

School of Education

**Management Structures and Processes to Optimise Motivation and
Engagement amongst Casual Academic Staff Working in Fully Online
Programs**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number HRE2016-0375.

Signature

Date: August 2021

Abstract

Participation in online learning is growing, increasing at a rapid rate, and is a global phenomenon. While some causal links can be made to a persisting climate of economic rationalism that has pervaded the higher education sector, literature and data shows that the growth is expected to continue and that the reasons for the growth do not all arise directly from economic rationalism. There is also a clear and recognised link between growing participation in online learning and teaching and growth in casualisation of the academic workforce. Both online learning programs and casualised academic employment have been positioned as problematic. However, as both can be confidently predicted to continue and most likely grow further, there is an imperative for higher education providers to examine and improve practices as they manage these two elements of their operations.

This thesis presents a case study which examines and explains the way casual academic staff working in one fully online initial teacher education program experience their work. The case study was conducted using ethnographic principles and method, with key data collection instruments being survey questionnaires and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The conceptual framework applied is the job demands-research (JD-R) theory and model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and the experience of the casual academic staff is explained through applying measures of their motivation and engagement using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2010). Connections are explained between levels of motivation and engagement and the achievement of the organisation's aims of providing a high quality, supportive learning and teaching program. Levels of motivation and engagement are measured and the factors which impact positively and negatively on motivation and engagement are identified, along with their relative importance.

The research purpose and contribution to knowledge is achieved firstly through the application of JD-R theory and model to a context that adds to the diversity of contexts in which the model has been applied. The use of ethnographic methodology also contributes variation to the methodologies more usually used when applying the model. Both these aspects support the contention from the theorists that the model is sufficiently robust to be applied in such diverse circumstances. Secondly, contribution is made through making key recommendations for the optimisation of motivation and engagement amongst casual academic staff in order to most effectively serve the organisation's mission of providing valuable online learning and teaching experiences and programs.

Four broad themes are identified that encompass the spheres in which motivation and engagement were impacted and which reflected known theory: leadership and support, professional contribution and growth, conditions of employment and collegiate and social networks. Within these themes are further sub-themes and individual elements, and it is in the elements that the critical contextualised experience is identified. Key recommendations are thus made that organisations should develop a deep understanding of the contextual factors in their organisations and local areas to know what will impact on the motivation and engagement of their casual academic staff members. The deep contextual knowledge is as important as broad understandings of general factors about motivation and engagement provided by organisational theory. Alongside deep contextual knowledge should be an equal understanding of the characteristics, skills, aspirations and needs of the casual academic staff members. Underpinning the development of the critical knowledge necessary should be a commitment to systematic strategies to build and maintain knowledge. Ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to optimise motivation and engagement then in turn depends on a commitment to developing and sustaining structures and processes that align to the needs of the staff and the organisation's aims, which will be properly informed, localised, and appropriate.

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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge that Curtin University works across hundreds of traditional lands and custodial groups in Australia, and with First Nations people around the globe. I wish to pay my deepest respects to their ancestors and members of their communities, past, present, and to their emerging leaders. Our passion and commitment to work with all Australians and peoples from across the world, including our First Nations peoples are at the core of the work we do, reflective of our institutions' values and commitment to our role as leaders in the Reconciliation space in Australia.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter introduces the research purpose and gives an overview of the thesis contents. Chapter 1 contains 12 sections. Following this overview in Section 1.1, a brief background to the research is presented in section 1.2, demonstrating the currency and relevance of the study. Section 1.3 contains a rationale for this research and states its specific purpose. Section 1.4 outlines the research problem and questions and section 1.5 introduces the methodological frame used to answer the questions. Section 1.6 outlines the data collection and analysis approach. Section 1.7 states the significance of the study, signalled through stating expected contributions to theory and to practice. Ethical considerations are addressed in section 1.8 and limitations of the study are stated in section 1.9. Section 1.10 provides an overview of the thesis organisation. A Glossary of Terms is included as section 1.11. The conclusion to Chapter 1 is presented in Section 1.12.

1.2 Background to the Research: Growth in Online Higher Education Programs and Link to Increased Casualisation of the Academic Workforce

Participation in online learning is growing, at a rapid rate, and is a global phenomenon. A number of authors contend that the phenomenon arose from a persisting climate of economic rationalism that has pervaded the higher education sector. Literature and data in this overview shows that the growth is expected to continue and that the reasons for that growth do not all arise directly from economic rationalism. It will also

introduce the recognised link between growing participation on online learning and teaching and growth in casualisation of the academic workforce.

Data emerging from the United States shows that student enrolment in online courses is outpacing that overall in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Bettinger & Long, 2010; Mueller et al., 2013). The Babson survey research group has published annual reports on distance (online) education in the United States since 2015, in which enrolment statistics and other data are captured. In presenting the research group's 2017 report, Allen and Seaman provide data showing that while overall United States higher education enrolments are trending downwards (p. 8), distance education growth – or the market share of online learning- is increasing (p.11). Further, that almost one third (29.7%) of all students in 2015 were studying to some extent online, with 14.3% of all students studying exclusively online (p. 4). In 2012, these figures were 25.9% and 12.6%, respectively. The report contrasts these figures with data from 2002 (p.11) showing just 9.6% of students overall engaged in online learning. Thus, participation in online learning in higher education in the United States has grown from under 10% to almost 30% in less than 15 years.

A broader perspective of participation in any kind of online learning provided by higher education institutions worldwide is found in the ICEF Monitor (2016), a market research service for the international education industry. The monitor report claims that: “online enrolment has reached a new level of critical mass over the past two years, expanding by nearly two-thirds in 2016 alone to reach a global enrolment of 58 million during the year”. Although this estimated figure includes enrolments in massive online open courses (MOOCs), and a significant proportion of those students will never enrol in formal higher education courses, it is indicative not only of demand for online learning but also of the investment being made by institutions in providing online learning opportunities. By 2019, the ICEF monitor reported that enrolment in MOOCs alone totalled 110 million people. Although specific data from many countries is not comprehensive, the growth in online programs appears to be occurring in many higher education contexts, including in Australia, which is the context and concern of this research. The following sections provide a summary of findings from the United States, United Kingdom and Australia of the key drivers for and current position of online programs in higher education. While the experience in the United

States has been the most marked and best documented, trends in the United Kingdom and Australia, although less evident, are still discernible with similar drivers to the United States context.

The major driver for development of online programs in the United States has been economic rationalism and that has influenced global trends, although arguably not always to the same extent. Hayes (2010) contends that "as the economy continues to stagger, universities are forced to respond to increasing numbers of students knocking at their virtual doors in search of online classes" (p. 17). Mueller et al. (2013) agree that universities have welcomed the move to online provision as essentially a cost-saving measure. Other perspectives on the affordances and benefits of online learning are examined but it is important to recognise that the economic imperative has contributed greatly to the uptake of online programs in higher education institutions. The impact of economic forces is not confined to the budget considerations of the institutions: As Mueller et al. (2013; p. 342) note, online learning has become increasingly attractive to students who cannot or who choose not to forego income from paid employment whilst studying. The online trends report published in the United States by Best Colleges (2019) which contained the results of a survey of 1500 students and 451 school administrators found that cost was the biggest concern amongst students and that costs were seen as a direct investment in a future career. Thus, even if approaching the development of courses from the perspective of meeting the needs and requirements of today's learners, economic considerations factor strongly.

The history and growth of online programs in higher education in the United Kingdom is quite chequered, with cultural and organisational forces stymieing growth. The economic rationalism factor is clear in that universities have been reactive to digital innovations and obliged to venture into online provision to remain current and viable, rather than being driven by visionary ideals. Much of the critical commentary about the ways universities respond to forces such as economic rationalism can be found in non-traditional sources such as electronic and print media other than academic journals. Therefore, it can be valuable to go beyond standard sources to find current trend information. Coleman, writing in The Guardian higher education network blog

(Coleman, 2014) comments on the way in which the United Kingdom may be limited by what she terms its scepticism, calling for regulation and a change in attitudes if the United Kingdom is to remain competitive on the world stage. Coleman's blog article references the Babson study referred to above, citing that 74% of academic leaders surveyed believed that online courses provided the same or better learning outcomes, and casting this as a cultural shift in the United States that is needed in the United Kingdom. The significant contribution made by the United Kingdom's Open University is acknowledged by Coleman, with the reach and breadth of its online programs lauded as notable and evidenced on their website. However, at a 2018 conference hosted by The Open University (2018), a symposium was conducted to explore the question of whether moving more wholeheartedly into online provision was the best strategy for supporting non-traditional students. The existence of this symposium could be taken as an indication that academic leaders are still not convinced that online education is the way forward overall. The Times Higher Education blog (2018) contends that the majority of the 120 mainstream universities in the United Kingdom have committed strategically, if not yet operationally, to online learning. A desktop survey revealed 328 courses being offered online across all United Kingdom institutions and the level of qualifications, although none found in initial teacher education. Coleman, The Open University and The Times in its blog, each identify student engagement and support, learning design, faculty engagement and technology choices as aspects that must be attended to and which could be problematic. The Guardian and The Times urge action and encourage United Kingdom academics to look to the U.S for guidance.

