The Learning Experiences and Professional Development of Native English Teachers in Korean Universities – A Qualitative Study

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## Contents

**Abstract** .............................................................................................................................................. 3

1. **Background** ........................................................................................................................................ 3

2. **Literature Review** ............................................................................................................................. 6

3. **Aim and Research Questions** .......................................................................................................... 8

4. **Theoretical Framework** .................................................................................................................. 9

   4.1 Adult Learning Typology ................................................................................................................. 10

   4.2 The Professional Development of Teachers ....................................................................................... 12

   4.3 Knud Illeris and the Three Dimensions of Learning ......................................................................... 15

   4.4 Additional Theoretical Considerations ............................................................................................ 18

      4.4.1 *Workplace Affordances and Individual Engagement* ................................................................ 19

      4.4.2 *The Concepts of Competence and Capability in the Workplace* .............................................. 19

      4.4.3 *The Concept of Identity in the Workplace* ............................................................................... 20

      4.4.4. *The Concept of Power in the Workplace* ................................................................................. 21

5. **Research Design** ............................................................................................................................ 22

   5.1 Methodology ..................................................................................................................................... 22

   5.2 Methods ........................................................................................................................................... 25

   5.3 Sampling ........................................................................................................................................... 29

   5.4 Ethical Considerations ...................................................................................................................... 30

   5.5 Potential for Bias ............................................................................................................................... 30

   5.6 Quality of the Study ......................................................................................................................... 30

6. **Findings** ............................................................................................................................................ 32

   6.1 Learning Through Practice .............................................................................................................. 33

   6.2 Learning Through Dialogue with Colleagues .................................................................................. 36

   6.3 Learning Through Feedback ............................................................................................................ 39

   6.4 Learning Through Critical Self-Reflection ....................................................................................... 43

   6.5 Motivation, Experience and Identity .............................................................................................. 45

   6.6 Barriers to Learning: Lack of Support, Issues of Power .................................................................. 49

7. **Discussion** ........................................................................................................................................ 52
7.1 Interconnectedness of Learning Experiences ............................................. 52
7.2 The Power of Identity ............................................................................. 54
7.3 Motivated but Unfulfilled Teachers? ...................................................... 55

8. Implications of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research .................. 56

9. Conclusion ............................................................................................... 57

References ................................................................................................... 59

Appendices ..................................................................................................... 64

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form used in the study .................................. 64

Appendix B: Guideline for Interview Questions ............................................. 66

Table of Figures
Figure 1 The Three Pillars of Learning (Illeris, 2007, p. 23)............................... 18
Figure 2 The position of identity in the structure of learning (Illeris, 2007, p. 139) .... 49
Abstract
English language skills are a highly valued commodity in South Korea. Most Korean students study English from first grade in elementary school, throughout their entire grade school experience and into university. Beyond this, many businesses and organisations within the country require an expert level of English communication skills from their potential employees. A great deal of care is taken within educational and government circles to ensure that students are afforded the best possible opportunities to acquire good English skills from an early age.

This attention to detail is not present with regard to native English teachers (NETs) in the country, however. There is a dearth of information related to the training and learning experiences of these language instructors. This paper bridges this gap by examining the learning experiences and professional development of NETs in Korea. Knud Illeris’ holistic learning theory (2007), and other theoretical concepts, are used to posit a series of categorised instances of learning as experienced by NETs in Korea. A closer look is then taken at the motivations, professional identities and behaviours of the NETs associated with these learning experiences.

The findings of this research are based on a phenomenological, in-depth analysis of eight semi-structured interviews conducted with NETs at eight different universities in Korea. The study sheds light on a previously undocumented area of research and provides a strong base for future studies to build upon. Additionally, some areas that could be strengthened are acknowledged in the form of barriers to NETs’ learning and development.

1. Background
Learning English has been a priority for many years among people who want to work in an increasingly global environment. The rise of neo-liberalism and the concomitant *global war*
for talent means there is an increased need for efficiency of communication with those people and organisations outside one’s own individual context (Brown & Tannock, 2008). More and more countries, and indeed individuals, are seeing the value of recognising English as the de facto global *lingua franca* (Crystal, as cited in Nicholson, 2015). This is borne out in the numbers of English language speakers around the world. English is ranked third in several reports of most-used native languages globally with an estimate of between 339 – 375 million users of English as their first language. This figure jumps significantly to upwards of 1.5 billion when we include speakers for whom English is not their native tongue (statista.com, 2017; ethnologue.com, 2016). This number places English at the top of the list of the most spoken languages in the world and highlights the huge amount of non-native English speakers in a global context. The industry that has grown up around this demand for learning English is variously termed TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). The differences in these terms are subtle so for the remainder of this paper they will be collectively referred to as TEFL. TEFL is the term which is most appropriate to the Korean context which will now be elaborated on.

These trends in English language use are mirrored, and to some extent magnified, in South Korea (to be referred to as Korea from now on). A wide range of political, historical and sociolinguistic factors have fed into a zeal for English education in the country that is arguably unmatched in other countries (J. S-Y Park, 2009). This is further underlined by some of the colloquial phrases associated with English education such as *English frenzy* and *English fever* amongst others (J.S-Y Park, 2009; J-K Park, 2009).

This zeal has translated into a huge range of English education programmes being offered in Korea, both in the public and private sectors. Indeed, Korea has the highest per capita
spending on English education globally and spends three times the amount that its closest regional rival, Japan, does (J-K Park, 2009). A study funded by the Samsung Economic Research Institute puts the number that Koreans spend on English education per year at upwards of $13 billion (Jeon, 2006). I have encountered some difficulty in finding subsequent large-scale research into the economics of English education in Korea. However, coincidentally, the year this study was published coincided with my arrival in Korea and the commencement of my career as an English teacher. Over the intervening eleven years, I have seen little empirical evidence to suggest that there has been a significant reduction in the economic figures discussed in the article.

Much of this money is spent on third-level English education with a recent government directive stating that it is now mandatory for all first-year university students nationwide to take an English communication course. On top of this, some well-established universities are choosing to offer English-only degree courses in lieu of courses done through Korean (Kang, 2012). As a teacher of English in a university myself, it is this area that interests me most.

As I have outlined above, huge importance is placed on English education in Korea. A large number of studies, articles and reviews have been written about various aspects of the industry, but I have found none from the point of view of NETs. It seems that such a large industry would place a premium on the experiences, skills and environments of its teachers, yet most of the literature I have turned up seems to be from employers' or students' points of view. Anecdotally, I have heard many accounts, both positive and negative, of NETs' interactions and experiences in their work settings but I have been unable to find any significant literature focussing on these experiences. As far as I can see, there have been few attempts at recording these experiences and conducting research into them. Through my research, I will shed some light on these heretofore unrecorded experiences.
The anecdotal accounts mentioned above point to a number of teachers leaving Korea due to a lack of professional development opportunities. The flip side of the same coin is that students suffer due to a lack of consistency and the loss of workplace acumen that occurs when experienced teachers move on. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to solve these problems, it is my hope that this research could contribute to a growing body of knowledge on these topics and, in the future, help to influence decision making around these issues.

2. Literature Review
In the course of my reading, I have found several articles which are of relevance to the ways instructors learn in a third-level work environment. However, three in particular have piqued my special interest. The three studies are qualitative in nature and were carried out recently. The articles provide good examples of the prevailing approaches to research such as mine as well as highlighting contrasts in the ways findings are presented. When aggregated, the articles paint a clear picture of the issues surrounding professional development for teachers in third-level educational institutions. Beyond the selection of these articles, I found that themes and issues were repeated somewhat. As such, these articles represent up-to-date perspectives of the phenomena I will be focussing on. What follows is a brief outline of some of the articles' more significant concepts and how they are related to my own research.

The first of these articles involves a large-scale, survey-based study of higher education teachers' descriptions of their own learning. The authors utilise a phenomenographical approach to posit a four-level hierarchical conception of learning among teachers in universities of applied sciences in Finland. This hierarchy ranges from individual learning at its most conceptually basic, through collegial learning and team learning to innovative partnership learning at its most complex point. These levels of hierarchy refer to the
relationships that are in place when learning occurs for teachers. The levels are further differentiated through the five dimensions of the actor, methods of constructing knowledge, the nature of reflection, the learning situation and motivation (Toytari et al, 2016, p. 1289). These dimensions refer to the contextual and environmental issues which impact upon the teachers’ learning.

The second article focusses on the learning experiences of faculty members of the biology departments of two universities in the Midwest of the United States of America (Kusch, 2016). The author uses a phenomenological approach to derive data relating to the faculty members' experiences of learning from structured interviews. This data is presented more simply than the previous study under headings such as: Role of Trial and Error, Role of Feedback, Role of Previous Instructors and Role of Instructional Experience as a Faculty Member. These headings refer to the main contextual drivers of learning for teachers in universities.

The third article is the most conceptually complex of the three to be discussed here. It presents a "sociocultural model for mid-career post-secondary teacher professional learning" (Boelryk & Amundsen, 2016, p.91). The model forwarded by the authors consists of four phases which represent the theoretical learning experiences of faculty members and how they can contribute to professional development. The phases involved are catalyst, idea development, implementation and outcomes and could be described as steps in the process of learning that the study’s participants encountered. Each of the phases is comprised of three dimensions: individual, social and contextual (Boelryk & Amundsen, 2016, p. 95). Within these dimensions, environmental influences play a major role in the learning of teachers.

The paper, and the Ph.D dissertation from which it emerged (Boelryk, 2014), looks at the learning experiences of 12 full-time faculty members at two unnamed, mid-sized institutions
in Ontario, Canada. I see the ambition of the study as being greater than my own research goals in that it aims, in part, "to effect changes to teaching practice and improvements to student learning" through the introduction of the authors' theoretical model (Boelryk & Amundsen, 2016, p. 92). However, I do not feel that this should preclude the possibility of me applying some of the authors’ thoughts to my own research.

Two of the three papers differentiate between formal and informal learning, contrary to Billett's (2004) view as explained below (Boelryk & Amundsen, 2016; Kusch, 2016). Only one of the three fails to make a distinction on this basis (Toytari et al, 2016), which leads me to believe that it is not unreasonable to include these concepts in my own research. Additionally, two of the papers highlight the need for critical reflection as outlined by Brookfield (1995) for effective learning to take place (Toytari et al, 2016; Kusch, 2016).

