

APPENDIX D

Narrative Summary – Sophie

<p>Educational background</p> <p>Sophie is a female student in her early 20s. She has a 2:2 degree from a post 1992 university, without any other qualifications. She said that she <i>'found school easy'</i> however, there were some subjects which Sophie <i>'found more difficult, especially when doing my GCSE's'</i>. There was <i>'nothing I disliked about school'</i>. She found herself gravitating towards sports, and in particular, Netball, which she played throughout her school, and has continued since. This <i>'kept me grounded'</i>. For Sophie, it was not an easy decision to go to university as <i>'I never thought I would be intelligent enough...so I never thought about going'</i>. She took the opportunity to go to Camp America and on her return, her college tutor contacted her <i>'and told me to apply'</i>. Her late application meant that <i>'I applied on the Monday and was moving in that Saturday'</i>. There was a chequered history in her family in respect of attending university, as her older sister had applied for and got a place, but left within the first year of starting her course. However, Sophie's <i>'family were there when I needed them, when I was stressed during exams'</i>. She said that she was <i>'happy I went to university, but could have worked harder. I would have liked a 2:1 because only now do I realise I do not look very good on paper'</i>. Prior to applying to university, Sophie had considered living and working in America, but was unsure of this now.</p>	<p>Q1 I1 I1 I1 I1 I1 E E E E E E</p>
<p>In categorising her into one of three types; engaged academic, willing/strategic complier or reluctant complier, Sophie would fall into the group I define as a reluctant complier (see 3.7.2).</p>	
<p>Becoming a teacher</p> <p>Sophie believed that <i>'from a young age I always thought I would be a teacher'</i>. She <i>'had it in the back of her head all the time'</i>. When asked further why this was so, she revealed that <i>'the teachers at school always said that I would be a good teacher, perhaps because I was bossy'</i>. Following the completion of her degree <i>'because of the recession, I couldn't get a job at all' at first, but then 'a job as a cover supervisor came up in a school and I thought I could test the waters to see if I liked it...I did love it. I love being in the classroom, being with the children'</i>. Sophie had that job for a year before she thought <i>'do I want to do another year of this or do I want to do my PGCE?'</i> She chose to apply, and was successful in getting onto her first choice of course where she found <i>'I am loving it.'</i></p>	<p>I1 I1 I1 I1 I1 I1 I1</p>
<p>By the time of the second interview, Sophie felt <i>'better...I feel I can do it whereas at the beginning you are always in two minds, can I actually be a teacher'</i>. By being in two quite different schools <i>'I kind of know what I do want to do and what I don't, what kind of school I want to work for, or what kind of department I want'</i>. She thought she was <i>'much more confident...I think I have the ability to do it, obviously there are still things I have got to learn...I definitely know I'm going to do it and pursue it'</i>. However, Sophie thought <i>'it was so much harder than people think'</i>. This was particularly true with lesson planning <i>'you don't see what goes on after 3 o'clock...there are teachers here to 8 or 9 o'clock at night...it's just never going to stop'</i>. She did think that <i>'I don't know how people teach with families, I don't know</i></p>	<p>I2 I2 I2 I2 I2 I2 I2</p>

how teachers can have families or friends, cos I don't have any this year'. Balanced against this was the fact that Sophie 'loves being in the classroom with the kids...I know I can't be their best friend, but I'm not that older than them'. She continued; 'I have quite enjoyed it, the ups of my placement are actually the teaching, I do like standing in front of the class, I do like teaching, the downs are the planning can be quite intense, especially if it is something I'm not quite sure of myself, I have to go learn it.' She continued 'it is stressful, if you have five lessons in the one day, and five the next, and you haven't got your planning time, then it is hard work, it is stressful if you are at home at 9 or 10 o'clock at night planning, so that's the down side of it...I do love being in front of the class, I do love the meeting the kids, I do love it [especially] when "oh yeah, they are actually taking it in" when they can answer the questions, that's really nice, that's one of my high points'. She told of 'two pupils come up to me and say "thank you miss for this, because it helped me" so that was where I thought well that actually does happen, you do get people praising you, like your mentor saying that was a really good lesson, but when the kids say it I think it does mean a little bit more ...that puts a smile on my face, it's really nice'.