Precise data from the Australian context is a little more difficult to garner because no study or publication could be found that reports figures and trends for participation in online programs specifically. However, it is possible to piece together data and make some reasonable conjectures. Key data displayed in Table 1.1 is drawn from two Australian publications: The 2016 Grattan Institute report "Mapping Australian higher education" (Norton, 2016), based on Australian Department of Education data and the 2019 data snapshot publication produced by Jackson (2019) for Universities Australia using enrolment data from 39 Australian universities. While variant methodologies and definitions of on and off-campus study inform the two reports, both agree that both

the number and proportion of students who are completing their courses in ways other than the traditional, full-time attendance on campus are growing (Norton, 2016, p. 25; Universities Australia, 2019, p. 17).

Table 1.1

Australian Online Higher Education Program Enrolment Trends

Aspect of Enrolment Trends	Trend Data – Various Indicators			
Growth 2010 – 2017: Proportion of population aged 25-34 with at least a Bachelor Degree	Major cities +5%	Inner Regional +1.7%	Outer Regional +4.7%	Remote and Very Remote +8.4%
Growth 2008-2016: UG enrolments by equity group	Students with a disability + 106%	Indigenous students + 89%	Low SES students + 55%	Regional and remote students + 48%
Proportion of students studying on campus	2000: 78%	2016: 66.4%		
Proportion of students studying ‘off campus’	2006: 14.5%	2014: 17.8%		

It is not possible to make unequivocal assertions about the correlation between changes in participation from students in specified locations or circumstances, and the growth in online courses and enrolments. However, indications are that these are linked. Pitman and Moodie (2017) in their online article, drew from data from the Australian and international context to state that “The issues of part-time enrolments and external enrolments are closely related, as most students studying externally also study part-time.” While their article focussed on root causes of student attrition and noted causal links between external (online) study and higher attrition rates, they still maintain that universities should not withdraw from this mode as a way of addressing attrition. Rather, universities should examine their practices and improve their online models.

Thus, they are convinced of the strong future of online learning because of its potential affordances for a broader range of students. While the research for this thesis was undertaken prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the uptake of online higher education has increased considerably as a response to the pandemic and thus it can be expected that the findings will be timely and especially relevant given prevailing global conditions.

Having established that online learning and teaching is in growth mode and fulfills a number of purposes, it is pertinent to note a further significant consequence of the phenomenon. There is a discernible correlation between the growth in online learning in formal higher education programs and the expansion of the casual academic work force. The more targeted data from the United States, together with data from one source, Open Universities Australia, leads to the claim that the onset and growth of online and especially open access online higher education programs has had some impact on academic employment modes. There is considerable room and impetus for large-scale, national studies that could properly chart and examine the nature and extent of this impact. In the meantime, there are indications that a key consequence of such rapid growth, and of the attendant change in learning and teaching mode, is that the growth has exceeded the capacity of universities' faculty staff to teach, and in some cases completely manage, the programs. A common strategy to help with this shortfall has been to increase reliance on sessional academic staff to teach in online programs. Significant changes to the composition of teaching staff have occurred, with greater proportions of sessional academics found in all institutions surveyed (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2012; Burgess et al., 2008; Campbell & Burgess, 2001; Department of Education and Training, 2016).

1.3 Rationale for the Study

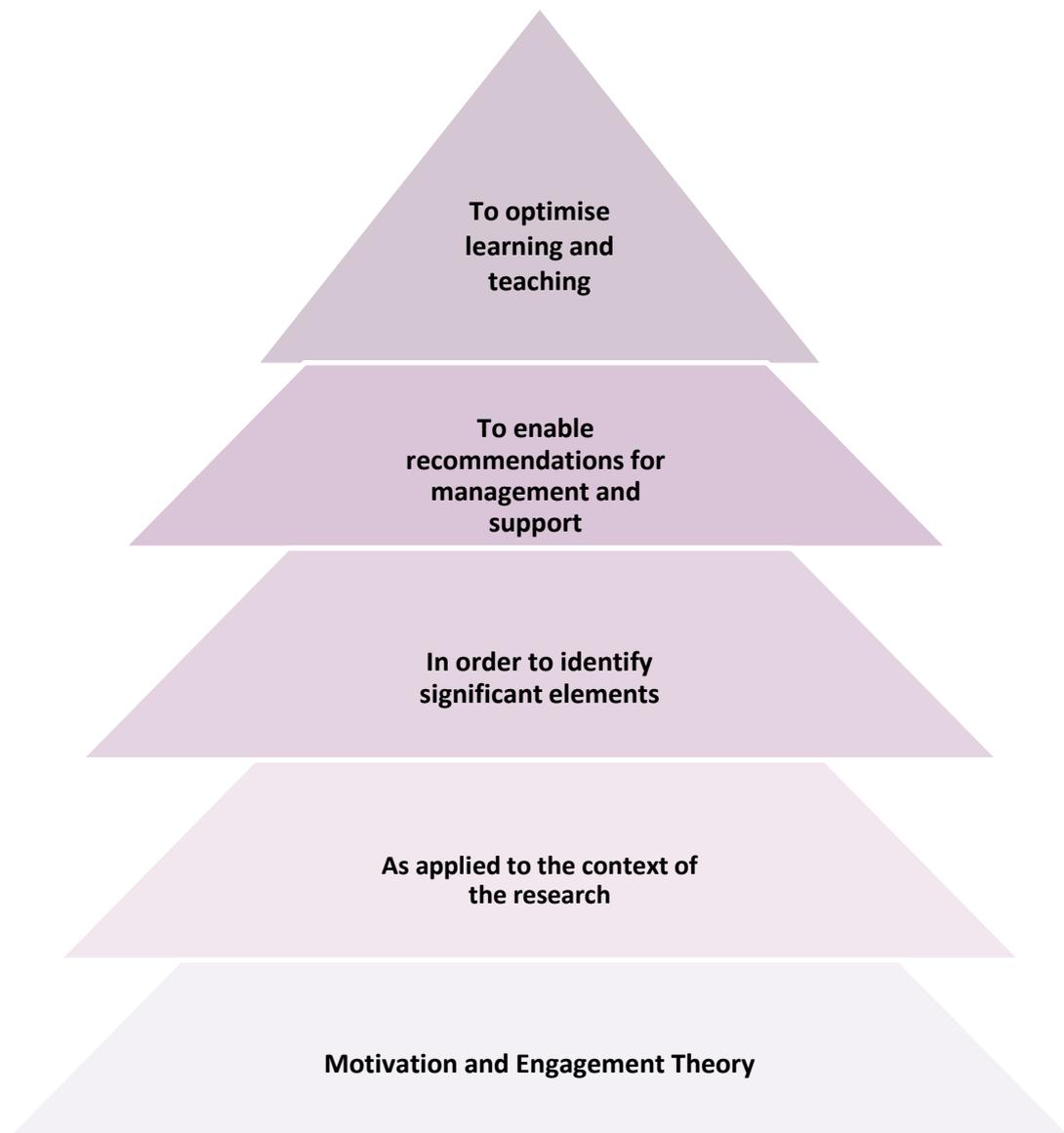
The research purpose arises from the rapid and recent growth in online programs offered by higher education institutions, and the associated growth in reliance on casual academic staff to teach in these programs. Promoting and supporting continued engagement of teaching staff is of critical importance for, as Rowley (1996, p.2) states, teachers largely determine “the quality of the student experience of higher education and (have) a significant impact on students' learning and thereby on the contribution that such institutions can make to society”. Promoting and supporting the engagement

of casual academic staff may demand different approaches than for continuing academic faculty. Therefore, to ignore the implications of these trends may risk the quality of learning and teaching and expose universities to other operational risks, compromising the fundamental mission of the institution. The situation described has created new challenges for the ways in which higher education institutions manage the employment and support of casual academic staff. The concern is to find ways of managing that protect the interests of all stakeholders and which do not risk damaging course quality or student outcomes. Assumptions cannot be made about the needs or even the characteristics of groups of casual academic staff, as they may be different to those of continuing faculty academics who are located on campus. Those expected differences suggest that practices should be examined to ensure they are responsive to the needs of casual academic staff, and particularly to those working online. One key way to help institutions develop the capacity to respond to these needs and examine and adjust management practices to meet the challenges, is to identify and analyse the particular factors that impact on the way casual academic staff work in online programs and tailor management practices to suit.

The overarching purpose of the research is thus to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of the impact various factors have on motivation and engagement in this context and then identify appropriate management strategies that respond to them. That understanding will contribute to the capacity of managers in higher education to develop practices that align with changes in the composition of their teaching staff, in order to support them in providing quality learning and teaching experiences for their students. Figure 1.1 represents the research purpose.

Figure 1.1

Overall Research Purpose Informing Design



1.4 Research Problem and Questions

The overarching research problem is how to investigate the reciprocal and combined effects of casualisation and working in the online medium on the motivation and engagement of casual academic staff members. Following that investigation is the need to examine and understand the processes and structures that support effective management of those staff members, in order to discern what approaches or actions are likely to optimise motivation and engagement. The implication is that an engaged and motivated workforce will be more likely to provide an optimum learning and

teaching environment for the students studying in this mode. The research questions created to structure this investigation are:

- 1 How is motivation and engagement being experienced by sessional academic staff working in one fully online program?
- 2 What are the elements of the work experience that impact on motivation and engagement for interviewed participants?
- 3 How are the elements of the work experience identified by the interview participants important to motivation and engagement for the whole research group?
- 4 What factors are important for the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff members working in an online environment?

