kids, not just the ones I teach'* and for that reason, at the first interview, he thought he would prefer *'to be head of year first'*. By the time of the second interview Alfie had not changed his mind *'I still want to be head of a lower year...have some role in key stage three...so the students know who I am'*. He was keen to *'go into the pastoral side of things'* but unsure whether *'head of department is where I want to go...I quite like to do my teaching role within my subject, I would quite like to do a pastoral role and combine the two'*. Alfie had the opportunity to teach another subject at his second placement school, one that is not usually combined with his main subject and is one he *'is loving at the moment...they eat up whatever I give them...they do all their homework, they are so polite...I think it's important for us to break away from teaching just one subject, to go and teach another subject. I would like to teach another subject, or be involved in something else, just to give myself that other thought process'*. He continued *'I would like to be involved in a lot of the school...and do justice and do well, I don't just want to spread myself too thinly but I don't want to be stuck teaching my subject in my class'*.

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M level study

Prior to starting the Master's level assignment, Alfie thought that he would be *'hitting [the M level credits] to get them rather than to change how I operate in the classroom'*. He continued, *'I don't think that after the assignment I will adapt this'*. He was unsure if he would have *'to get this master's thing if I am to continue up the [career] ladder'*. Alfie was pragmatic *'if I get them, I get them, if I don't then I don't'*. His preference was to *'create myself as a teacher and be comfortable with my teaching practice rather than to achieve at that level'*. He continued *'the organisational side, the enjoying side, the academic side, the pastoral side, the friendship side, the disciplinarian side, all of those*

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things are more important to learn than getting M level credits’.

When Alfie first received the assignment in the autumn, he thought the deadline of February *‘was a long way off and it wasn’t something that I would have to sit down and do that October’*. He was honest in his reflection that he needed to *‘buck my ideas up and start it’* but wanted to finish his first placement before doing so. He waited until Christmas before deciding *‘to concentrate on the introduction, my learning and really getting down into what topic I wanted [to learn]’*. Alfie thought it difficult *‘with the time management and my placement’* to get anything much done before then, For him, *‘the master’s level was not that high a priority’* and that he *‘was looking for a way of just passing it’* and thinking about the minimum of *‘what I needed to do’*. He broke the assignment into smaller chunks; *‘let’s do the introduction, do the theory of learning, do the scheme of work, let’s do the conclusion’* and then planning his time to do *‘what needed to be done’*. He thought that *‘there was more validity in a text book than a journal’* so used books rather than other resources for his research. He was *‘very aware that it was Master’s level and you don’t want Mickey Mouse resources in your bibliography, you want to have some credibility’*. He did not find access to the library an issue, he knew what area of research he wanted to concentrate on and therefore could *‘tap into’* the relevant areas. Alfie mostly worked on his own whilst on *‘Christmas holidays’*, he did have *conversations ‘with a couple of my close mates just to see how are you doing, do you think that...but there was no swapping of resources’*. He worked on his own *‘as it’s better that way just because you can start worrying when they say “I’ve done this” and you think, I’ve not done that, does that mean I’ve failed...you get into that spiral’*.

For Alfie the time management was an issue; *‘it took a proper slog of time, sitting down, writing...it wasn’t exciting...I didn’t like the reflection part...I found it hard to put into words, I could write a couple of sentences but not so many thousand words’*. He did *‘enjoy the introduction, seeing how adults learn’*. Alfie found a benefit in learning a new topic, as he had to teach this soon after completing his assignment, and *‘found it good to have all the key terms in my head’*. From that perspective, he thought *‘the assignment was quite good at making us focus on an area of weakness’*. He had reservations about other ways of being assessed at Master’s level, as *‘maybe people aren’t as creative as others if they had to make a resource’*, and they *‘might struggle’* and *‘be tempted to copy other things’* that were already out there. He liked *‘to have the choice’* of which area of his subject to focus on, with still having the security of *‘guidelines to help us’*. For Alfie the opportunity to submit a draft and get feedback *‘was great...to see if I was on the right path’*.

Continuing onto Master’s

Alfie originally saw the benefit of M level study as a way *‘to gain the qualification quicker’*. He had the idea that *‘you have to have a Master’s to get ahead’*. In his first interview he was a little uncommitted as to whether or not he would continue on as *‘it depends on my NQT’ year. I don’t know how important my Master’s is to me to start with, but if it comes along natural progression then that’s fair enough...the qualification is good to get if the school are offering you to do it’*. He seemed keen to *‘do any CPD that was offered to me...it’s a day off school for a start, you get a decent lunch and you get to network...it makes you think of other things...its different ideas of doing things, different ways’*.

KEY

E –Email correspondence

I1 – Interview 1

I2 – Interview 2

O – Ofsted

PT – Personal Tutorial

Q1 – Questionnaire 1

Q2 – Questionnaire 2

W – School/College web site