When aggregated, the articles highlight several themes that contribute to the existing knowledge on my area of research and also informed the way I approached my task. They brought home the importance of relationships and environments to learning in third level educational institutions as workplaces. They also emphasised the role identity and its formation and evolution play in professional development in this context. These themes interested me greatly and fed into the formulation of the aim and research questions of this study.

3. Aim and Research Questions

As I have outlined above, English language education has an elevated status around the world and, particularly, in Korean society. However, there is relatively little existing literature on those people who are involved in much of the teaching in Korea - NETs.

The aim of my research is to address the gap in this literature by examining how NETs describe their learning experiences within the context of third-level education in Korea.
I will be focussing on learning experiences which the participants view as helping them develop professionally.

Specific areas of interest within that framework are represented by the research questions:

- What are the motivating factors for the learning experiences of NETs?
- How do NETs view the effect of workplace environment and affordances on their professional learning experiences?
- What role do NETs see critical reflection playing in their professional learning processes?
- How does professional identity impact on NETs’ professional learning experiences?

These questions have been formulated as I see them being interconnected in the context of Korean universities, with each affecting the capacity of the others to be utilised by learners in an effort to develop professionally.

4. Theoretical Framework

There are several concepts and theories which, when taken together, provide the theoretical framework for this research study. As will be explained fully in the research design section, a series of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted and then transcribed. The concepts outlined here were selected as a result of the initial analyses of these interview transcripts. Following preliminary analyses, several themes began to emerge from the data. These themes were further analysed in relation to each other and appropriate theories with which to examine the data were selected. This is in line with qualitative studies that pursue an inductive approach where theories emerge from the research conducted (Bryman, 2015).

What follows is an overview of the most prominent theories, concepts and themes that resulted from the data.
4.1 Adult Learning Typology
Knowledge acquisition in the workplace has been described in terms of *formal, informal, non-formal* and *incidental* learning experiences (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). These are concepts that Billett has raised issues with, however, as he believes that they do little to "improve the status of workplaces as learning spaces" (2004, p. 313). The implication, Billett argues, is that the negative connotations of discussing learning in terms of what it is not, (ie: *informal* means *not* formal and *unstructured* means *not* structured) is counter-productive and places *formal* learning on a pedestal above all other kinds of learning (Billett, 2004).

Billett’s view is echoed by others who see the potential for confusion associated with the use of such terminology. It has been asserted that the terms are “mainly used to distinguish some types of learning from others, but in ways that are contradictory and contested across the literature as a whole, since different criteria are used by different writers” (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcom, 2003).

These viewpoints could cause problems for my research as I envisage much of the learning experiences that occur amongst NETs in universities in Korea would take place in a context that is *other than* formal. However, my current goal is not to improve the status of these workplaces in terms of learning, which is the background to Billett’s criticisms. I am also steadfast in my assertion that *formal* learning is not inherently more valuable or important than other forms of learning which he also highlights as a drawback to the use of this terminology (2004).

In addition to this, my outlook is also in line with recommendations outlined in a study on the use of this terminology (Colley et al, 2003), the most relevant of which states, “Where use is made of the terms ‘formal’, ‘non-formal’ or ‘informal’ learning, it is important to specify the meanings, the purposes and the contexts of that use” (p. 69). As such, at this juncture it is
appropriate to introduce the definitions of the terminology which I subscribe to for this study as outlined by Myers, Conte & Rubenson (2014). The authors take their lead from UNESCO in their definitions (1976) but provide a more succinct typology than that which existed previously. The definitions provided in their typology of adult learning are as follows:

**Formal learning** is a learning activity that is structured and sequentially organized in which learners follow a program of study or a series of experiences planned and directed by a teacher or trainer and generally leading to some formal recognition of educational performance, such as a certificate, license, diploma, or degree. Formal adult learning is provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that constitute a continuous “ladder” of full-time education.

**Non-formal learning** is structured learning that includes activities such as: participation in courses that are not part of a formal educational program; workshops; seminars; private lessons, and guided/organized workplace training. Non-formal learning may take place both within and outside educational institutions. It may cover educational programs to impart adult literacy, adult basic education, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non-formal learning does not usually follow the “ladder” system that is characteristic of formal learning.

**Informal learning** is learning that is less organized and less structured than either formal or non-formal learning. It involves no (or very little) reliance on predetermined guidelines for its organisation, delivery and assessment, although it must be undertaken with the specific intention to develop some skills or knowledge. Informal learning may include such activities as those that occur in the workplace (e.g., on-the-job training), and any other unstructured learning activities that may occur on a self-directed, family-directed, work-directed, or other basis.

**Incidental learning** happens randomly and is not intentional or planned. It may occur anywhere at any time. While we recognize that incidental learning may affect outcomes, it is difficult to capture empirically and difficult to influence through
policy levers. Incidental learning is thus excluded from our definition. (Myers, Conte & Rubenson, 2014, p.2)

A final reservation about the application of such terminology comes in the form of Illeris’ view that “the division between formal, non-formal and informal learning utilised in the supra-national literature about lifelong learning (e.g. the EU Commission 2000),…does not concern learning in itself but only the context in which it takes place” (2007, p. 34). What I interpret Illeris as saying here is that it can be difficult to designate learning as formal or informal, per se. It is rather the learning activities, or education, that is formal or otherwise. When viewed through this lens, one acknowledges that informal learning can take place closely connected to participation in formal education, but informal learning can also be self-directed and even unintended.

This does not preclude my use of the terminology for this study, however, as I will be using it to differentiate the contexts of the learning of the participants. With regard to the learning itself, it will be explained through the prism of a holistic learning theory that will be elaborated upon in the next section.

4.2 The Professional Development of Teachers
Building on the typology of learning as outlined above, and in line with the aims of this research, it is worthwhile examining the concept of professional development in general, and specifically as it pertains to teachers. The term professional development is interesting with regards to this study in that it can be attained through any of the forms of learning in the aforementioned typology. The one caveat that exists is that the learning that is experienced should be applicable to the learner’s work environment and job, insofar as it provides them with the skillset and mind-set with which to make improvements across all aspects of their professional life (Berliner, 2001). I would argue that, when viewed in this way, professional development bears all the hallmarks of my research participants’ focus on competence and
learning experiences of English teachers in Korea

capability as will be discussed in a later section.

With regard to academic environments, it has also been asserted that professional development in teachers can lead to concurrent improvements in many related areas. As teachers become more capable, the quality of teaching they can provide becomes more beneficial to students. As a result of this, students’ achievements in academic spheres experience upward trends and schools in general can be seen to improve (Day, 1999; Avidov-Ungar, 2016).

There are other factors which affect the professional development of teachers. First of all, the dynamic nature of their work environment makes it necessary for teachers to constantly upgrade their skillsets in order to effectively serve their students’ ever-changing and diverse range of needs. Teaching is a mentally taxing profession and teachers often develop systems for themselves to cut down on mental effort that is beyond their acceptable level. While it is important to minimise mental stress, it is equally important that these habits do not become crutches upon which the teacher bases all of their professional practices. Elsewhere, authors have discussed this practice of automaticity, which allows the practitioner to devote more time to those functions that are ostensibly more cognitively onerous (Bereiter & Scardemelia, 1993). The danger for teachers, however, is that this automaticity hinders their ability to react to dynamic class environments. It is important for teachers to prioritise the idea that each individual situation needs to be treated on its individual merits (Mason, 2002).

In an effort to tackle counter-productive automaticity, and in order to make a worthwhile impact on students’ lives and modes of thought, teachers need to recognize that their practices are largely dictated by underlying assumptions and beliefs. In turn, these prescriptive assumptions need to be made explicit, which empowers the learner to challenge and reassess them (Brookfield, 1995; Day, 1999). This questioning of assumptions, which is inherent to successful professional development in teachers, is analogous with double-loop
Learning experiences of English teachers in Korea

learning as espoused by Argyris (1976) and critical reflection as Brookfield sees it, which will be elaborated upon later (1986, 1995).

Just as teachers pursuing professional development have an impact on their environment, their context reciprocally affects their capacity to develop and, indeed, their modes of development. Writers building on the Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective of learning have espoused the point of view that an individual’s actions are based upon historical and cultural behaviours in their direct environments (Chaiklin & Lave, 1991; Cole, 1996). Following on logically from this is the idea that workplace conditions of teachers greatly influence their development. School or university boards, department heads and various other stakeholders within an organisation can contribute greatly to this development (Berliner, 2001). On the other hand, lack of action on the part of those people in positions of influence within an organisation, can lead to environments which are less conducive to creative thought, innovation and the beliefs and attitudes that are necessary for teachers to significantly improve upon their current practices (Ball & Cohen, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Continuing along with this train of thought, is the idea that power plays a significant role in the construction of a teacher’s professional identity. We have seen how those in positions of power influence an environment, and also how one’s environment influences one’s beliefs and assumptions. Furthermore, one’s assumptions and beliefs contribute to how one views oneself. Thus, I would argue, those in positions of power can influence how individuals within an organization identify and see themselves (Foucault as cited in Brookfield, 2001).

What has become clear over the course of this research is that learning takes place in a myriad of forms and guises. I recognise that teachers’ professional development is just as likely to occur in informal settings as it is in the classroom (Marton & Booth, 1997). Furthermore, teachers’ professional development is influenced by and contributes to many factors in the workplace that have been touched upon here. Several of these concepts will be...
examined in greater detail in the next section. It is this interconnectedness of factors which greatly influenced my selection of Illeris’ holistic learning theory as the primary lens through which to view my research as will be explained now (2007).

4.3 Knud Illeris and the Three Dimensions of Learning
When choosing a theory with which to examine the learning experiences of the participants in the study, the main criterion that had to be satisfied was that the chosen theory was holistic. This is significant in that the theory had to encompass a broad range of learning experiences of participants in varying contexts. As such, several interesting theories were considered but deemed not to provide a complete enough view with which to look at the learning experiences.

The perceived weaknesses of workplace and social learning theories have been discussed by Knud Illeris who attempts to address them in many of his works (Illeris, 2003; Illeris, 2004; Illeris, 2007; Illeris, 2015). Illeris recognises the need for a general, holistic theory when he suggests that “…learning has both an individual and a social side. …This implies that both the individual orientation of traditional learning psychology and modern social orientation must be incorporated, but neither of them can, alone, offer a complete and ‘correct’ understanding” (2007, p.19). But he also acknowledges that the variety of factors which contribute to learning make such a theory difficult to formulate. Nevertheless, his acknowledgement of the necessity for far-ranging variation as part of a general theory on learning (Illeris, 2003, p.177) contributes to his theory being the most applicable to my research.