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First Teaching Placement

Sofie's first teaching placement was in a small secondary school of just under 600 students situated in a town approximately 12 miles from the nearest city in the South West of England. 5% of its students have a statement of SEN or are on School Action Plus (DfE 2010). The school was granted Academy status as part of a pathfinder with another local comprehensive school. The main school was built in 1966, and has recently been informed that it was successful in its application for capital investment, meaning that a major rebuild is underway. The GCSE results for 2010 show that 42% of its students achieved A*-C including English and Maths. On reflection, Sophie thought she 'didn't have the most effective mentor which I thought was going to mega affect me, but looking back it doesn't even phase me at all, like I did get support from other staff so it was ok. It would be interesting to see how I would cope if I had a different type of mentor...it does affect you, the difference with not having her [the subject mentor] on my back asking for anything so I didn't do the stuff'.

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Second teaching Placement

Her second placement was in a much larger 11-18 comprehensive school based in South Wales. 'A small percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic background...with about two-thirds of pupils coming from areas of urban deprivation' (Estyn 2008:1). Approximately 10% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, lower than the national average (ibid). The school was judged to be 'a good school [with] a distinct Christian ethos (ibid). Its GCSE results show that 68% of students achieve 5 A*-C, and 53% including English and Maths (school website).

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In this placement, Sophie 'found I was planning so much more intensely than I did in my last one'. However, her mentor here was 'really good...he tells me when things are good, but also he will say to me "this is what needs to be changed" he's really constructive in what he says, and I take it on straight away, and he says "you've listened to that, that's good"'. Other members of staff at the school have also been supportive, despite 'having a completely different style, being completely different

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people...it makes me focus on different things'. Sophie found that the two placements 'were hugely different types of school' and found it helpful to contrast them and to have gained experience in such diverse settings. I2

Sofie's conceptualisation of the Ideal teacher

During her first interview, Sophie thought it important 'to have a good rapport with the kids...I don't think you can go in and assume you are going to get on with the kids, you have to work on that'. She believed that 'you have to come down to their level, you need to respect them, to gain their respect.' It was also important to her to be 'someone who makes it fun', she further clarified 'not laughing and giggling but something they can understand...as soon as it starts going over their head then that's when they stop learning and behaviour issues come in'. I1 I1 I1

During her second interview she still considered it 'important to have a rapport with the students' but felt it necessary to have 'good classroom management...I'm quite strict...you can't be too relaxed or think that you are their friend'. The key was 'communication levels and rapport' Additionally, 'you've got to have time management, that's the main thing I've learnt this time...to plan in advance...it's easier for you in the long run, I know its stressful on the weekend when you work all day, but it's easier than going home at night stressed about your lessons'. I2 I2

During the second interview, I introduced prompt cards (emboldened in the following paragraphs) for Sophie to rank order, or discard to stimulate discussion about key characteristics of her ideal teacher. At the top she placed **standards**, which she thought 'you've got to know things about standards, like every child matters, they are going to be really high, and then the standards of teaching, what levels you've got to hit for exams, so I think that that's quite important'. Sophie put **knowledge** and **theoretical knowledge** together, followed by **skills**, **reflective practitioner** (which she 'thought could be a bit higher because you've got to reflect on your knowledge before you can teach and then you've got to reflect on your teaching before you can make judgements' and **making judgements** on the same level, next came **regulation**, **technician** and **flexibility** at the bottom came **social service** and **autonomy**. Afterwards, she 'thought they are all important, perhaps they should all be on one level'. I2

Imagined future career path

In her first interview, Sophie thought that 'teaching is a brilliant career to have, even if I don't want to do it in ten years time'. She thought it would be a good job to have 'when you have a family...so you can work around them'. When discussing future options, Sophie looked at much broader options than just working in a school; 'teaching in the army or in the prison service might be interesting...I want to test as many waters as I can and find my comfort zone'. She was also very interested in the role of the SENCO (Special Needs co-ordinator) but would also 'love to be head of department'. However, Sophie did not want 'loads on my plate' or to lose the contact with the students; 'there are lots of teachers here with titles that don't do a lot of teaching'. Being a head teacher was not something high on Sophie's list of career options, however she thought 'maybe in 20 years time I would want their salary'. She was aware that she 'didn't know yet whether I want to go down the pastoral route or I1 I1 I1 I1 I1 I1

not yet. There are loads of options that I could do'.

During the second interview, Sophie described her thoughts about her career path at the start of the PGCE as being *'first you want to be a teacher, then I want to become head of department, then I want to be head of school, I don't think I actually want to go down that route, I think I would rather be a teacher, then do extra things. The EAL (English as an Additional Language) is something I'm really interested in and being part of the SEN team but looking at X [the teacher who is a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator) and a teacher] she literally doesn't stop, in lessons she has people knocking on her door, coming in with problems, she doesn't get to teach properly and effectively because she has so much going on, so you really got to decide whether you are going to do one or the other'*. When I asked her about being head of department, Sophie said she *'hadn't really thought about it, just because you hear stuff and they say "oh you don't even get that much money for the extra work" and that does affect you'*. Sophie thought she would be *'happy just being a teacher and having extra roles within the school, rather than be head of department'*.