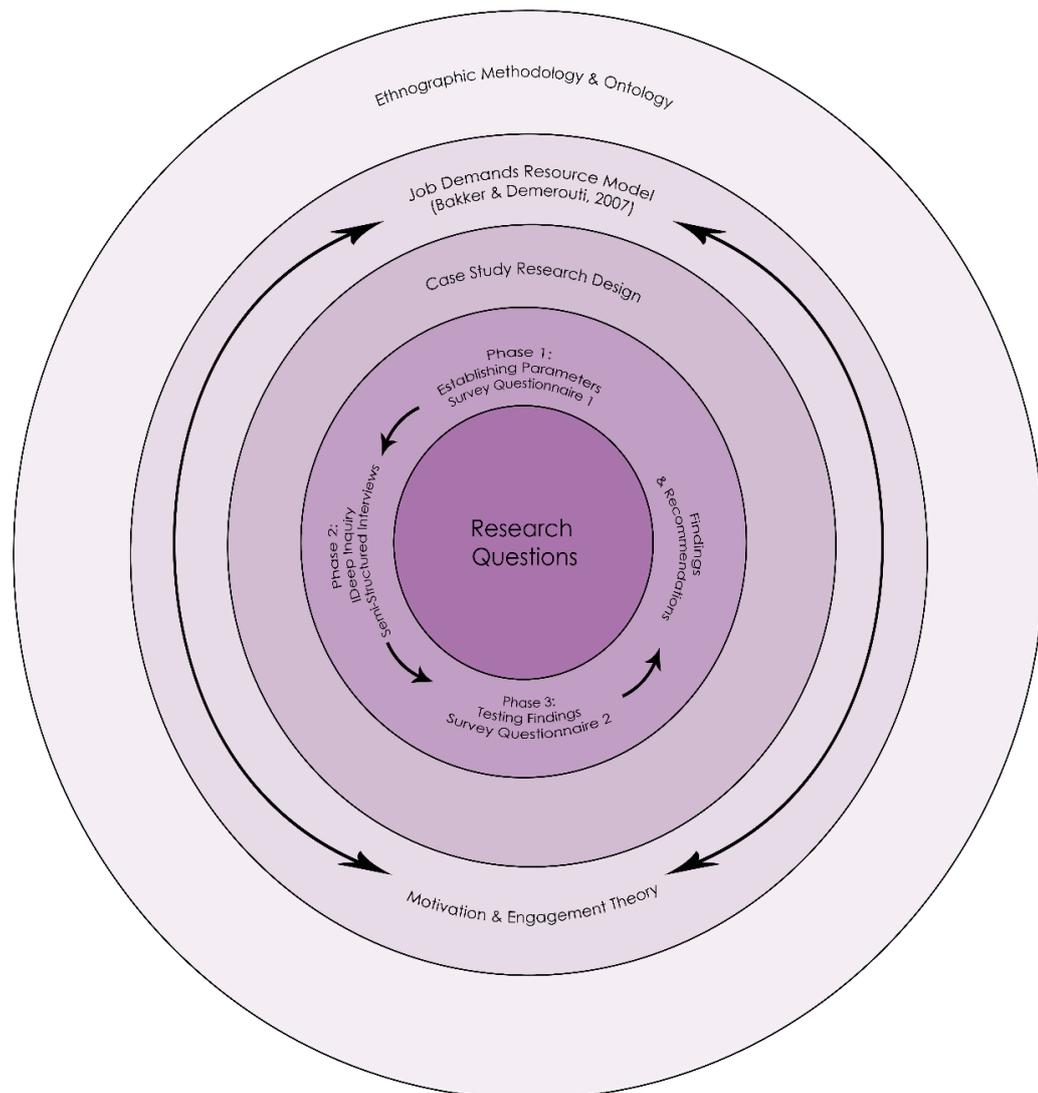
1.5 Research Methodology Used

This section provides an overview of the theoretical frame and design considerations that informed the structure of the research that was conducted to answer the research questions. Following the review of literature about the characteristics of both online learning and teaching and casual academic employment, motivation and engagement theory is surveyed to provide a theoretical foundation and a model for the research design. Both motivation and engagement are impacted upon in a number of ways as a result of the combined effects of casualisation and the online teaching environment. The causal link between employees' motivation and engagement and their efficacy is well-established. Theory pertaining particularly to academic contexts is comprehensively explored to provide a robust and relevant lens through which to seek new knowledge about how higher education institutions can structure the management and support of casual academics to optimise motivation and engagement. Within motivation and engagement theory generally, the Job Demands-Resources theory and model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides the specific theoretical foundation for the research. While quantified measures of impact on programs are not a part of this study, the findings clarify which factors and which organisational actions have important impact on motivation and engagement. The findings can inform future studies that do seek to quantify impact.

Considerations revealed in the review of literature, as well as philosophical perspectives, inform the choice of an ethnographic research design as the most appropriate way to conduct the study (Creswell 2012, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998). The ontological and epistemological foundations for this choice are presented in Chapter 4, where the methodology of the research is described in detail. The structure used to guide inquiry and analysis is a case study (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2018, Yin, 2018). Reasons for this structure are likewise discussed in Chapter 4. The conceptual framework for the overall research design is represented in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Conceptual Framework for the Research Design



1.6 Data Collection and Analysis Approach

The research uses recognised qualitative research methods, with data collection drawn principally from two survey questionnaires and one round of semi-structured interviews. The data collection and analysis is organised into three phases: Phase 1 is labelled Establishing Parameters and comprises two parts; a selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1. Phase 2 is labelled In-depth Inquiry and comprises the semi-structured interviews, and Phase 3 is labelled Testing Findings, undertaken through Survey Questionnaire 2. Levels of motivation and engagement are measured by using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) or UWES, which is embedded in the survey questionnaires administered at the outset and again at the conclusion of the data collection stage of the research. These data are complemented by observations of practice and scrutiny of key documents (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2015). Data analysis to formulate recommendations is undertaken using key techniques of transcribing, coding and categorising to identify and check emergent themes, and is supported by journalling throughout analysis stages (Creswell, 2012, 2018, Creswell& Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness is achieved through key strategies of member checking, use of complementary data sources, thick description through journalling and attention to discrepant information (Creswell, 2018). A full account of the approach to data collection and analysis is provided in Chapter 6.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Identifying and explaining the important factors that impact on motivation and engagement amongst sessional academic staff working fully online will contribute to richer understandings of the application of the JD-R model. It will also guide practice in similar contexts, which are growing in number and reach across locations and institutions.

1.7.1 Contribution to Theory

It is expected that the research will contribute to an enrichment of the applicability of Bakker and Demerouti's JD-R model (2007). It will address the need identified by Jones (2011) of making contributions to the theory that derive from diverse fields, use

methodologies other than the strictly quantitative generally used, and focus on organisational rather than personal perspectives. The focus on organisational perspectives aligns with developments as discussed by Albrecht (2010, p.14) for further research based on the JD –R model. Recent developments of the JD-R model take into account contextual factors surrounding the employees and the model may become conceptualised as an organisational demands-resources model. This nascent model is introduced in Chapter 3 in the review of the development of the theory, and the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 10 include some consideration of this development. However, the main contribution to theory is to suggest elaboration of the applicability of the JD-R model to emphasise factors pertinent to those working in contexts reliant on digital technologies such as found in fully online programs.

1.7.2 Contribution to Practice

Several findings are made about the ways in which motivation and engagement are impacted in the context of the researched group. Arising from those findings are recommendations for how the organisation can optimise motivation and engagement through its structures and processes for the management of casual academic staff. Some of these recommendations will be applicable to other similar contexts where casual academics are responsible for teaching, both online and to some extent, whether online or not. These recommendations can serve to influence practice and, ideally, policy, both within the institution and in other similar settings in higher education where casual academic staff members are being managed.

In general, this research intends to contribute to the discourse about the ways casual academic employment is viewed and managed. It presents a view of casual academic employment in online programs that seeks constructive ways of thinking and acting that are appropriate to such contexts and which respond to the needs of the casual staff. It makes recommendations for optimal management strategies that protect the interests of all concerned. In so doing, the cause of quality learning and teaching in a changing environment can be advanced.

1.8 Ethical Issues

Ethics approval for this study was obtained as shown in Appendix 1.1. Prior to beginning data collection, potential participants were provided with information about the research aims, the methods being used and of their rights to information. Contact details were provided should participants have questions or wish to withdraw consent at any point. During the interview phase, permission was obtained to audio-record responses, and participants were assured that data would be de-identified, with each interview participant selecting a pseudonym. Assurances were provided that participation in the study, as well as any information given or views expressed, would have no positive nor negative impact on employment status.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Four possible limitations are identified. Firstly, participation in each data collection phase was voluntary, and so there may have been some selection bias, although responses were varied enough for any bias to be unlikely to have had significant impact. Secondly, as this was a single case study, localised, contextual characteristics may limit the generalising of results and recommendations. Thirdly, the instrument used to measure motivation and engagement, the UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2010), may not measure all aspects of motivation and engagement most relevant to the work of casual academics working in online programs. The instrument was selected as it is robust and proven and aligns well with the JD-R model, but it is possible that more finely-tuned data could have been elucidated if a more closely tailored instrument had been available. Finally, conclusions and recommendations must be tempered by acknowledging that the data collection, analysis and conclusions were undertaken only by the researcher, albeit under supervision. Further, this research has been undertaken in a field where there are few comparative studies, and so conclusions must be viewed as somewhat propositional pending further research.