The central concept of his learning theory is The Three Dimensions of Learning (Illeris, 2004). These dimensions aim to bridge the gap between the individual and social aspects of learning that are apparent in some other theories such as Lave & Wenger’s Social Learning Theory
which was later built upon by Wenger to create the concept of *Communities of Practice* (1998). Illeris later developed his initial concepts in his book *How We Learn* (2007) to arrive at the most complete version of his holistic learning theory to date.

Illeris distinguishes between two *processes* of learning which, when taken together, make up the three dimensions of learning. The first of these processes is *acquisition* which Illeris sees as being the “psychological processing….taking place in the individual, of the impulses and influences that interaction implies” (2007, p.22). The acquisition process is determined largely by biological factors that have evolved over the course of human history to give us unique learning possibilities. Acquisition is a process that occurs entirely within the individual. It is compiled of two elements, *content* and *incentive* which make up two of the three pillars of learning.

The content dimension of learning represents what is learned in the acquisition process. It is this element of learning that has been traditionally focussed on in prior learning theories. Formerly, it has been described as *knowledge, skills, insight* or countless other terms associated with learning. However, in recent years, various researchers have deemed *critical thinking, reflection* and *learning to learn* as being equally appropriate terminology with which to look at content and the acquisition process of learning (Illeris, 2007).

As is depicted in *Figure 1*, the incentive dimension constitutes the second pole of the individual process of acquisition in learning. The implication is that content and incentive are inextricably linked within the process that takes place entirely internally to the individual. The concept of incentive as it pertains to learning can be said to consist of *motivation, emotions, attitudes* and *volition* among other comparable concepts (Illeris, 2007). Whereas the content dimension has traditionally been dealt with by learning research, the incentive dimension has long been the domain of psychology. It is the marriage of these two concepts
that, in part, makes Illeris’ theory so appropriate for my needs.

The second process is interaction which Illeris describes as occurring “between the individual and his or her environment which takes place during all our waking hours and which we can be more or less aware of” (2007, p. 22). The interaction process is dependent on the social and physical aspects of the environment within which the learner is operating. This interaction with the environment and other learners also represents the third dimension of learning.

The interaction process is concerned with the fact that all learning is situated, i.e. it is influenced by the characteristics and constraints of the learning space or environment within which the learner is located. The learning environment is formed by the social and societal influences exerted upon it and, in turn, shapes and influences the learning that occurs within it. In fact, the significance of the learning situation is so pronounced that it is “also a part of the learning” (Illeris, 2007, p. 97). Illeris’ general learning theory is of use here, as it recognises the potential for a multitude of varying situations which make up the learning environment in any given context.

Just as individuals influence their environment, their environment influences learning. Thus, their learning “comes to reflect the social and societal conditions for possibilities, and contributes to the participants’ socialisation in relation to existing social conditions through processes that are often conflictual in character” (Illeris, 2007, p. 100). This aspect of Illeris’ theory can be elaborated on using the concepts of affordance and engagement as is explained below.

The two processes and three pillars of learning are represented in Figure 1 below, taken from Illeris, in which the acquisition process is represented as a horizontal arrow. The content and incentive dimensions are at either end of this arrow which indicates the dynamic between
what is learned and why it is learned. The interaction dimension is shown as a vertical arrow between the individual and the environment and represents the relationship between these two as it pertains to learning (2007).

![Diagram of the Three Pillars of Learning](image)

*Figure 1 The Three Pillars of Learning (Illeris, 2007, p. 23)*

Taken holistically, the three dimensions of learning are amalgamated into the concept of experience. All learning contains elements of the three pillars of learning to varying degrees. However, Illeris’ view of experience is that it is something more, in a qualitative sense, than ordinary learning (Illeris, 2007). Although, Illeris is reluctant to make definitive distinctions between the two concepts, it is these qualitatively more robust learning experiences that I examine in the course of my research.

4.4 Additional Theoretical Considerations
One of the main reasons I selected Illeris’ three dimensions of learning as the primary theory through which to view my research is that it is holistic. As such, it encompasses many of the aspects of learning that came to the fore during my research interviews. The most significant of these aspects are represented in certain concepts which Illeris includes in his theory and are outlined briefly below.
4.4.1 Workplace Affordances and Individual Engagement
A recurring theme in the course of my research interviews was the provision, or lack of, opportunities for learning to take place by the organisations in which the learners worked. Participants frequently made reference to what can be explained by the concepts of *workplace affordances* and *individual engagement*. As Billett writes, “The readiness of the workplace to afford opportunities for individuals to engage in work activities and access direct and indirect support is a key determinant of the quality of learning in workplaces. This readiness can promote individual’s engagement. However, this engagement remains dependent upon the degree by which individuals wish to engage purposefully in the workplace” (2001, p. 1).

In other words, the structure and inclination of an organisation to give learning opportunities to its employees provide the platform upon which the participant can form worthwhile learning experiences. Equally important, however, is the willingness of the participant to seize the opportunity for learning within this context. It is a reciprocal relationship which requires both parts to be present for significant learning to occur. These concepts tie in with Illeris’ explanations of *interaction* and *environment* as outlined above.

4.4.2 The Concepts of Competence and Capability in the Workplace
Again and again during the research interviews, allusions were made by the participants to what could broadly be termed *competence* and, when built upon, *capability*. Similar to the learning typology outlined above, there are manifold definitions and interpretations of these related concepts in existing literature. Definitions of competence tend to focus on a person’s ability to fulfil the basic requirements in their sphere of action (Lester & Chapman, 2008). Capability, on the other hand, is generally seen as incorporating competence, insofar as it takes for granted a fundamental ability to complete one’s basic functions. On top of this, however, capability goes beyond competence into the terrain of *wisdom* or *excellence*, often
through creative means (O’Reilly, Cunningham & Lester, 1999).

These opinions on competence and capability are succinctly represented in the following quote: “Capability is a broader concept than that of competence. Competence is primarily about the ability to perform effectively, concerned largely with the here and now. Capability embraces competence but is also forward-looking, concerned with the realisation of potential” (Stephenson, 1998, p. 3).

By participating in the formulation of one’s own developmental needs within one’s individual professional context, one could be said to be pursuing a capability approach. The manifestation of one’s development is driven by the individual, dependent on their “capacity to manage their own learning, and their proven ability to bring about change” (Stephenson, 1998, p.3). This highlights the need for the individual to be forward-thinking and pro-active in their own development, again showing the connection between capability and agency.

4.4.3 The Concept of Identity in the Workplace

Another recurring theme throughout the interviews was the concept of identity. Many of the participants involved alluded to how their self-image affected the ways they approached their jobs and the interactions that took place within this context. This, in turn, had a direct bearing on the manner in which they experienced learning.

The ways in which people view themselves and their roles has a real impact on the ways they experience learning. As the interviewees gradually revealed more about themselves and their roles it became clear that, for many of them, their conceptions of their own professional identities were shaped by cultural and societal norms, as well as expectations placed upon them within their organisations. This is encapsulated rather neatly in the following quote: "Our identities are shaped across our lives, both temporally and sectorally; any one person's 'identity' will only in part be an outcome of organisational experience" (Watson, 2009, p. 426),

20
which highlights the varying factors which contribute to the evolution of the way one sees oneself.

Watson continues, "The notion of identity has enormous potential as a bridging concept between individual agency, choice and the creation of self, on the one hand, and history, culture and social shaping of identities on the other" (2009, p. 426). This idea provides something of a bridge between an individual’s identity and the influence this has on their ability to engage with the affordances provided by the organization of which they are a part, as explained above.

What also became clear throughout the course of the interviews is how individuals contribute to organisational identity. Individual identity is formed, in part, due to the environments within which one works. However, the micro processes which are undertaken by an individual also affects changes in behaviour and practice on a meso-organisational level (Chappell, Farrell, Scheeres & Solomon, 2000). This can form a kind of mutually reinforcing loop which dictates to a large degree the manner in which one learns within an organisation. An individual’s actions within an organisation, and by definition learning, leads to the creation of new identities in the work environment (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, as cited in Chappell et al, 2000).

4.4.4. The Concept of Power in the Workplace
The final significant influencing factor on the professional development of the interview participants is power. Constant references were made by the interviewees to the relationships formed in the workplace and the impact these relationships had on their learning experiences.

The interviews illustrated how different kinds of relationships can affect learning in different ways. Hierarchically vertical relationships are represented in what has been termed sovereign power. It has been described as “power exercised from above by a clearly discernible
authority” (Foucault as cited in Brookfield, 2001, p. 2). Although sovereign power was initially conceived of as being literally exercised by a king over his subjects, I feel that the king’s modern equivalent in an organisational context is any figure of authority, such as a supervisor or manager whose influence can be seen explicitly on their subordinates. The impact this kind of power dynamic has on one’s learning experiences is evident throughout the interviews and will be discussed in more detail later.

Disciplinary power serves as a concept through which more hierarchically lateral relationships can be examined. One might assume that these relationships might provide a workplace environment more conducive to learning and development, however, this is not always the case. It has been posited that this kind of power results in a normalising gaze whereby individuals in an organisation can feel pressure to conform to type and fulfil their professional obligations in a manner in line with accepted organisational norms (Foucault as cited in Brookfield, 2001).

5 Research Design
In designing this study, many factors came into consideration. Theoretical questions concerning ontologies and epistemologies came to the fore. Similarly, more practical concerns such as time constraints and allocations affected my approach to research and how the study was constructed. The following paragraphs discuss some of the more influential factors in the design of my research.

5.1 Methodology
Although, the connections between epistemological and ontological concerns are not deterministic, there have been historical associations between these concerns and certain research methods. These associations are by no means universal, however they do represent a predisposition of some methodologies to go hand-in-hand with some methods (Bryman, 2015,
Thus, due to the qualitative nature of this study, I elected to pursue a phenomenological methodological approach.

The methodology I subscribe to aims at examining how individuals derive meaning from their lived experiences. This is achieved by performing a detailed analysis of the accounts of participants. The analysis is then presented and discussed in an effort to extract themes, as experienced by the participants, generically (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p.7; Giorgi, 2009).

Similar to some of the concepts already outlined in this paper, however, the varying definitions and interpretations of phenomenology are nebulous. There can be some difficulty in succinctly articulating exactly what phenomenology is. Some authors, such as Amedeo Giorgi (1989a; 2009), strictly adhere to the writings and principles of phenomenology as originally developed by Edmund Husserl (1983), whereas others such as Max van Manen are more inclined to pursue a more eclectic view on phenomenology. Van Manen draws from a greater pool of writers to arrive at his stance with respect to the methodology (1997). It is this more encompassing view that my research takes its lead from, as I feel it is less rigid and allows for a greater degree of flexibility in the selection of appropriate research methods.