M level study

In the beginning, Sophie found it hard to relate her studies at Master's level to what she does in the classroom. She could see *'that we are all learners'* and that she would be *'learning a new subject which will benefit me as a teacher...as I am learning it myself'*. She could see that it would be a way of *'showing progression'* but *'struggled with linking theory to my practice'*. Sophie knew that she *'did not want to stand at the front of the class and dictate'* particularly as she was keen to bring in *'discussion about what is happening in the world'* into her lessons and from this standpoint, could see why she would need to study learning theories, but was unable to develop her thoughts any more deeply than this.

By the time of the second interview, Sophie could see *'how effective diagrams are when learning...and when I teach a hard subject, you've really got to start basic and get the behind the scenes of it done, before you hit the hard bits, so it has helped in the teaching'*. Beyond thinking about how her own learning helped her in the classroom by developing strategies for teaching, Sophie did not make any further links between Master's level study and her own practice.

After receiving the assignment brief in October, Sophie *'in the first week or two I had all the ambition of doing this, of setting up the plan of what I'm going to do, and picking my subject area – I knew what topic I wanted to do straight away, and so I looked at all the books and the specifications. Then I kind of went on a downhill path. I got so stuck into my school that I didn't focus on the assignment until the Christmas holidays'*. Sophie then *'panicked'* as it *'all got a bit rushed'*. She thought that she *'didn't have any "ups" ' in doing the assignment, however, once she got into learning a new topic 'it was really good as I did get to learn something'* that she realised she would need in her second placement to aid her teaching. Sophie did find the downside was *'the panic of just making sure it was Master's level with my writing, that is my weakest link, I'm not good at writing assignments and hitting that level'*. Sophie started writing her assignment *'sometime in January...I could have started it*

earlier, that would have prepared me more...I'm a procrastinator, I write lists all the time'. Sophie 'mostly used books and a few journals', which prior to having a training session in the library she 'didn't have a clue about how to get them'. She found the 'learning was good, it was hard, at some point I was like I don't understand how kids can learn this cos I'm struggling'. She did enjoy 'some bits of the writing' but thought she 'put too much pressure on myself as I left it too late...if I started it properly in October, I think I would have enjoyed writing the assignment as well'.

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In discussing other options for how the Master's level assignment could be changed, Sophie thought that 'doing an action research thing would be more beneficial for us, especially if we are in a school where lessons are hard or we are teaching something we are not sure of'. She thought it would help her lesson evaluations 'which are huge to me and that's what I find most effective'. Sophie also 'quite like the idea of making a resource, if you make a really good one, then you can share it, so after the assessment, we could share our resources...in school, we don't do that enough...I think on the course, it's the kind of people on it, we don't do it'.

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Continuing onto Master's

Sophie thought it 'more a case of self satisfaction...more to say I've completed my Master's'. She also believed that 'if I start something...then I am going to finish it'. Sophie was honest enough to know her limitations, and knew that 'I struggle with these assignments' and that she 'was just not at that level yet, but maybe in the future, I will be'. She realised that 'I'll need to get my writing up to Master's level'. In the longer term, Sophie thought the Master's 'a good thing to have', that it 'might help in applying for jobs' particularly 'if you want to be a head'. For her, completing her NQT year would 'put me under a lot of pressure' so she would not consider it next year, but 'maybe in a couple of years'.

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By the time of the second questionnaire, Sophie 'was not quite sure' about undertaking additional study, she thought she 'might like to do the MA in education, just because you've got it there for you to say you can do it, but it really depends on what school I go to and the funding is going to be a huge thing, do I want to go back and have to pay to do it'. She was aware that 'some schools will pay for it as part of their CPD (Continuing Professional Development)'. However 'at the moment, I just want to get settled into a school and see how it goes'. For the future, Sophie was aware that 'if I want to go to be head of year, I might need it'. It was also 'interesting to see jobs out of school, still to do with education...I might not want to be in the classroom for ever'.

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KEY

E –Email correspondence

Q2 – Questionnaire 2

I1 – Interview 1

W – School/College web site

I2 – Interview 2

O – Ofsted/Estyn

Q1 – Questionnaire 1