1.10 Thesis Overview

Table 1.2 displays the overall structure of the thesis, which is organised into ten chapters. The title and content of each chapter is shown, along with the research questions that are addressed throughout the chapters.

Table 1.2*Thesis Chapters and Research Questions*

Chapter	Title	Content	Research Questions Addressed
1	Introduction	Background to the research; thesis overview and structure	
2	Literature Review: The Research Context	Review of literature relating to online higher education learning and teaching environments	
3	Literature Review: Players in the Context	Review of literature relating to casual academic status and those who teach online	
4	Theoretical Basis for the Model used in the Research	Theoretical basis for the JD-R Model and the UWES instrument	
5	Methodological Framework	Justification of the methodological standpoint and the case study research design	
6	Research Design: Phases of the Research	Explanation of method in the Research Phases 1,2, and 3	
7	Data Analysis and Discussion for Research Phase 1: Establishing Parameters	Analysis of data from the selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1 to formulate Phase 2 interview group and design instrument	1
8	Data Analysis and Discussion for Research Phase 2: Deep Inquiry	Analysis of data from the Phase 2 interviews to formulate themes; design of Research Phase 3 instrument and process	2
9	Data Analysis and Discussion for Research Phase 3: Testing Findings	Analysis of data from Survey Questionnaire 2 and complementary data; key findings	3, 4
10	Conclusions and Recommendations	Conclusions for research questions and recommendations for structures and processes to support casual academic staff working in fully online programs; recommendations for future research	

Following this introductory chapter, the body of the thesis begins with a review of literature which provides a sound foundation for informing data collection and analysis

and the research design more broadly. The review of literature is organised into two chapters, reflecting the two major discourses informing the study. Chapter 2 examines the research context and provides a comprehensive review of literature relating to online higher education learning and teaching environments. In so doing, Chapter 2 provides some historical and global development background to online higher education and current understandings of what is salient to institutions who offer online higher education programs. Chapter 3 presents significant information and ideas about the players in the context, being casual academic staff and those who teach online. In Chapter 3 is a consideration of each separately and then the combination of being a casual academic staff member teaching online. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the contextual knowledge foundation for the research, which focuses on motivation and engagement amongst sessional academic staff working in a fully online university program.

An examination of the important contextual factors surveyed in the complete review of the literature provides the perspective for the conceptual frame for the research, which is explained in Chapter 4. Included in the review of literature is research literature from books and journal articles, as well as publications from government and corporate bodies. Sources reviewed and included were for the most part, published between 2000 and 2020, and the majority of those were published between 2010 and 2019. The multidisciplinary nature of the salient elements of the context has meant that literature is drawn from not only education disciplines but management and leadership, and also psychology. Although each main element is addressed in turn, they are interconnected as all converge to create the lived experience of sessional academic staff working in the online program, whose experience is examined in the case study. Each of the elements identified is considered crucial to establishing a sound basis of theoretical understanding within which to inquire about and report on the reported experiences, views and attitudes of the case study group. The discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 signals how the components of the context and those situated within it informed the inquiry with the research participants. The full review of literature also provides reference points for the findings and recommendations made in the final chapter.

Following the comprehensive discussion of contextual factors, Chapter 4 then presents an explanation of the theoretical basis for the model and existing instruments used in

the research. Chapter 4 traces the key theoretical developments about motivation and engagement relevant to the research which provide theoretical foundations, across time and disciplines, for the formulation of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The chapter contains a description of the JD-R model and a justification for its use in the research to analyse and measure motivation and engagement within the case study group. Chapter 4 establishes a sound theoretical lens through which to conduct the research, discusses the basis for its selection, and shows how it provides a framework for the consideration of the key questions asked of the research participants. The literature reviewed and the theoretical foundation in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 thus guide the questioning of the research participants and the analysis of data gained. In this way, the methodology applied and the research strategies chosen are informed by these chapters.

Chapter 5 contains an explanation of the methodological perspective taken and provides a rationale for adopting a qualitative approach to managing the research. Within Chapter 5 is an argument for the suitability of the ontological and epistemological position taken. The overall approach is based on ethnographic principles (Creswell, 2012, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998) and structured as a case study (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Strategies for achieving research trustworthiness are also discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 outlines how the research is organised into Phases 1, 2 and 3, with each phase building on and informing the next. Phase 1 establishes the parameters of inquiry for Survey Questionnaire 1 and for the formulation of the group to be interviewed in Phase 2. Phase 2 comprises the in-depth inquiry through semi-structured interviews, and Phase 3 tests findings from Phase 2 through Survey Questionnaire 2. Chapter 6 gives details of the processes used for data collection and analysis across all three phases, including the design and administration of instruments used and a schema for the application of tactics.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 contain the findings from the data collected from each of the three phases of the research and a discussion of the results. The results and discussion have been organised over these three chapters so that each phase of the research can be addressed in turn. This was important, as each phase and its findings informed the

next. Across these chapters, the discussion addresses Research Questions 1 to 4 and builds evidence for the key findings that are reported at the end of Chapter 9. Findings are also linked to the surrounding frames of the literature concerning the context as well as motivation and engagement theory. This process permits further testing of the findings to ensure that final recommendations are sound: not only that they are based on trustworthy data but also that they can be situated within robust and accepted theoretical and knowledge frames. The recommendations made can then contribute to both theory and practice. A summary of the findings for each of the research questions is presented in Chapter 10, which also contains an evaluation of the research as well as recommendations for practice and the expected contributions of the research.

1.11 Glossary of Terms

Casual academic	An employee contracted for a specified period to undertake teaching duties in a higher education program. Such employees are paid an hourly or contracted rate rather than an annual salary, with a casual loading in lieu of accruing leave. Their employment status is tenuous. In this thesis, the terms casual, casualised and casualisation are used when referring to the general practice or situation of staff who are not tenured.
Elements	The characteristics or conditions of the work environment being researched that are expected to impact on one or more aspects of motivation and engagement.
Engagement	The mental state employees experience, of vigor (sic), enthusiasm, dedication and absorption in relation to their work. (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2010).
Motivation	The attitude towards their work, where motivated employees will look forward to beginning work, believe in its importance, be goal-oriented and optimistic about what they can achieve.
Online learning	A unit or course of study in which the learning and teaching is undertaken through online interaction rather than through attendance in person at a university campus. Online learning is used in this thesis to include what may be described elsewhere as e-learning and in some cases, distance learning.
Research Phases	Refers to the three phases of the research and their associated data collection and analysis tactics and instruments: Research Phase 1 – Establishing Parameters – Selective review of Australian Practice; Survey Questionnaire 1

	<p>Research Phase 2 – In-depth Inquiry – Semi-Structured Interview Format</p> <p>Research Phase 3 – Testing Findings – Survey Questionnaire 2.</p>
Sessional academic	The term used when referring to a group of casual academic staff, where that term is used in the particular organisation or context. The research participants in this study are referred to as sessional academic staff.
SETLD	Acronym for School of Education Teaching and Learning Development, describing the professional learning program offered to sessional staff at the research university.
The research university	The nomenclature used in this thesis to identify the university at which the research took place, and which employs the group of sessional academic staff studied.
Tutor	The title used in this thesis to describe academic staff engaged in the role of delivery or facilitation of online learning content. Such staff may or may not have other roles and responsibilities.

1.12 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 1 provides a justification for the research purpose and identifies it as a qualitative study undertaken in accordance with ethnographic methods, structured as a case study. The chapter gives an explanation of how motivation and engagement theory, and specifically Bakker and Demerouti's 2007 JD-R model, and Bakker and Schaufeli's Utrecht work engagement scale (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2003, 2010) provide the theoretical foundation for the inquiry and a robust instrument to apply to the specific context under inquiry. The theory and model inform the data collection, analysis and discussion. Each of these processes is discussed in full in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: Higher Education Online Learning and Teaching Contexts

2.1 Purpose and Scope of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 represents the first part of the analytical review of literature which informed the design and direction of the research. Chapter 2 contains an examination of the nature of online learning and teaching and its significant characteristics, limitations and affordances. Chapter 2 establishes what is currently known about online learning environments and teaching online, and what might be of importance in the particular context of the research. The salient characteristics of the research context are that it is a large-scale initial teacher education program provided to diverse students located in urban, regional and remote locations across all states and territories in Australia, as well as to some students located internationally. The knowledge presented about online learning and teaching environments is relevant to understanding contextual factors that will frame and impact on ways staff teaching in this and other online contexts experience motivation and engagement in their work.

There are seven sections to Chapter 2. Section 2.1 introduces the chapter and presents the review scope. Section 2.2 provides an overview of the online learning and teaching environment. Section 2.3 contains an explanation of online learning as a construct and section 2.4 considers the ways in which online learning provision can contribute to social change and social justice. The role played by technologies is examined in Section 2.5 and in Section 2.6, the impact of the teacher in online learning contexts is emphasised. Chapter 2 concludes with Section 2.7.

In reviewing the literature about online learning contexts for higher education, two broad considerations guide the search for literature that would be valuable to the research purpose. Those considerations are:

- What is known historically and globally about the nature of online learning and teaching in higher education; and
- What is important about that for the context of the research, which might influence how motivation and engagement are experienced.