Phenomenology is largely concerned with the way participants understand their experiences and the elements of these experiences, or phenomena, which make them discrete from others. The participants’ interpretations of these phenomena lie at the core of the research and their perceptions and the manner in which they discuss their experiences takes on increased significance (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It is these characteristics of phenomenological research that make it the most appropriate methodology for my purposes. The aim of my research, as has been outlined above, is to examine how NETs describe their learning experiences, which can be explored by utilising a phenomenological approach.

The interpretive aspect of the approach alludes to the fact that humans, by their very nature,
must interpret and make sense of their environments and interactions in order to derive meaning (Brinkmann, 2008). It is these interpretations that I am interested in recording. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the way in which the participants describe their experiences will be processed through the prism of my own interpretation, forming what could be termed *double hermeneutics* (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), or interpretation through two lenses. This interest in the descriptions of my research participants largely dictates the research methods which are at my disposal.

A final reason that interpretive phenomenology is an appropriate methodology for me, is that it presupposes an intrinsic, personal awareness of the subject of study (Reiners, 2012). I am a NET myself, and thus, have an inherent understanding of the contexts I am examining. Although, ideally, I would like to be able to bracket my biases towards the contexts per a more Husserlian descriptive approach to phenomenology (Giorgi, 2009), in actuality my professional experience as a NET makes it unlikely that I would be fully able to distance myself from the phenomenon. This leads me to the final recognition that an interpretive approach is more appropriate, whereby a bracketing of prior engagement with the phenomenon is less necessary (Freeman, 2008; Heidegger, 1962).

Some writers have commented on the potential for confusion between interpretive and descriptive phenomenology, and the difficulty in subscribing to one view in isolation (Boelryk, 2014; Reiners, 2012). Others have written about the current debates centred on how we can accurately define the differences between phenomenological disciplines (Finlay, 2009). Still other writers have asserted that "phenomenology takes a dualistic ontology in which the object and subject are considered separately and independently" (Ornek, 2008), although this runs contrary to others' views (Larsson & Holmstrom, 2007). This confusion could be attributed to misinterpretation of formative writings on phenomenology (Dahlberg
Further confusion arises when attempting to differentiate phenomenology from hermeneutics as disciplines. Some would argue that interpretation is closer to hermeneutics than it is to phenomenology and that all qualitative research methods are, in fact, methodical hermeneutics (Rennie, 2012). My point of view tends to be more in line with that of Ricoeur (2010). I see hermeneutics and phenomenology as tributaries of the same river. Their waters mix and intermingle, making it difficult to discern where one starts and the other finishes.

What emerges from all of these writings is that ‘interpretation’ may be used, and may be called for, in order to contextually grasp parts within larger wholes, as long as it remains descriptively grounded” (Wertz, 2005, p. 175). This is reinforced by Finlay’s assertion that, “Some scholars…see description and interpretation as a continuum where specific work may be more or less interpretive” (2009, p. 11).

My final standpoint on the issue is in accordance with Finlay (2014), who holds that these semantic discussions on different disciplines of phenomenology and hermeneutics, if misunderstood, can hinder research. Instead, she advocates the opinion that, “A phenomenological sensibility is suggested rather than offering cookbook guidelines” (p. 121) when approaching research. This opinion is echoed by Pietkiewicz & Smith who state that phenomenological guidelines “…should not be treated as a recipe and the researcher is advised to be flexible and creative in his or her thinking” (2014, p. 11). As has been outlined above, I also concur with Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) in that I am “especially interested in what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people” (p. 1).

5.2 Methods
Although it is possible to derive data relating to specific phenomena from large-scale surveys
as outlined in the case of Toytari et al (2016), the authors freely admit that "the use of the big data did not bring with it any added value in terms of qualitative categories" (p. 1294). Due to this, I elected to pursue the more traditional approach to phenomenological data collection of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The use of interviews allowed me to acquire a broad range of meanings and interpretations from the participants based on their learning as they experienced it (Brinkmann, 2013).

The interviews were iterative and inductive in nature in line with Brinkmann's recommendations for qualitative interviews (2013). A total of 8 interviews were conducted, ranging from 37 minutes to one hour in length. As there is no prescribed number of interviews in qualitative studies, I feel this number provides a balance between time, logistical and financial constraints on the one hand, and the need to interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what I need to know, as suggested by Kvale & Brinkmann, on the other (2014). Where possible, the interviews were conducted in person. However, due to some scheduling conflicts with participants, two of the interviews were conducted via Skype. For the purpose of this paper, I have assigned each of the teachers a number from one through eight, based on the order they were interviewed in, in order to preserve their anonymity.

My choice to conduct eight interviews is based on recommendations with regard to phenomenological research. This sample size allowed me to see the similarities and differences between the experiences of the interviewees while, at the same time, producing an amount of raw data that was not overwhelming. It also allowed me to focus on the depth of research as opposed to the breadth. My decision to interview a manageable number of participants allowed me to perform a detailed, case-by-case analysis. I gave myself enough time to read the individual transcripts without the pressure to move forward with analysis.
LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN KOREA

(Sandelowski, 1995). This allowed me to discern their essential features which I could then compare and contrast to form a more general picture of NETs’ learning experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Interviewees were asked to volunteer accounts of their learning experiences which were then built upon using follow-up questions to elicit deeper descriptions (Akerlind, 2005). Opinions, emotions and actions in relation to the participants’ learning experiences were solicited in order to develop a fuller picture of the phenomenon. These accounts are what have been called thick descriptions. Descriptively rich accounts of an experience or phenomenon afford the reader a wealth of information with which to make informed judgments about the findings of the research (Geertz, as cited in Bryman, 2015). For list of the guiding questions and topics employed in the interviews, see Appendix A.

The eight interviews were processed according to Finlay’s four-stage guidelines (2014). The first of these steps is seeing afresh, whereby I tried to distance myself from my preconceptions and existing biases related to the phenomenon of NETs’ learning and professional development. Finlay sees this step as, “…the foundation on which everything rests; without it, a researcher cannot be said to be truly engaged in phenomenological inquiry” (p. 122). I achieved this by recognising the potential my own experiences as a NET could have in contaminating the purity of the experiences of the participants as they were described to me. A spirit of openness, curiosity, empathy and compassion assisted in helping to create an atmosphere in which the interviewees felt comfortable expressing themselves while, at the same time, allowing me to remain as unbiased as possible (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nystrom, 2008).

The next step Finlay outlines is dwelling. During this step, I took time to allow myself to become absorbed in the phenomenon in question. I meditated upon the raw data of the study
in the form of interview transcripts. By spending time reading and re-reading the texts, meanings gradually emerged from the data. These meanings slowly took on thematic significance and the interconnections between themes and concepts became more defined leading to the conceptual framework upon which the research is based. I also listened to each of the interviews several times in an effort to develop a deeper empathy for the interviewee.

The participants’ use of pauses, intonation, volume and speed of speech gave further insight into their feelings and frame of mind related to their learning experiences. By taking these steps, I was able to home in on aspects of their learning that participants considered significant, while simultaneously maintaining a contextually holistic view of the phenomenon. Throughout this step, and indeed the whole process, I endeavoured to proceed with a large degree of personal reflexivity in order to stay conscious of the impact my actions had on the results of the study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The third step, as Finlay sees it, is explication (2014). It is a natural follow-on to dwelling, in that it entails amalgamating the various themes that emerge from that step into cohesive units. During this phase, I aimed to identify, clarify and cluster relationships between the themes that emerged during analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I did this by using the traditional method of pen and paper. I made notes on the hard copies of the transcripts and located connections amongst concepts in individual texts and, also, between texts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This has been termed open-coding and represented a more tactile and comfortable mode of working for me (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). I feel it allowed me to develop a deeper affinity with the subject material than would be possible using computer software. I also felt it allowed me to embrace the organised chaos of the process. There was an inherent messiness in my research but I do not feel that it detracted from my research or experience in any way. In fact, I believe it helped to drive home the message to me that it is not always possible to reduce phenomena to succinct soundbites. Furthermore, during this
step, I tried to move “between important themes generated in the analysis and exemplify them with individual narratives (how particular individuals tell their stories), comparing and contrasting them (i.e., showing similarities and differences)” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p.8).

The final step employed in my analysis was *languaging* in which my research was written up. I tried to find a balance between using language that conveyed a sense of scientific credibility while still staying true to the descriptions that the interviewees used to express themselves. I also wanted to paint a picture of the various elements involved in NETs’ learning experiences teaching TEFL in Korea as well as looking at the bigger picture. I feel I have achieved this by using quotes from the interviews themselves to illustrate the themes that emerged from the data. I have tried to use the quotes in an evocative manner that could have a meaningful impact on the reader (Finlay, 2014).

5.3 Sampling
The interview participants were selected via purposive, snowballing sampling, as per Bryman (2015). A purposive approach was utilised in order to sample in a strategic way to ensure that the participants’ experiences were relevant to the research. The criteria upon which selection was based was that each interviewee had to be an English teacher in a 4-year university. Additionally, participants were required to have a minimum of two years’ experience as a NET in universities. Those with less than two years’ experience were precluded on the basis that processing learning experiences is not necessarily a quick occurrence. The professional experience of the selected interviewees ranged from 4 years at the least to 18 years at the most.

A weakness in my sampling was caused by the difficulty I had in finding women to participate in my study. Of the eight participants I interviewed, only one was a woman.

Although it proved impossible to find trustworthy statistics on the ratio of female to male
workers in the industry, my personal experiences lead me to believe that women are not being grossly underrepresented in my study. Additionally, variation of participants was achieved in areas other than gender. The eight participants were selected from eight different universities ranging in size from 3000 students at the smallest, to over 38,000 students at the larger end of the spectrum. Further variation was ensured by selecting at least one participant from each of the seven legally permissible nationalities of NETs in Korea. These nationalities are limited to; American (U.S.A), Canadian, Irish, British, Australian, New Zealander, and South African.

5.4 Ethical Considerations
This research was undertaken in line with the ethical guidelines and principles as outlined by the Swedish Research Council (Gustafsson, Hermeren & Petersson, 2006) and Linkoping University. As such, all participants were informed of their role in the study and their right to withdraw at any point. Additionally, as I am interested in the experiences of the participants and not the identity of their organisations per se, all participants and their places of work were anonymised. The information collected as part of this study will be used for this study only.

5.5 Potential for Bias
It is necessary to acknowledge the potential for bias with this study. As a NET myself, there was a danger that I would allow some of my preconceptions to impact the study during the course of the interviews or the analysis. Equally, the NETs who I interviewed may have been susceptible to social desirability bias and provide answers they felt I may have been looking for (Bryman, 2015). These risks were minimised through critically reflecting on my role in the process (Brookfield, 1995) and creating a comfortable interview atmosphere in which participants were made to feel that they could answer honestly and truthfully.

5.6 Quality of the Study
The study was conducted in line with the concept of trustworthiness which has been proposed
as a criterion for quality in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln as cited in Bryman, 2015). In order to satisfy aspects of **credibility**, I did my best to ensure that all of my research was carried out in line with standards of best practice in the academic community. Furthermore, I conducted **respondent validation** whereby interviewees were consulted and asked follow-up questions in order to ensure we had arrived at a consensus related to the meanings of what we discussed.

Issues of **transferability** were addressed by employing thick descriptions as outlined above. Participants were prompted and encouraged to provide as much detail in their answers as possible. While the data derived from this study is not empirical, the descriptions involved and outlined in this paper will allow readers to make judgments on appropriateness of the findings to their own contexts.

Although Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Bryman, 2015) recommend researchers undertake what they term **auditing** in order to satisfy issues of **dependability**, this was not entirely practical in my case. Time constraints limited my ability to audit to a level I would otherwise have liked. However, recordings of all interviews were kept and transcripts typed up. This contributes a certain amount of transparency to my approach. Detailed descriptions of the methodology and methods employed, as well as the context within which the research took place, add more clarity and dependability to the study.

Finally, elsewhere in this paper I have addressed issues of **confirmability**. By recognising my pre-existing notions and biases related to the area of study, and taking steps to minimise their impact, I have been able to ensure that I conducted the research with as much objectivity as possible.

In an effort to avoid following the suggestions of only one writer on the issues of quality, I paid additional considerations to Yardley and her recommendations for imbuing qualitative
research with a greater degree of quality (2000). As such, her principles of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance contributed to the gravity with which I approached the research.

I worked with a high degree of sensitivity to the context of my research. In particular, I familiarised myself with other authors’ research on similar topics as outlined in the literature review. This enabled me to develop the tools to conduct a profound analysis on the interview data (Yardley, 2000, p. 220).

An attitude of commitment and rigour contributed to my collection and analysis of data with a large degree of thoroughness. Furthermore, this attitude necessitated that I recognise the complexity and variety related to the learning of NETs and the ways in which it is interpreted. Related to this, my commitment to transparency and coherence of methods is comparable to Guba and Lincoln’s writings on transferability (as cited in Bryman, 2015), as outlined above.

Yardley’s (2000) final criterion for good quality research relates to the research’s impact and importance. I see my own research as contributing to a growing base of knowledge which future practical applications in the field can be founded upon. By subscribing to these thoughts and the recommendations of Guba & Lincoln (as cited in Bryman, 2015), I have ensured that my research maintains a high level of quality and transparency throughout.

6. Findings
To uncover the findings of this research, I employed the methods and methodologies as outlined above to shed some light on the professional learning experiences of NETs in Korea. In this section, I use direct quotes from the interviewees to illustrate my interpretation and understanding of these findings while also drawing parallels with the research studies as outlined in the literature review section of this paper. The picture that emerges is of learning and professional development that, in the majority of cases, occurs in overwhelmingly
informal or incidental contexts. What is also clear is that these learning contexts are complex and usually interwoven to such an extent that it is often difficult to extricate one from the other. One caveat that must be highlighted is that these findings are the result of interviews with only eight participants. As such, the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. However, I have made my process as transparent as possible. This will allow readers to make their own judgements on my work, and how it relates to their own contexts, based on the information available to them. The learning experiences of the participants are grouped under four headings; Learning Through Practice, Learning Through Dialogue With Colleagues, Learning Through Feedback and Learning Through Critical Self-Reflection. Additionally, issues of motivation, experience and identity are addressed. Finally some barriers to NETs’ learning within organisations are recognised.

6.1 Learning Through Practice
During the course of the interviews, all of the participants alluded to learning through experience. Viewed through the prism of Toytari et al.’s research (2016), this kind of learning more commonly occurred in the individual learning category. It could also be equated to the Role of Trial and Error as outlined by Kusch (2016). One distinction that could be made, however, is that Kusch’s category relates to learning on a more ad hoc basis whereas the participants in this study tended to have a clearer picture of the practice they wanted to implement before it actually commenced. Nevertheless, the similarities between the two categories remain evident. Speaking on the topic, Teacher 2 described her learning as not necessarily being explicitly observable. Instead, she spoke of her professional experience in terms of it making her more adaptable to the dynamics of her classroom. Exposing herself to a variety of environments, she felt, provided her with a degree of professional flexibility that she had previously not been in possession of. Speaking of how her experiences travelling abroad helped her to develop into a better-rounded person and informed her teaching
philosophy, she took care to foreground her opinion that these experiences did not necessarily have to be accumulated in an international context:

“Isn’t it true that people who have a greater variety of experiences tend to be more well-rounded or find it easier to adapt? But the thing is, you don’t have to leave the country to get those experiences because I’ve met tons of people of all ages who have stayed in Korea who have had those experiences”.

Teacher 6 speaks of experience as providing a sound basis upon which to build professional capacity. There is a drive on the teacher’s part to improve his competencies and capabilities in the classroom:

“I’ve got to make sure that I’ve got this foundation and I can continue scaffolding and building upon what I know”.

A further striking vignette is laid out in the following account of how Teacher 5 found himself in an uncomfortable situation when approached by his university’s administration to teach disciplines in which he had no background. He describes the ensuing experiences as being formative for his teaching philosophy, style, and professional capacity. His experiences helped him develop his professional capabilities which, later, feeds into his professional identity:

“Their goal was to get classes covered. It was like sink or swim. When I first started work, after a year at this current job, they asked could I teach a presentation skills course. It was in the international department, so I’d be teaching students from Asia and Europe as well as Koreans. The money was good, extra work in the summer, fifteen days work, three hours a day – of course I did it! Maybe two years later the same organisation, that is part of the university, they asked me to teach negotiation
and dispute resolution. Well, I knew instantly that I was not qualified in the slightest to do this. Not at all, I have no background in this! I probably wouldn’t strike you as a hard-nosed negotiator. The money was really good, but beyond that was the professional development. It was interesting. I didn’t know anyone else who was teaching this, so why not just give it a bash?"

The last sentence from this quote, “…why not just give it a bash?” encapsulates the sentiment of some of the other interview participants who see learning by doing as somewhat of a baptism of fire. Several of the interviewees (Teachers 5, 6 and 8) expressed the view that diving head-first into a problem has yielded better learning results for them than any amount of preparation could provide. It is a clear manifestation of a teacher engaging with the affordances made available to him in the workplace. It is further reflected in this passage from Teacher 8 who had to consciously set aside his apprehension at accepting an opportunity suddenly afforded him:

“I was fortunate to get that opportunity, but I have other colleagues who shy away from it. So you have to have the gumption to just try it. Professional development is massive for me. It was me just taking the chance. The last two semesters, most students have come through two unis in Singapore – they were exceptionally smart. It was really challenging but it was really good. I hope it helps me in the future - having that experience”.

The opinion is supported by Teacher 3 who discussed learning to deal with a new computerised system for grading students that was implemented by his department. Guidelines were provided by the administration at his university, but were only available in Korean. His limited Korean language skills meant he had difficulty with the system at first. In addition to this, his sense of pride in his professional skills and identity, as is elaborated on
below, made it difficult for him to ask for a personal explanation on the use of the new system. He did, however, express a level of fundamental curiosity in his professional context that helped him develop his skills:

“I just kind of noodled around on the computer until I could gradually make some sense of it. By taking the time to work it out for myself, I think it’s probably more likely that I’ll remember it from semester to semester, maybe”.

This interviewee’s reluctance to approach colleagues, administrative staff, or his superiors for advice is representative of the divide in opinion amongst participants on the appropriateness of discussions with co-workers as a means to learn as is built upon in section 6.2.

6.2 Learning Through Dialogue with Colleagues
During the course of the interviews, most of the participants volunteered information on the roles of their colleagues in their learning. What I have termed *dialogue with colleagues* falls, in the majority of cases I encountered, somewhere between Toytari et al.’s (2016) levels of *Collegial Learning* and *Team Learning* in that more than one person is involved in the learning process. In one of the cases I researched, it could be described in terms of those authors’ concept of *Innovative Partnership Learning*, whereby the co-creative and collaborative nature of working with colleagues transcends the incidental, day-to-day nature of learning as described by others. Instead, it takes on more proactive, creative and diverse characteristics. Similarly, it could be equated to Boelryk’s (2014) *Constructive Interaction* essence of the *Social* dimension of learning, where discourse between co-workers facilitates idea generation. Due to the readiness with which the teachers I interviewed volunteered information on this topic, it is surprising to me that Kusch (2016) does not provide a category of learning that can be compared with *Dialogue with Colleagues*.

For some of the participants, such as Teacher 3, discussing problems with co-workers is not
an attractive proposition. In his current job, he describes learning in this manner as the last resort:

“If I really can’t figure it out, I go to the office for help”.

It has not always been this way for him, however. Reminiscing on his experiences at a previous university, the same participant discussed what he sees as the *halcyon days* of his professional learning. His speech became more animated, his face lit up and there was a tangible sense of excitement in his manner. For him, context and environment clearly play a big role in the way he learns and develops his competencies and capabilities:

“That (his previous job) was a really interesting situation because the teaching body, the teachers that worked together had been hired, and I don’t know how they managed to bring all these people together, but they were as far as I’m concerned, the best group of teachers I have ever been with. It was all about sharing information and trying to make the program as good as it could possibly be. We would have meetings of course. But we would meet with each other, share information, talk about how to do things: “What are you doing that’s working?”, “Can I do that?” “Here’s my papers”, “this is working for me”. By doing that, by working together, it seemed like the program became this amazing thing. Not to overuse that word, it went from something that seemed to be a very nice teacher training program to this thing where everybody was working together and had a common goal and wanted to make sure everyone was successful. There was a lot of information sharing and teaching each other. Without saying “I’m gonna teach you how to do this”, more like “Hey, this works for me”, or “try this”. It was a great learning experience for me”.