The two considerations provide salient boundaries to the review of literature in Chapter 2 and form a lens through which to view and select relevant literature. While the considerations are not explicitly answered, both are brought to bear across Sections 2.2 to 2.6 and form a reference point for decision-making about what to include. There is an extensive body of literature that interrogates online teaching and learning, but the review of that discourse for this thesis has been limited to literature that contributes to explicating the nature of the online teaching experience. This means that there is no critical analysis of software platforms, course design or program rationales per se: those aspects are only examined in terms of how they might impact on what it is like to teach in such programs. Examining the impact on what it is like to teach in such programs is then further investigated in the research to focus particularly on impact on motivation and engagement, for a select group of teaching employees, being casual academic staff. International contexts have been surveyed to the extent that they provide a sense of Australia's relative position globally. The Australian experience is emphasised and proves highly informative, while contributions from other locations have contributed meaningfully to discussions and conclusions in the review in places.

2.2 Overview of the Online Learning and Teaching Environment

The literature about online learning and teaching environments provides a reference point for later discussion and final recommendations for organisational responses that seek to optimise motivation and engagement. Relevant dimensions of online higher education learning environments are presented in the full review in sections 2.3 to 2.6. These are that, firstly, the notion of online learning and online learners is a recent construct and one which has contributed to perspectives about learning. Secondly, that the availability of online learning has been an agent of social change and social justice

and thirdly, that technologies employed to provide online learning need only be ‘good enough’ for purpose, with that purpose being the pedagogical intent. The technologies must support sound pedagogical design for online learning by embedding social constructivist learning design and encompassing multiple elements that impact on the learning experience. Finally, that the individual teacher still makes a difference.

2.3 Online Learning as a Construct

The notion of online learning and online learners is a recent construct. Up until about 2003, online or ‘distance’ learning was viewed as a way to utilise emerging technologies to give learners who could not attend a campus access to what was viewed as a proper tertiary education experience. Since that time, online learning is fast becoming a conscious choice and a preferred mode in many cases. The change in the way online learning is viewed and chosen is pertinent to an understanding of the experience of being an online educator and it is important to position it at the outset of this discussion of the literature. Historically, studies into online course delivery and online learning were mostly concerned with the ways and extent to which the online medium impacts on effective learning. The discourse is now moving away from one of how to compensate for an assumed deficit (Ehlers & Pawloski, 2006; Zare, 2000) and towards how the affordances of online learning and digital media can be enhanced, with authors from across global locations contributing to the field. For instance, Dumford and Miller (2018), Ladyshevsky and Soontiens (2013), Narang et al. (2021) and Shearer et al. (2020) write about North American contexts; Doherty (2015) from the United Kingdom; Pei and Wu (2019) and Wang et al. (2020) report on studies from universities in China, Kumar and Lin (2013) in south-east Asia. Deantonio and Johnson (2015) reported findings from the U.S Quality Matters project and framework to an international audience in Spain in 2015. These and other studies that examine how learners interact with the online learning environment and construct their learning have contributed to new perspectives about learning and brought changes to formal learning theory and to the way university learning is viewed.

The literature shows that writers and theorists from North America have been prevalent in the field, reflecting the fact that North American universities have offered distance

education to tertiary students through online programs since the early days of the internet in the 1990s. Harasim (1990; 2000; 2011) has written extensively about learning theory and its application to online learning environments, believing that the changes in theoretical understandings are fundamental. Harasim contended in 2000 that online education represented a “new paradigm in learning” (p. 17), acknowledging Kuhn’s idea (1970) that paradigm shifts occur when conversations between varying groups start to achieve meaningful communication, and arguing that this was evident at time of writing. Harasim provides an historical overview of key technological advances, practitioners and theorists that have led to her making her central contention and she presents extensive data from a dedicated research team that surveyed over 439 online courses (the term courses is used here to denote units rather than entire programs). Harasim’s work (2011, 2017) focusses on how definitions and constructions of theories of learning have been required to change because of the phenomenon of online learning. Harasim begins with a systematic representation of the theories, pedagogies and technologies employed by practitioners who design and teach in online programs, according to whether they operate from a behaviourist, cognitivist or constructivist stance. Her later work (2017) argues that emergent learning theory must include connectivist and collaborativist theory which arise directly from the ways in which humans interact in digital learning spaces and with digital technologies and tools. The comprehensive and robust nature of the work provides a convincing case for the claim that online learning is a phenomenon that has had impact upon learning theory constructs.

Athabasca University, in Alberta, Canada has been a leading institution in online education for some years, and a number of publications emanating from the university have been seminal in informing theory and practice. This includes the first handbook of distance education in 2003 (Moore & Anderson), and then Anderson’s edited book ‘Theory and practice of online learning’, in 2004 and a new version in 2008. The discourse contained in these key publications includes another significant shift, allied to that described by Harasim, which is the emergence of the term ‘online learners’. This label is more suggestive of a positive engagement with the institution than the older label of distance education and still encompasses the students unable to access a campus due to their location remote from a campus, while also any student who may

choose or be required to access learning online. In this way, online learners are conceptualised as less marginalised, as well as more realistically heterogeneous. Online learning can now be seen as a generational development that can be more ubiquitous. This development has allowed the consideration of technologies to focus on how they can enable and enhance learning, rather than how they can compensate for something believed to be missing.

There is some continuing scepticism about whether online learning and teaching is as good as classroom-based learning. While this review does not discuss measures of quality, a full understanding of the context is helped by being aware that in some quarters, online learning is still viewed as a mode with limitations. Remaining firstly with the Canadian work, Parker (2008, 2012), addresses questions of viability and attractiveness to students, asking whether institutions are able to provide online education that is sustainable financially, whilst still guarding some more traditional quality values. Parker discusses an often-stated view that institutions' moves to online provision represent a commercialisation of learning and that quality will inevitably be compromised. That question certainly bears scrutiny and challenge. Parker, in recognising that such views must be scrutinised thoroughly, accepts that a full examination of the sources of the scepticism is a very broad endeavour, but maintains that certain aspects can be readily contested. One of the most significant points that Parker makes is that quality is in the eye of the beholder (2008, p. 307), and that the experience of quality is both individual and relative. Parker's later work (2012) addresses questions of how formal demonstrations of quality assurance demanded through external governance and accreditation can include online course delivery specifically. Parker's contentions instigated discussion about whether established ideas and measures of quality also need modifying to encompass online learning and teaching, in the same way as learning theories have been accommodated in this new environment. Parker's work signals different understandings that are needed about the student experience, particularly insofar as they inform quality measures in an online environment. The need for frameworks through which to judge quality of online provision has been recognised in Australia. A significant project undertaken by the Association for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) produced the Technology Enhanced Learning Accreditation Standard (TELAS) to allow

institutions to self-assess their programs across four key domains: online learning environment, learner support, learning and assessment tasks, and learner resources (ASCILITE, 2021).

Meyer (2003) had already noted that the years of online teaching and learning up until then had taught us that the characteristics of the students and what they bring to their learning are more significant when the learning mode is online, with key considerations being facility with technology and a preference for a visual learning style (p. 16). Thus, if the program or course is to be judged as good quality, it will be more critical that the learning environment provided – the technologies chosen and the pedagogies employed – align to the students’ situations. Ideas about the suitability and affordances of online learning environments have been examined by Australian academics working in this area. Khoo (2003) and Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) write of the way in which students learning online approach the learning interface, with expectations that it will provide them with what they need to be able to learn effectively. They contend that this is a different and higher expectation to that brought by students to classroom-based learning. Lowe and Cook (2003) identified that there is often a skills gap between what students bring to an online learning environment and those needed for study success. Duff and Quinn (2006), recognised these significant concerns and devised a comprehensive framework to address student retention in online courses. Issues of student engagement and retention in online courses has remained a focus of inquiry across various contexts. For example, Park and Choi (2009) in China identified factors that caused adult learners to either leave or remain engaged with online learning, and Bigatel and Edel-Malizia (2017) in the United States, investigated the application of a framework for indicators of engaged learning online.

The idea of alignment of courses to students’ situations is reflected in the recent development of work that scrutinises the degree to which more specific programs or approaches are ‘fit for purpose’, rather than the discourse being overall more general to big ideas about online learning and its affordances and limitations. For instance, Pei and Wu (2019), based in Beijing, reported findings about a systematic review of four major databases and medical journals in in of whether online learning “worked better” than offline learning in undergraduate medical education. Wang et al. (2020) looked

specifically at the ways various multimedia offered in online programs in Beijing high schools impacted on the ways 131 students collaborated to learn. This increasing focus on specific aspects of the online environment, of online learning as a construct, or on particular student cohorts, and how they can contribute to measures of quality, is seen in a study undertaken by Barczyk et al. (2017). The researchers investigated the ways in which students' demographics affected the ways they viewed the quality of their online learning experience, considering, specifically, their age and their employment status while studying online.

Considerations of appropriateness for the students' contexts must therefore be an important consideration for the academic staff working in online programs as well as for the course designers. The engagement of academic staff with their work will be affected by their capacity to provide a suitable learning environment. This thesis will reveal that such capacity will in turn be determined by factors both internal and external to the staff members.

The availability of technologies provides access to higher education to more diverse population groups and in ways that were not otherwise possible. Thus, the technologies themselves have served to broaden access to tertiary education and change the way in which it is experienced. This has, in turn, led to changes in the ways a university student can be viewed. The significance of the heightened need for comprehensive and relevant learning support for online students increases the onus of responsibility on staff working in online programs. The tutor will often be the focus for all learning (and general) interactions from students. The challenge of this responsibility is further compounded by the characteristics of online student cohorts themselves, as well as from the learning environment. The dimensions of the role of online tutors arising from the responsibility to provide supportive online learning and teaching environments are discussed in sections 2.5 and 2.6. Firstly, though, the positive impact on social justice must be noted.