Teacher 1 felt he did not have a personality that was conducive to learning in this way.
Laughingly, he acknowledged that he, “…enjoy(ed) eavesdropping, walking through the halls and hearing what other co-workers do”, while simultaneously not really feeling the inclination to join the conversations. However, he went on to explain that discussion of teaching techniques and practices was by no means a universal behaviour in his workplace:

“Some of them do it and some of them don’t. They do it to different degrees”. He was also unequivocal in his assertion that this was not a situation in which his most formative learning occurred. In fact, when further prompted on the matter he was almost vehement in his insistence that learning in an informal context in this way was unlikely to occur for him, and he rarely “shot the breeze” with co-workers.

Teacher 7 discussed how interaction with a former colleague, despite contributing real learning opportunities, was a relative rarity in his career. He sees most of his learning as being self-started. The relationship with that colleague is very meaningful to him, though, and to this day provides him with motivation and inspiration for learning:

“It was individual. The only time I ever felt that (learning through dialogue with colleagues) was the support of my co-worker who was also interested in publishing and conferences so we started motivating each other. It’s not just that - it’s holding each other accountable. Because I knew we were those kinds of people. And so I would always expect him to perform, making sure he had an idea for a next paper. It was a very nice way of supporting each other. And so, to this day, I’ll open my email a couple of times a month and he’ll be sending things”.

Finally, Teacher 5 talked about how he felt it necessary to solicit opinions from colleagues outside his immediate workplace in order to get a view of the bigger picture. He felt exposure to ideas from people outside the world of teaching could help him to see a persistent problem
he had with new eyes: “I enlisted help from as many people as I could. I talked to my brothers who work in business. I talked to an older man who works in companies.” He went on to explain how he tried to draw on the experiences of those in his professional and private circles in order to gain new perspectives on old problems.

While the communications the interviewees describe in this context largely occur between people on a hierarchically similar level, further incidences of learning were attributed to the more stratified hierarchies that were seen to inherently exist in the participants’ organisations.

6.3 Learning Through Feedback
The majority of the interviewees alluded to the importance of feedback in how they performed professionally. In most of their universities, student feedback forms were a common form of evaluation. However, access to these forms and the ease with which they could be interpreted caused a degree of variation in opinion on their worth for professional development. Toytari et al (2016) and Boelryk (2014) incorporate feedback into several of their levels. However, based on the significance which the interview participants assign feedback as having in their learning, I agree with Kusch (2016) who sees The Role of Feedback as warranting its own category. As such, my view on the matter is directly comparable to how she views this context.

Teacher 4 described how he proactively sought to solicit the opinions of his students on his classes. Despite the existence of mandatory, end-of-semester feedback forms for students, he was not privy to what was written about him and his methods. To address this, he developed his own exit cards which he incorporated into the syllabus of his class:

“I don’t get any feedback from admin. There are student evaluations but we don’t get to see those. I guess the feedback is (Sardonically), ‘Congrats, you get to teach for another year’. I’ve tried giving my students what I call exit cards. So an exit ticket is
like a small piece of paper or template and before a student leaves the class they fill out this paper saying what they liked and what they want done differently. So it’s like a form of assessment to try and shape the direction of the lesson. Other than that, it’s whatever outside feedback I get and that outside feedback is minimal”.

Teacher 7 spoke of the kind of informal feedback he received from students and former students in passing conversations:

“…a senior student, last semester, came up to me at the end of the semester and told me that he had just got a job and what we studied in my class really helped”.

Teacher 2 mentioned the possibility of encountering students both inside and outside the formal environment of the classroom. She discussed how non-verbal or non-written communication can provide much feedback and impetus for discerning what is going well, or not, in the classroom. She uses student attitudes as an indicator of how she is doing, in conjunction with the more formalised channels of feedback forms:

“I liked my students when I saw them engaged. Even though, if I saw them on the street, they might feel awkward having a conversation, I wouldn’t feel so badly about it because from the comments they gave me and the written work that I was getting from them I could see that they were putting a lot of work into it”.

There were cautionary comments about the usefulness of student feedback forms as a tool for measuring success and development, however. Teacher 3 questioned the forms’ relevance. He felt that unless a student had a hugely negative view of him as a teacher, the forms offered little potential for learning:

“There are some comments but most is ticking boxes. Generally, the comments are positive. If someone has something negative to say, they leave it blank”.

40
Teacher 5 had an almost identical view and warned against the tendency to assign too much meaning to positive student feedback. As he saw it, this kind of feedback can lead to complacency in a teacher:

“Just because you get decent reviews, that doesn’t mean you are doing a good job. Sometimes, in this line of work, some of it’s just having a nice relationship with the students. If you’re easy-going and you are friendly with the students, you’d probably get good reviews anyway. You could probably not put that much time and effort into it and still, because we are native speakers, and because we have taught something for a long time, we can go in and teach a class pretty easily. So that sort of complacency, maybe could be detrimental. It could lead to laziness”.

This is a similar view to that of Teacher 4 who describes a feeling of being left in the dark, uncertain of how he is performing professionally, based on the lack of feedback from administrative staff at his university:

“This (organisational) culture works on a principle of…(pauses, searches for words)…they leave you alone and the only feedback is if you’re going wrong, which is not very encouraging at times. But it is what it is. In terms of feedback it’s a way of trying to feel my way through it so if admin smiles at me, if the interaction is happy, then I’m just presuming that things are ok, y’know?”

Teacher 2 explained how she felt feedback could be a double-edged sword. When implemented correctly, it could be the spur she needed to improve her professional practice. However, she had also experienced situations where the nature of the feedback provided made her uncomfortable. Any benefits to her learning were offset by the negativity and resentment the feedback caused her to feel. In order to experience meaningful learning through feedback, she felt, the giver and receiver had to be aware that they were walking a
tightrope:

“They allow me to do it (freedom to pursue her own approach to teaching) because the outcome can only be good. Or if they want to test the outcome or get feedback from students or watch me - then that’s possible. But if I don’t feel comfortable or confident when I’m doing my job, I’m going to hate what I do and burn out”.

Teacher 6 saw feedback as being invaluable to improving classroom demeanour. The feedback he was provided with inspired a transformation in his attitude towards teaching:

“I got feedback from my Korean supervisors saying that the students were saying that I was being too strict. So, over the years, I’ve learnt to loosen up without being too relaxed if that makes sense. So it’s a combination of just getting feedback over the semesters and trying to find, like again, trying to pursue how much I can relax while still being firm as a teacher”.

A final positive view of feedback is shown by Teacher 8, who feels it has contributed to his learning. Although the process can be uncomfortable and difficult at times, it helps him recognise where he can improve:

“The lady that was running the program would come into your class to make sure you were doing the requisite amount of classroom interaction because that was their main sticking point - what they wanted you to do. There was a lot of self-development after that”.

He talks of how the impetus for professional development was extrinsic in his personal context. Others talk of more intrinsic stimuli for development. A whole range of motivations for development revealed themselves during the course of the interviews. What became clear, though, is that reflection is perhaps the most powerful and widespread driver of learning for
NETs.

6.4 Learning Through Critical Self-Reflection
Most of the interviewees spoke, to some degree, about the practice of analysing their roles critically in order to develop professionally. A high level of self-awareness with regard to their work became apparent. While some of the teachers attributed this ability to coldly assess their performance to their own education which they had undertaken in formal settings, others saw it more as a natural occurrence that came to the fore over their years working in classrooms.

For Teacher 5, the skill of critical reflection was acquired during his studies. He sees it as helping to combat the detrimental automaticity which can lead to stagnation for some teachers. He sees reflection as helping him keep things fresh in the classroom. It does not happen easily for him, though:

“Recently, I started studying again. In my current course, a lot of what they focus on is reflection. So reflecting a bit more than I previously have is good for me. It makes me question how effective I am. I think you can get stuck in your ways and think that your way is the best without evidence. So I continually research and try things to make sure I’m being as effective as I can be. Sometimes I struggle. The lower level classes aren’t as effective as the higher level. I need to spend a bit more time, I think, and diversify what I do and make it a bit more effective”.

Similarly, the following quote comes Teacher 1 who was first inspired to reflect on his professional practices as part of an assignment for his Master’s degree. He developed a mode of behaviour for critical analysis that he still implements today. By recording his lessons, he facilitates the process of self-reflection – an action which produced transformative results for him. He recalls the shock with which he greeted his initial recordings:
“One of my very first research projects for my Master’s was an assignment where I had to record a lesson and record how much teacher talk was created by me. Meaning, how much do I talk in comparison with how much either student-led conversation or student talk (occurred). I was astounded with the amount of time (I talked) - Jesus! I’m talking almost fifty per cent of the time! Most people don’t realise how much they speak more than they should. It’s almost like an amazing discovery. ‘Really? I talk that much?’ They realise they are taking up more class time than they should, no matter what their philosophy is. So (since) early on, that’s always been a conscious thing for me”.

Teacher 2 saw reflection as an ongoing process. It was openly discussed amongst co-workers in her department:

“We talk a lot about meta-cognition too. Thinking about the way you are approaching things. So I always try to keep that in mind”.

However, she went on to explain that not everyone was willing, or able, to self-reflect. It caused her frustration:

“I also think the digital age makes people lazy. They don’t want to pick up the pen because they can look it up. Instead of actually finding it out or trying to come up with a web of ideas. They don’t want to spend time doing that. They’ll procrastinate or do it at the last minute. (Animatedly) Or not analyse! That’s a big one too - analysing and synthesising and being able to apply something! There’s a lot to say right there”.

Teacher 4 did not explicitly refer to reflection, as such. He did describe a process of periodical self-evaluation, however. This self-evaluation then caused him to either alter or maintain his current practices:
“In terms of how I feel I’ve improved, I guess that’s down to my own impression. I look back on lesson plans. Do I think I’ve taught the course better? If something bombs I delete it or reshape it”.

6.5 Motivation, Experience and Identity
The motivation for the participants’ development came in a variety of forms. All of the teachers were in possession of at least a Master’s degree. I was surprised at the level of candour with which the interviewees spoke about the reasons for getting their degrees. The prime motivator for pursuing formal education throughout the interviews appeared to be the fear of losing their jobs and uncertainty about the future. Several teachers spoke of being urged to obtain Master’s degrees by those in positions of power in their organisation. Even when there was no explicit mandate from the hierarchy in their institutions to obtain a Master’s degree, the threat to their job security was implicitly felt. Without the qualification, their jobs were at risk. This is clear from the following quotes from Teacher 1 and is a manifestation of sovereign power as explained above. It also represents the normalising gaze present in workplaces insofar as the interviewee felt more pressure to get a Master’s degree in order to conform more with his colleagues (Foucault as cited in Brookfield, 2001):

“Looking back on it now, it’s easy to say I saw the writing on the wall and I knew there’d be a huge influx of people coming in from Western countries in 2002 and further along, and the competition would get greater and greater. And it was true. I think anyone back then could have seen that happening, so anyone who had a sense of pride or even a sense of job security knew they should get an MA and this was back in the early 2000s. So that’s what I did”.

Similar views are expressed by Teacher 8 when he says:

“I had heard - read online - that universities were moving in the way of…they were
looking for people with a Master’s and seeking to retain people who had a Master’s. I guess I was trying to future-proof my employment. That’s a bit of a pretentious statement but, y’know, there’s no security. I was just trying to...I saw myself teaching at the uni long-term, I wanted to increase the probability that I could stay employed”.

The sentiments outlined above were supported by other interviewees and show how, in many cases, the atmosphere, work environment and social contexts of the interviewees acted as fundamental drivers to pursue further education formally.

Beyond formal education, the main driver for improving their skillsets was the participants’ sense of pride in their profession. Across the board, again and again, teachers spoke of an apparent drive to do their job to the best of their abilities. There was a common urge to develop competence, capability and expertise in order to provide their students with the best possible learning experiences. These urges tied into the way the participants viewed themselves and their professional identities. The following quotes illustrate these conditions.

The first comes from Teacher 2 who derives real satisfaction from doing her job well. Her identity and her motivations reinforce each other:

“As a professional, the reason why I’m so satisfied with my job is because I feel that I want to be good at what I do. In order to be good, I need to put something into it. Because I’m getting some outcome, my students are getting an outcome. Their success and happiness makes me happy. And when the pay and the atmosphere and the praise I get from my colleagues, when I do my conferences, I feel that I’m contributing something”.

The next quote is from Teacher 6 who is driven by the sense of professional responsibility he feels to his students. He illustrates the satisfaction he feels in a job well done:
“You have to be so well prepared, on your toes - good content. If I’m one of the staff given the responsibility to teach those students, that’s another sign that perhaps you’re doing your job”.

When asked to elaborate on the motivation for continuously developing his lessons and professional skill base, his reply was simple but spoke volumes:

“Well, because it could be done better. I’m sure it could be”.

This is another allusion to critical reflection as Brookfield sees it (1995). The teacher strives for a level of expertise that is, perhaps, unattainable. He views his learning as ongoing and unlikely to ever be complete. He is constantly questioning his assumptions in an effort to provide his students with better learning experiences. It is an attitude present amongst the majority of the participants and feeds into the final significant motivator that was recurrent amongst the majority of interviewees – self-doubt.

The previous quote highlighted the teacher’s desire to provide high quality learning experiences to his students yet, in other instances, similarly worded quotes provide an insight into teachers’ uncertainty in their own abilities. Teacher 2 recalled how this uncertainty led to a period of reflection on her own practices:

“So I think that, even myself, I was getting a little brain-drained. You question yourself. Was it my fault? What did I do wrong?”

Similarly, Teacher 6 articulated how he had become somewhat of a figure of fun for his co-workers in the office. He spent what he felt was far too long on preparing for his classes. His lack of surety in his methods resulted in a pursuit of ever-improving skills and fed back into how he saw himself as a teacher:

“It’s really so difficult…I probably spend too much time on it. Some of my
colleagues laugh at me and think I’m an idiot for spending too much time on it. And perhaps I am. Perhaps, some of the students don’t care so much. I probably shouldn’t agonise over every little point here or there. I’m trying not to spend so much time on it…It’s difficult. I sometimes stay up late at night. Sometimes the job gets in the way of your family time, sleeping time. It’s stressful and frustrating”.

His commitment to his role is almost absolute. His self-identification as a teacher, and all that it entails, impacts negatively on his personal life. He recognises this, yet does not seem to be able to make the decision to put less time into his work. The manner in which he relayed his situation showed he could even see the funny side to it, but his professional identity, motivation and sense of responsibility to his students are so strong that he chooses not to redress what is becoming an absurd situation.

What can be seen through all of this is that motivation, experience and identity do not exist as discrete concepts. Rather, they form part of a complex web. They ebb and flow, interdependent, impacting on the strength and depth of each other while always being present to some degree. It is this realisation that brings me back to Illeris’ theory of learning. As can be seen in Figure 2 from the book How We Learn (2007, p. 139), Illeris contends that identity is formed in the space where the individual, comprised of motivation and learning content or experience, and the individual’s environment meet.
Figure 2 The position of identity in the structure of learning (Illeris, 2007, p. 139)

This rings true in relation to the accounts of the interviewees in my study and reaffirms my assertion that Illeris’ theory is appropriate for interpreting the professional learning experiences of NETs in Korea.

6.6 Barriers to Learning: Lack of Support, Issues of Power
So far in this paper, the learning experiences of NETs have been discussed in depth. However, throughout the course of my conversations with teachers, many of their frustrations and barriers to their effective learning became apparent.

The most significant of these barriers was the lack of perceived support for learning from those in positions of authority within the participants’ organisations. Not one of the interviewees spoke of a recognised system within their organisations that was explicitly directed at fostering learning. On the contrary, most of the NETs discussed what they saw as shortcomings of their workplaces and organisational hierarchy when it came to their professional development. While there was a necessity to obtain a Master’s degree in all cases, no-one received any support in achieving this goal. There was no financial assistance towards obtaining the qualifications. Nobody received any help with regard to circumventing
scheduling conflicts between work and studying. Organisational support for these formal qualifications was conspicuous by its absence. Largely, the NETs were expected to fit studying around their already busy schedules and any assistance they received was through personal relationships they had formed in the course of their work. Teacher 4 states:

“Zero financial help, so nothing there. In terms of scheduling,....I was also able to get one of my co-workers to cover one of my classes and...then later on I covered the class of the guy who had covered me”.

With regard to what has been described as learning in an informal context as outlined in section four, only two teachers discussed an intentional, coherent effort on the part of managers to create an environment or system within the organisation that was conducive to learning and development. In Teacher 3’s case, he has since moved on to a new job. In Teacher 5’s case, his manager has been replaced as part of an organisational policy for the rotation of middle management positions. In both cases, the environment or system for learning and development was no longer in effect.

Other teachers spoke of the imposition that prescribed teaching methods had on their capacity to develop. By implementing a set of acceptable, formalised, standardised techniques, NETs felt that the organisations in which they worked stifled their creativity. This diminished the likelihood that real, meaningful learning and development would take place. Teacher 2 spoke of the claustrophobic sensation this caused her to feel:

“They’re really, really tight on the way you are supposed to instruct. You’re not so free. You can bring your materials and books, but they are very picky about your instruction. They want to make sure every student is getting a streamlined education at a streamlined university. They gave me a handbook and it’s really, seriously intense. It’s a bit cookie-cutter”.

50
Management’s constrictive attitude towards the individuality of teachers in the classroom is a representative example of *sovereign power* as outlined in section four of this paper. By exercising control over teaching methods, managers are inhibiting teachers’ capacity to participate in a wider variety of impactful learning experiences. Furthermore, the implementation of power in this way contributed to a culture of secrecy within teachers’ workplaces. Foucault’s concept of the *normalising gaze* (as cited in Brookfield, 2001) offers an explanation for why teachers at one participant’s university were unwilling to be seen to be doing anything that fell outside of the institution’s recognised acceptable norms. Although, individual teachers may have been pursuing effective methods in their classes, these methods were not shared amongst peers due to the potential that they would be ousted as a dissenting voice within the hierarchical structure. This unwillingness to share was a direct result of power dynamics in the workplace and acted as a significant barrier to learning that was repeated in several of the participants’ contexts.

In Teacher 3’s eyes, the opacity and secretiveness of what was going on in other teachers’ classrooms did not just lead to a lack of learning opportunities for him, it also became a significant source of conflict:

“I have tried to get people to share information. The teachers that I worked with wouldn’t share with me what they were doing…there were huge fights. Eventually, that ended up changing because we had a change of leadership and the department got a new chairman who said we had to change or we could find a new university. So everyone did it”.

Although Teacher 7 felt a natural inclination to resist what he saw as his university’s constrictive organisational edicts, his resistance was tempered by his sense of professional identity and the lack of job security he felt. He followed the suggestions of management even
though he felt it would be detrimental to his development and his students:

“In that little (metaphorical) box at my university, I think it’s going to be give and take. I’m a professional. At the end of the day, I do things that I don’t want to do because you have to do it...If you are being given something from the top down, if you don’t play by the rules, you are going to be out (of a job). Survival of the fittest”.

However, it also struck him that there was potential for future conflict around the issue. He was unsure to what degree he was willing to forego the possibility for his continuing development:

“I’m a professional. I play by the rules first and foremost, so I follow what they give me - the handbook, or whatever. But if something comes up where I feel that my professionalism and what I felt was right and my creativity was being compromised, I would approach my boss and tell them how I feel and show them what I’m doing and show what I want to do”.

This is in contrast to Teacher 3’s experience at a previous institution where he was given freedom to pursue whatever methods, within reason, that he felt would produce the best results. He recalled the experience fondly:

“They said that by the end of the year the students should know how to do this, this this and this. They didn’t tell us how to teach, they just told us the outcome. So that was a goal. But you had freedom to get the students to that goal”.

7. Discussion

7.1 Interconnectedness of Learning Experiences
Throughout the interviews, details of the kinds of learning experiences of the participants gradually became clear. I have chosen to group these experiences in the four categories of

Feedback, and Learning Through Critical Self-Reflection. What has also become clear is that it is not as simple as explaining these categories of learning as being discrete phenomena. There is a large degree of interconnectedness and overlap between categories. As has been shown in the interviewees’ accounts of their learning in the findings section, many of the participants spoke of experiences that showed elements of all of the categories of learning. It was seen again and again in the teachers’ reflections on how they seek and achieve development. Feedback from superiors encourages teachers to talk with colleagues. This can spur bouts of introspection which, in tandem with trying techniques out, leads to development. This interconnectedness of learning experiences highlights the dynamic contexts within which NETs learn in universities in Korea. Throughout this study, the learning contexts outlined by the participants have proven to be varied and changing. Some teachers found development occurred more easily in an individual context, whereas others preferred a greater amount of interaction with co-workers and their immediate surroundings. What is clear, though, is that all teachers have shown a great degree of awareness of their personal and professional contexts and how this can impact upon their development.