2.4 Online Higher Education as an Agent of Social Change and Social Justice

An important theme that has emerged in the discourse about online higher education is how the technologies and their accessibility serve a social justice agenda. As observations made it apparent that digital learning and teaching technologies were

broadening access to higher education, institutions began to recognise that provision of online programs could be a purposeful strategy for social change. The potential for purposeful change was heralded first in the developing world, where questions of basic access to education were more marked. The work of Kumar and Lin (2013) in collecting and publishing writers from worldwide geographical contexts, demonstrates that the provision of online learning is far-reaching across both the developed and the developing world, with the latter (including China, Malaysia and Indonesia) viewing the access to this learning very much as a key agent of significant social change. The change agenda is also relevant to developed countries, the Australian context, and particularly to the research university. In Australia, the social justice agenda has been served to a great extent through the opening of entry pathways into online learning, advanced most notably by the introduction of Open Universities Australia in 2004 (Open Universities Australia, 2020). Allowing open access to online tertiary courses, regardless of previous academic background, has fundamentally changed the composition of student cohorts in these programs, and the numbers of students engaged in these programs is significant enough to claim impact nationally. The information in Figure 2.1 has been drawn from the Department of Education and Training's annual report of enrolments in higher education, published 11 September 2019 (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

Figure 2.1

Student Enrolments for Open Universities Australia 2018

Table 10.1: Unduplicated Number of OUA Students by Age Group, Study Period and Gender, 2018

Age Group	March Quarter 2018			June Quarter 2018			September Quarter 2018			December Quarter 2018			TOTAL ^(a)			Total 2017
	Males	Females ^(b)	Persons	Males	Females ^(b)	Persons	Males	Females ^(b)	Persons	Males	Females ^(b)	Persons	Males	Females ^(b)	Persons	
17 and under	47	97	144	47	96	143	87	153	240	72	139	211	159	322	481	394
18	68	130	198	74	143	217	96	195	291	96	163	259	207	388	595	531
19	90	183	273	91	193	284	134	249	383	113	244	357	270	557	827	736
20	114	238	352	116	244	360	161	312	473	123	276	399	332	684	1,016	949
21	157	251	408	136	215	351	172	294	466	141	255	396	401	677	1,078	1,130
22	150	294	444	122	230	352	182	326	508	150	227	377	410	687	1,097	1,242
23	171	318	489	126	258	384	181	339	520	160	221	381	428	701	1,129	1,229
24	177	300	477	142	233	375	190	301	491	145	212	357	413	660	1,073	1,236
25	169	298	467	125	219	344	203	280	483	138	193	331	397	613	1,010	1,123
26	198	306	504	130	223	353	185	284	469	123	200	323	395	640	1,035	1,102
27	173	299	472	140	230	370	177	271	448	127	191	318	373	613	986	1,038
28	174	271	445	120	175	295	164	259	423	122	157	279	349	527	876	1,029
29	153	251	404	120	170	290	163	230	393	120	141	261	328	492	820	904
30 to 39	1,146	1,849	2,995	814	1,276	2,090	1,123	1,878	3,001	730	1,224	1,954	2,328	3,819	6,147	6,759
40 to 49	603	1,043	1,646	395	680	1,075	567	1,080	1,647	401	657	1,058	1,139	2,072	3,211	3,338
50 to 59	203	353	556	116	232	348	195	376	571	122	215	337	398	748	1,146	1,147
60 and over	106	124	230	53	66	119	115	116	231	59	68	127	205	230	435	409
TOTAL	3,899	6,605	10,504	2,867	4,883	7,750	4,095	6,943	11,038	2,942	4,783	7,725	8,532	14,430	22,962	24,296
Total 2017	4,744	7,098	11,842	3,067	5,101	8,168	4,453	7,170	11,623	3,080	4,913	7,993	9,411	14,885	24,296	
% change on 2017	-17.8%	-6.9%	-11.3%	-6.5%	-4.3%	-5.1%	-8.0%	-3.2%	-5.0%	-4.5%	-2.6%	-3.4%	-9.3%	-3.1%	-5.5%	

(a) Total number of students is less than the sum of the four quarters because some students appear in more than one quarter.

(b) May include students who have requested their gender to be recorded as neither male nor female.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the difference in age distribution of students when compared with expectations for on-campus cohorts, and Brunner (2017) and Dymment et al. (2017) have further identified from their students in two large Australian universities that those studying online were more likely than their campus-based peers to be older, with significant gaps since previous study/schooling, responsible for the care of other family members, engaged in employment, from low socio-economic backgrounds, living further from city centres, less academically qualified, and experiencing social, cultural or physical barriers to on-campus study. While these figures represent a major influence on the student cohort in the research university context in particular, their significance for online teaching in general can be inferred. The impact may be less for institutions whose online offerings do not extend to open access, but if the above characteristics are taken into account, it could be expected that even those online students with the more standard requisite academic background will be more likely to possess one or more of the other characteristics.

The capacity of the online mode to remove a number of other barriers to study makes it more likely to lead to that choice being taken. The online trends report published in the United States by Best Colleges (2019) referred to in section 1.2 (p.3) claims that 50% of the 1500 students surveyed chose to study online because work and/or family commitments precluded attendance at campus-based courses. Although no distinction was made between work and family commitments, as 64% were female, family commitments were probably prevalent. In the 2017 review publication, the authors report that “students are choosing online education for a wide variety of reasons that go well beyond considerations of convenience and the flexibility of ‘anytime, anyplace’ learning” (p. 11). The authors note that their survey found students also chose the online option because of factors such as disabilities, illness, and anxiety. Further, 48% of the survey participants were shown to belong within the bottom two income level classifications (p. 23). Thus, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the provision of online programs has ameliorated or removed barriers to higher education for significant population groups and that this has changed the composition of student cohorts. It is the latter consideration and its impact for those teaching in these programs, which is of most interest to the research, as motivation and

engagement may be enhanced if sessional academics feel part of a social justice agenda as change agents.

2.5 The Role of Technologies that Support Online Learning and Teaching

The overriding conclusion from the literature is that technologies employed to provide online learning need only be ‘good enough’ for purpose, but must be utilised in the service of sound pedagogical design. The contention that technologies chosen by institutions should suit the context and rather than there being an ideal technology choice, the central question should be whether appropriate choices are made that are fit for purpose, emerged early in the development of online programs (Ally, 2008; Anderson, 2008; Fahy, 2008; McGreal & Elliott, 2008). Key to determining good fit were considerations of efficiency and timeliness, such as ongoing affordability, robustness, and availability when needed (Davis et al., 2008).

An important development in the discourse surrounding the enabling role of technologies to learning was signalled by Hutchison et al. (2008) in their assertion that it is the “activities or experiences that the technology enables” (p.203) that should be examined, rather than focusing on the technologies themselves and their capacities. While that stance seems unopposed in the literature, it is still noted that such a position assumes a basic level of functionality and accessibility of the technology. Alongside the assumption that the technologies selected and afforded will be basically functional, is the assumption that those teaching in online environments will be competent in their use. Part of being good enough is ensuring all teaching staff, including casual teachers, will be competent and confident in employing the technologies used to deliver and support learning. This is an important factor to consider in terms of its impact on motivation and engagement and the ways in which the organisation could support casual academic staff effectively.

Whatever technologies are chosen, they must be utilised in the service of sound pedagogical design. Devlin and McKay (2016) noted that online learning and teaching environments have helped to move the positioning of the teacher from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side” (2016, p. 101) but Shearer et al. (2020) expressed their consternation at the lack of fundamental development in that shift, claiming that it

could be argued that the move to online courses has not been accompanied by pedagogical shifts of any real value (p. 322). Cohen (2021) highlights some of the key concerns that continue presently about the ways online programs must be designed in accordance with purposeful pedagogical intent and urges systematic action. Part of any such systematic action must be the professional engagement and development of the casual academic staff who will, almost inevitably, bear the major load of the teaching in online programs.

More diversification of views on how this can be achieved is found in this historical discourse than in the preceding debates about the role of digital learning technologies per se. One key thread in this discourse has been the way higher-order thinking can be scaffolded through digital learning interfaces. Ally (2008), in referencing the work of Bonk and Reynolds (1997) argued that the key to enabling higher order thinking lies more in the learning design than in the technologies themselves, although a certain minimum functionality for the technology is assumed. Learning design has emerged as a central and inextricable consideration in the discourse of online learning. Despite the centrality of learning design, writers in the early years of this century continued to argue the critical role of the technology's capabilities in being able to create authentic and valuable learning experiences. Kozma (2001) proposed that the power of the technologies enabled learning to be brought to life in ways that ameliorated some of the limitations of an isolated learning experience. Ring and Mathieux (2002) wrote of authentic learning and of the key role of collaboration in achieving such learning, and the ways in which certain technologies enable this. The ensuing ten years have certainly seen synchronous collaboration become ubiquitous, more lately enhanced by video presence of the collaborators.