This is a clear reason for why Illeris’ holistic theory of learning is so appropriate for my purposes (2007). In the majority of the participants’ cases, the teachers have been shown to be well-motivated – they are eager to try new things and their respect for professionalism is clear. They are largely reflective and thoughtful. These traits represent the acquisition process as Illeris outlines it. Development is a continuing process of interweaving experiences that leads to learning related to the teachers’ jobs. Exposure to new ideas comes in a variety of guises, each of them contributing to professional development.

But, equally, environment plays into the participants’ learning. Learning and development is spurred on by their surroundings. It is this point of interaction between the individual and
environment that is the crux of Illeris’ theory. It is a phenomenon that I encountered again and again in my research. The extent to which teachers learnt was impacted greatly by their surroundings and the way they interacted with one another. This variance in the degree to which one aspect of learning impacts upon the experience is accounted for in Illeris’ theory. At no point does Illeris state that there should be an optimal amount of one of the dimensions of learning over the others. Instead, Illeris maintains that each learning experience is different. Thus, it is natural, and even desirable, to observe varying degrees of each dimension in different learning experiences. This holistic approach in viewing learning in its totality accounts for the whole host of different learning experiences of NETs as described in the findings section.

7.2 The Power of Identity
As was outlined in previously, Illeris describes identity as forming at the confluence of the processes of acquisition and interaction (2007). In the case of this study, this was interpreted as meaning that the ways in which the participants learn via interaction with their environment is a huge contributing factor to how they construct their professional identities and see themselves. Identity was shown to be a strong motivating factor in the search for improved competencies and capabilities. The NETs’ professionalism drove them on in an effort to improve their skillsets and provide their students with more effective teaching. Furthermore, several teachers’ professional identities were shown to have a direct bearing on their attempts to influence their environment and contribute to learning spaces being more conducive to development.

The professional identity of the participants was seen to be formed, to a lesser extent, in the education in formal contexts in which the NETs participated in. The skills the NETs acquired and the learning experiences they had during these periods of education contributed, somewhat, to the way they viewed themselves as professionals. What was surprising to me,
however, was how the teachers seemed to place greater value on their own education in terms of job security as opposed to seeing it as a way to improve their professional skills. Rather, they saw their professional identities being formed more in the day-to-day interactions with co-workers, colleagues and students. This supports my categorisation of the NETs’ learning in the findings section and points to the greater instances of learning occurring incidentally or in informal settings as opposed to formal settings.

Professional identity was shown to have deep connections with the push for development. It inculcated a strong willingness in the participants to engage with the limited affordances their places of work provided them with. It led them to seek out learning experiences through interaction with others and their environments. Finally, it prompted the teachers to critically examine the ways in which they approached their jobs.

7.3 Motivated but Unfulfilled Teachers?
The findings section highlights how the vertical hierarchy within the NETs’ schools impelled the NETs to further their education in formal contexts. What was also shown, though, is that the participants largely felt that professional development was obtained more effectively through the course of daily work. As such, much of the learning and development that the participants experienced was self-initiated. It occurred in non-formal or incidental contexts through daily interactions with students and co-workers. The participants were also seen to have formed distinct professional identities. They took a lot of pride in their work and tried, independently of their employers, to contribute to productive learning environments.

Yet this drive to improve capabilities was not reflected by their employers. Despite employees and employers end goals ostensibly being the same, i.e. providing students with productive learning environments, employers were shown to have contributed very little in terms of helping their employees achieve those goals. In this context, an element of luck was
needed to develop and the teachers felt overwhelmingly that much of their development occurred ‘in spite of’, as opposed to ‘due to’, the contribution of the hierarchies within their places of work.

It seems counter-intuitive to me for employers to show such apparent disinterest in their employees’ motivations and goals. By employers slightly modifying their attitudes and behaviours towards employees’ learning, it is conceivable that they could provide their employees with much more valuable learning experiences. As will be elaborated upon briefly below, this could potentially serve the dual purposes of improving student education, while also contributing to a more fulfilled workforce.

8. Implications of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research
As has been shown throughout this paper, the learning experiences and professional development of NETs in Korea take place in varied environments with a huge array of contributing factors. In addition, it must be reiterated that the findings of this study are based on interviews with only eight participants. As such, this research is not broad enough to make any sweeping statements or broad generalisations about the subject material. It does, however, provide a sound basis upon which to build. Further studies related to this one, encompassing a broader base of interviewees will shed more light on the subject.

One area where the data derived from this study could be practically applicable moving forward is in the potential conception and implementation of informal or non-formal training programmes for NETs in Korea. Developing a deeper understanding of the motivations and professional contexts of their teachers would allow employers to tailor these programmes to individual or collective needs. Although the cost of implementing training sessions such as these may be prohibitive, particularly for smaller universities, I believe it would be a worthwhile endeavour. It could conceivably simultaneously act as a means of increasing
employee job satisfaction, while also contributing to the NETs’ professional development and improving the learning experiences of their students.

Should the creation of training programmes be impracticable, I see no reason why the findings in this study could not be acted on in other ways. The barriers to learning, as experienced by the participants could potentially be overcome without any significant financial outlay. Similarly, the aspects of learning which the NETs valued most highly could be emphasised and improved upon with no great expenditure on the part of educational organisations. By building on their strengths and minimising their failings, it should be possible for universities to create an environment conducive to learning, where their employees thrive and develop.

9. Conclusion
The goal of this study was to shed some light on how NETs in Korea describe their learning experiences. In particular, emphasis was placed on those learning experiences that contributed to NETs’ professional development. These experiences were separated into the four categories of: Learning Through Practice, Learning Through Dialogue with Colleagues, Learning Through Feedback, and Learning Through Critical Self-Reflection. By primarily examining the experiences through the prism of Illeris’ holistic theory of learning (2007), a fuller picture of how NETs develop gradually emerged. Further understanding was achieved by utilising concepts that Illeris incorporates into his theory. These concepts of *affordance and engagement, competency and capability, identity, and power* contributed to my being able to see and understand more aspects of the interviewees’ learning.

Over the course of the study, a complex picture of NETs’ learning manifested itself. A striking finding was the labyrinthine, interconnectedness of the issues surrounding the learning. It is no simple task to separate the related concepts involved into discrete elements. Instead, it is
necessary to acknowledge the presence of the elements, while maintaining a holistic view of learning in its totality. Professional development in universities in Korea was seen to be an ongoing process impacted by various concepts. Within that framework, motivating factors, workplace environments and professional identity were all seen to play significant roles in the development of NETs’ skillsets.

While external obligations played a role in driving the development of skills, much of the underlying motivation came in the form of the interview participants’ strong sense of professional identity and responsibility to their students. Skills development, motivation and identity were seen to form a kind of reciprocal, mutually-enforcing loop. Each of them contributed to the growth of the others and vice versa. Finally, a degree of insight was formed into limiting factors that can hinder the development of NETs. By acknowledging and examining these factors, it is possible to envisage ways in which this study can be built upon and, with further research, potentially have real-world, practical applications.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form used in the study

Participant Consent Form for Postgraduate Dissertation

Andrew Keane
Masters Dissertation
Linkoping University

Title of Project: The Learning Experiences and Professional Development of Native English Teachers in Korean Universities

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study or not. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher. Once you are familiar with the information on the form and have asked any questions you may have, you can decide whether or not to participate. If you agree, please sign this form indicating your willingness to participate. Please also indicate that you are willing for your contribution to be audio recorded. Please note that this recording will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and, if necessary, the research supervisor. It will only be used for the purposes of transcribing the material.

Please note your participation is voluntary and you may decide to leave the study at any time. You may also refuse to answer specific questions you are uncomfortable with. You may withdraw permission for your data to be used at any time in which case notes, transcriptions and recordings will be destroyed. No negative consequences will be incurred by withdrawing your consent.

Purpose of the Study
You have been asked to participate in a research study about the professional development and learning experiences of native English teachers in universities in Korea. The purpose of the research is to describe and understand what learning experiences contribute to the professional development of native English teachers in Korean universities.

Use of data
The findings will be used to form part of my dissertation and will potentially be published in academic journals.

A copy of my findings will be made available upon request once the dissertation is completed.

Procedures to be followed
To assist my research I am asking you to agree to participate in a personal interview. We can arrange a time and date which is convenient to you once you have confirmed your consent. The interview will take no longer than one hour to complete.

Risks
There are no foreseeable risks from participating in this study.

Compensation
You will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Statement of Privacy and Confidentiality
In any publication based on the findings of this study, the data presented will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you.
All information concerning you is to be recorded, stored and reported in such a way that you cannot be identified by anyone not part of the research. The information will be inaccessible in practice to unauthorized persons.

Furthermore, collected information on you will only be used for research purposes. Your information will not be used or lent out for commercial or other non-scientific uses.

Contact Information

My telephone number is: 010-9532-2666

My email address is: andrewkeane1@gmail.com

Confirmation and consent

I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in the research project of Andrew Keane. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to the use of the findings as described above. I give permission for the interview to be recorded. The recording will be used only to ensure the correct transcription of the interview and will be heard only by the researcher and, possibly, the research supervisor.

Participant signature:__________________________________________

Name:_________________________________________________________________

Date:_________________________________________________________________

I confirm that I agree to keep the undertakings in this contract.

Researcher signature:______________________________________________

Name:_________________________________________________________________

Date:_________________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Guideline for Interview Questions
The interviews conducted for this research were semi-structured and, as such, there was not a prescribed list of questions. There were, however, themes and topics I wanted to make sure were addressed during the conversations. In general, these themes were elicited organically during the course of the discussions, but they could be characterised through the following questions.

**Background**

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. What is your job title?
3. How long have you been working in your current role?
4. What is your educational background?
5. What is your professional background?

**Learning Experiences**

6. Can you tell me about a challenge you have faced in your work?
7. How did you overcome that challenge?
8. How did you equip yourself with the tools to overcome that challenge?
9. Did you have any organisational support from your university to overcome the challenge?
10. Can you tell me about a positive experience you have had with regard to your work?
11. How did this experience affect the way you behaved in your job subsequently?
Professional Development

12. Have you ever participated in workplace training as a teacher?
13. Was the training voluntary or mandatory?
14. Do you feel the training contributed to the way you do your job?

Professional identity

15. Beyond a simple job description, what do you see your professional role as being?
16. What are your beliefs and values with regard to teaching?
17. How do you determine success at the end of a semester?
18. How do you determine ways in which you could improve?

Motivation

19. What motivates you as a teacher?
20. What was your motivation to pursue further education?