One consequence of the development of the view that technologies must serve pedagogical intent has been the recognition of the importance of collaboration between technological innovators and pedagogical experts to develop valuable learning opportunities. In 2000, McNaught et al. devised a framework derived from extensive research into leading-edge practices across Australian universities which were promoting and supporting "computer-facilitated learning" (p. xvii). Although the model was not specifically concerned with fully online courses, the central tenet of their review recommendations and the basis for their framework, is still highly

relevant. The central argument is that technology systems must always support the institutions' teaching and learning plan and aims, rather than determine them. A brief look at a few more recent technological innovations seems to indicate that it is now well-recognised in the Australian context that any innovations designed to enhance a digitised learning environment must be embedded within a supportive systemic and pedagogical infrastructure.

Developing the argument further, Loi (2007) suggests that technological innovations will only be advantageous to learning if they are enmeshed with associated developments in pedagogical frameworks. Loi further contends that all stakeholders in the learning and teaching process: technology designers, teachers and learners, must collaborate to create content and innovate ways of interacting with it. Once again, this has implications for the ways in which online teachers need to fulfil their teaching roles effectively. Therefore, it can be expected that capacity for this creation and innovation amongst casual staff working online will vary and will factor into considerations of demands and resources, thus impacting on motivation and engagement.

A project undertaken within the teacher education program at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology by Latham and Faulkner (2016) illustrates how technological innovation can be planned purposefully to support pedagogical intent. Latham and Faulkner developed a virtual primary school in the digital learning environment, and pre-service teachers were able to interact with the virtual environment to practise some learning and classroom management interventions. Latham and Faulkner explain the way that the planning, trialling and management of the implementation of this digital learning environment was an iterative and collaborative process involving the technical and academic innovators. The authors suggest that this kind of project and approach can be emulated by institutions to achieve effective synergies of pedagogical design and technological tools.

The provision of at least some online learning and teaching is viewed as an imperative for Australian universities. Kregor et al. asserted in 2012 that online provision would be necessary if universities were to retain their place as attractive to students. The questions about whether universities (indeed all educational institutions) really need

to include online offerings has been comprehensively answered by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the critical decision processes are now not whether to offer online learning but to focus on developing clear and strong visions and then selecting the appropriate technology infrastructure that will support the institution's vision and specific goals. Kregor et al.'s article heralded the consideration of human resources as part of the investment picture and not only the technologies themselves, and further warned of the unwanted consequences of poor decisions or insufficient attention to all factors. This warning is still timely, especially in the rush to online provision observed in response to the pandemic conditions, and is highly relevant to questions of staff development and support. Kregor et al. align with O'Neill et al. (2004) in asserting that "there are risks; to the institution's brand if a high quality experience is not delivered, of wasting significant investment if the technology is under-utilised, and of disenfranchising staff and students if expectations are not met" (Kregor et al., 2012, p.17).

The importance of sound pedagogical intent in informing the choice and utilisation of the technological systems and tools has been established and further, that staff and students must be included and supported in creating the resultant learning environments. The central role of pedagogical intent requires a closer examination of its important aspects. The final part of this examination of the nature of the online learning environment therefore looks more closely at some key features of sound online learning and teaching pedagogy. Pedagogical and course design principles can be applied to good effect in the online learning environment. Application of clear principles provides a better understanding of the elements of practice that impact on the efficacy of all of those who teach in that space, and will help guide deeper inquiry of the sessional teachers' experience. Technology and pedagogy must develop hand in hand if desired learning outcomes are to be achieved for online learners. Two clear themes emerge, which are that design must encompass social constructivist learning, and that design must encompass multiple elements that impact on the learning experience.

- **Constructivist Learning Environments**

The social constructivist view of learning, as advanced by Bruner (1966) and Vygotsky (1978), maintains a persistent prominent role as a sound basis for strong learning

design principles. Much of the discourse surrounding learning design focuses on how these principles can be realised, with Ally (2008) reporting that debate is now settling towards the conclusion that online environments can indeed create constructivist environments. Active and social learning strategies such as viewing, hearing and discussing others' ideas, and strategies to stimulate thinking at higher orders, are all essential components of constructivist thinking, and digital technologies which enable these processes are now well-entrenched. Ally contends that the online environment, if well-designed and managed, provides an ideal vehicle for working within the zones of proximal development and providing a selection of appropriate learning materials that individuals can choose from as and when needed. Ally believes that online course design is fast catching up with face-to-face delivery in its development from behaviourist approaches, towards the constructive, as course designers develop their capacity to create constructivist learning environments in digital media. Despite this overall development, Ally suggests that elements of behaviourist or cognitive learning theory can and should co-exist with constructivist learning in online learning environments. Ally (2008, p. 20) highlights the complexities of co-existence of various learning theories and builds on the work of Siemans (2004) in introducing a more recent learning theory development, which is the idea of connectivist theory. This theory suggests that knowledge that resides to some extent in machines can connect with the knowledge in humans, and that critical new knowledge or learning can be created through this connectivism. Writing from the context of the Open University, Malaysia, Kaur (2007) offers further perspective on connectivist theory. Through a focus on how interactive discussions were structured and supported in the university's online program, Kaur states that the view taken is a social constructivist perception of the way in which humans and computers can interact to create knowledge. Kaur's writing proposes theoretical evidence to support the contention that computers can be used to actually develop thinking and collaborative skills.

Collaboration between learners and between teachers and learners is accepted as being a significant component of social constructivism of knowledge, and is still accommodated in the connectivist theory described in the previous paragraph. Kali et al. (2009) have published an extensive ontological and epistemological discussion that supports the constructivist view of learning and demonstrates the methodology used

to support the paradigm. It looks at the specific design principles required of an online unit or course which will enable collaborative learning, recognising such learning as a cornerstone of constructivist learning environments. The authors offer two main precepts that are essential: firstly, that learners engage in peer instruction and secondly, that learners' artefacts are shared and used as an aid in the further learning of others. Abrami (2009) presents findings from a series of articles concerned with a project called gstudy, a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL). The critical impetus for the study was to address what was seen as a serious lack of research into the ways in which various technology tools support and sustain productive online collaboration. Instead, Abrami reports an overemphasis in the literature on developing and testing the functionality and usability of technologically-based tools (for example text chat tools, conferencing tools, email systems) for simply sharing information, rather than examining how and why they might variously determine or effect collaboration. Abrami's findings turn attention beyond just considering how the technologies might support effective learning, towards examining what specific learner behaviours the tools enable through the interventionism of course design principles. Abrami and Bures (2009) continue this discussion to question what was really known about how effective collaborative learning is and what mechanisms enabled it to occur online. This questioning is not so much at the philosophical or psychological level regarding different perspectives of learning theory, but is concerned with the ways in which the online learning context contributes to or disables effective collaborative learning. A central contention being advanced by Abrami (2009) is that the research at that time was showing that distance learning was returning poorer learning outcomes, higher levels of student attrition and lower levels of higher-order thinking and complex learning skills. Abrami and Bures (2009) recognise that some factors such as different student cohorts had influenced these findings but still identified other causes unrelated to this: principally, instructional materials and the technologies used to deliver the material. This finding may be indicative of an earlier time when course design principles for online learning were unsophisticated and tended to simply transfer content into an online space and proceed to deliver the material in the same way as though students were in class. The key missing factor was student interaction; the cognitive and social presence identified as essential by Kali et al. (2009).

Given the imperative to collaborate and draw from varied expertise in order to create effective online learning environments, the literature further reveals that such collaboration needs to be undertaken advisedly and with close reference to some specific methods and affordances. The risk is that energies are expended in directions that will not support learning in an online environment.

- **Design must encompass multiple elements that impact on the learning experience**

The way in which learning design is undertaken and managed will impact indirectly on staff teaching in online programs. Although casual academic staff are less likely to be directly involved in the decision-making that will determine strategic approaches to design, they will be impacted by the course taken. As the research project is concerned with identifying actions or processes that can be instituted by the organisation that will result in sessional staff being fully motivated and engaged, it is relevant to consider how the learning design processes are undertaken. A key theme that has emerged from the group of readings reviewed in section 2.3 to 2.5 is the recognition that the online learning experience does not simply replicate or replace the formal learning that occurs on campuses: it provides a comprehensive system that encompasses more than simply formal learning content. Furthermore, that schemas or models that encapsulate what is important in online learning design must be formulated and presented for application in various teaching contexts. This need is recognised both here in Australia and globally. Coleman (2014) notes that academics in the United States have re-examined their learning environments to provide “contemporary digital experiences” that maintain student engagement, and urges the United Kingdom to follow suit and devise and enact systematic changes that reflect what is known about online learning design. As Coleman notes (p.3), it is the “whole culture” of online learning that needs to be embraced in order to find suitable learning design systems if students are to be attracted and retained in online programs.

The design and ongoing management must be systematic, collaborative and well-informed by theory. Dalgarno et al. (2013) urge researchers to draw from and build on existing research, rather than devising ever-new models and frameworks. Their editorial piece contains some useful statements that might be taken to be representative of the current research position in this field. The authors explicitly state in this editorial

that it is a “well-established notion” (p.i) that overall learning design and the management and delivery of specific learning activities both influence learning more than the actual technologies employed. This takes the earlier-accepted idea that the technologies need only be good enough a step further. For this reason, they exhort both researchers and managers to look closely at how they might apply some existing models of learning design to their own contexts, rather than assuming that their specific research context is not sufficiently similar as to benefit from this application and refinement. Following are examples of such schemas being advanced in Australian settings, each of which contributes to a comprehensive picture of what needs to be included when devising a well-informed, theoretically-based design strategy suitable for the particular context.

The idea that instructional designers and the media developers should collaborate at the outset of planning courses, to ensure that purpose is aligned, quality criteria are understood and logistical or practical aspects are duly considered, has been advanced by Caplan and Graham (2008). However, in recognising that this is not always possible, they provide some guidelines for designers to support good planning and decision-making. These guidelines can be summarised as: working from an institutional base that has embraced the essential differences between lecture-hall and online courses; properly understanding what constitutes an ‘online course’; and being fully aware of where in the continuum from “first generation to current generation” (Caplan & Graham, 2008, p. 249) of online learning design the course is placed. Caplan and Graham’s guidelines raise some important questions concerning the extent to which some of the suggestions can be applied within the structures that exist in the local institutional setting.

Martin et al. (2007), a team from RMIT University, look specifically at practice that enables effective human-computer interaction (HCI) in online education. They provide a practical guide to developing an educational program, through the employment of a “design-persona” (p. 110), a theoretical modelling process that essentially, means that course designers will attempt to predict the characteristics of their student cohorts and match individual learner characteristics to an appropriate learning environment. (p. 111). This process is then aligned using HCI capabilities in the best way to inform course development, with the authors favouring the use of

systems theory. The work of Martin et al. contains extensive information about modelling and systems theory which sets the otherwise already known considerations within a more theoretical frame, and thus providing the strong theoretical foundation for action urged by Dalgarno et al. (2013).

The Canadian work undertaken by Garrison et al. (2000) produced a theoretical model of effective online learning that explicates the dynamic between the three critical elements of cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence, linking to work undertaken by Aragon (2003). The importance of creating social presence in online learning environments has been positioned by Aragon as one of the most significant factors in not only community-building but also improving learning, and Aragon's work uses social presence theory to explain how social presence in online environments can serve to narrow the "effects of the geographic, temporal, and psychological distance between instructors and participants" (2003, p. 57). In 2008, Anderson wrote more extensively on teaching presence and expands further on three critical teacher roles needed in order to establish 'teaching presence' that were identified in Garrison et al.'s model. These are: designing and organising the learning experience taking place (prior to and during delivery); devising and implementing activities that encourage student/teacher and student/student discourse and interaction at individual and group level between these and between them and the content resources; and finally, adding their own subject-matter expertise through a variety of forms of intervention and instruction. Thus, it can be seen that the elements that build a more comprehensive teacher/student relationship online will be a dynamic that includes casual teaching staff and their practice but also reaches beyond their locus of control. Moisey and Hughes (2008) consider the importance of providing online students with a comprehensive and effective support network, that encompasses 'non-academic' aspects, and see it as an expectation of course designers. Moisey and Hughes describe the Canadian context, but their ideas resonate with the research context, paralleling as it does students who are also considered 'non-traditional' because they have entered the learning environment through non-standard means, many through open access, and so do not necessarily have academic backgrounds, study skills, nor experience with negotiating tertiary institutional environments. They advocate the provision of prospective students with the tools to make "an informed

decision to pursue online learning” (p. 421) and suggest resources that can help them to assess their readiness, consider whether their hardware, software and connectivity is adequate, and access advice about where their course may lead in terms of career progression. Whether or not informed by Moisey and Hughes, Open Universities Australia (2020) introduced readiness quizzes and short preparatory modules for prospective students in 2011, in recognition of this need.

There will be other logistical considerations in the institution of the research context that may limit the application of recommendations from these theorists. These include financial resources and organisational responsibilities – for instance, the extremely large volume of student enrolments and the shared responsibilities for enrolment and welcoming of students between the research university and Open Universities Australia makes some of Caplan and Graham’s and Moisey and Hughes’ recommendations difficult. Nevertheless, these works provide very useful roadmaps for the organisations and further research can be undertaken to determine the relative impact of specific recommendations and guide change as needed.

2.6 The Impact of the Individual Teacher in Online Learning and Teaching.

Notwithstanding the externally-determined dimensions to online teaching and learning, it is critical not to ignore personal skill and agency. The individual teacher or facilitator with whom students will interact still has significant impact in the online learning space. Kanuka (2008) considers the question of whether emerging technologies have allowed online learning to fulfil its promise of providing a cost-effective, socially inclusive, high quality tertiary learning opportunity. She firstly covers territory that has been discussed in Section 2.5 and mentions numbers of investigations into various technologies to ascertain their role in achieving these aims, as well as the almost simultaneous scepticism from other quarters that draws attention to what may be lost in the online learning environment. Kanuka conducts what she sees as a timely analysis of the nature of the diverging views and asks that we view the differences as essentially a reflection of personal teaching philosophy. This last point provides an important indication of where those engaged in online teaching have agency, and to remind educators to ascribe only what truly belongs to the nature of the medium and the rest to the manner in which it is managed at ‘point of delivery’; in

other words, the skill and commitment of the teacher. There are two (connected) ways in which the individual teacher makes a difference in online learning environments specifically. These are, firstly, the ways in which they facilitate learning communities and secondly, how they project their teacher presence.

- **Facilitating learning communities**

The understanding that online learning and teaching is not a simple transaction between each learner and the online environment has led to discourse about how online learning communities need to be created and sustained. Tarserio (2007) identifies two critical components that create an effective learning and teaching dynamic and uses the term communities of practice to describe the ways in which social learning takes place. The two components seen by Tarserio as critical are the way in which course design supports enables interactions that build learning communities and the way in which skilled teachers facilitate and enable those interactions. Tarserio argues that the facilitation role is critical, and that the role of facilitator in online learning extends beyond the traditional teacher role of providing, organising and delivering content. Online teachers must work to create a learning environment conducive to learning with different strategies but with the same purpose and recognition of its importance as the face-to-face teacher creates in a physical classroom. Key principles identified by Tarserio are the need to create a climate of mutual respect, trust and the freedom to be informal when practising skills. The purposeful creation of a conducive learning environment can then allow for another essential factor, which is the conscious participation by the learner in communities of practice for learning. The role of active learning was emphasised by Yen and Abdous (2011) who argue that measures of student engagement must not be confined to looking at grades. Authentic measures of the way in which engagement has impacted on learning must include consideration of whether the learning experiences have developed students' critical thinking and other skills that they will need to be effective lifelong learners.

The transformative potential of online learning environments was the subject of an inquiry and report on blended learning conducted by Garrison and Kanuka (2004). Their report revisits Garrison and Anderson's community of inquiry model (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, Fig.2. p. 98) first formulated in 2003. Although some elements of a blended learning environment will be different from the fully online, the centrality of

the skill of the learning facilitator emphasised in Garrison and Kanuka's report holds equivalent importance in both modes. The teacher's capacity to manage the environments and facilitate the learning experiences, as well as their presence to students, will enable students to reflect and think critically and so advance their understandings. Garrison and Kanuka assert that very specific skills are needed to marry the benefits of considered, more objective and reflective expressions facilitated in the online asynchronous learning environment with the spontaneity and synergy of thought than can enrich the face-to-face learning environment. The relevance of this contribution to the discourse is that it can guide educators now to appropriate technologies that enable this kind of spontaneity and synergy, such as live, real-time online collaboration software. Just as importantly, it points to where the online teachers may need resourcing and supporting if they are to utilise these technologies and so contribute to their role fulfilment.

- **Teacher Presence**

The importance of what has been termed teacher presence online has been highlighted by a number of writers. Teacher presence refers to a way of operating in the online environment, that is distinct from the technical or subject area skills and expertise the online tutor may bring to their role. It is dependent to an extent on an understanding of online pedagogy but also encompasses notions of personal approaches to practice. Pelz (2010) distils and elucidates three principles of effective online pedagogy, borne of extensive experience in online and blended learning provision. While the first two principles reflect what has already been discussed about learning design and online pedagogy, the third introduces the specific idea of teacher presence, exhorting online teachers to constantly strive for presence. One example Pelz provides is especially relevant to this research context, which is encouraging student-led discussions and peer feedback. Similarly, in discussing the role of the tutor (or instructor), Kaur (2007, p.136) describes some specific actions or behaviours that ensure teacher presence is strong: these include active participation in student discussions, timely response to questions and concerns and using explicitly encouraging language to stimulate all students to participate in ideas exchange.

Also of particular relevance is Jones' paper (2007) on encouraging student participation in online discourse. Jones looks specifically at how human-computer interactions (HCI) can best create a student-centred learning environment where there are large groups of students engaging in the same online unit or course. She contends that the central principle is to enable small-group discourse which can be inclusive of diverse learners, and concludes that asynchronous learning is a key enabling factor, with the tutor managing the overall pace. She forwards this as being a way of being inclusive of large numbers and diverse groups while still offering individualised learning. Jones' case study is very relevant to this research study as the teaching context is similar and reflects similar perspectives about the value of student-centred learning, constructivist principles and collaborative practices. Adding dimension to the skill set needed to create effective teacher presence is the mention by Levy (2003, p. 5), recognised earlier by White and Weight (2000), of the need for online teachers to have the interpersonal skills to be able to communicate effectively with students. Levy joins with other writers in emphasising that this communication needs to go beyond providing instructional guidance and to encompass various kinds of problem-solving, including those associated with students' use of technology. Jones' (2007) article mentioned above also signals the increasing challenge of the growing cultural heterogeneity of students, which may result in more variance in communication styles and more demands on teachers to cater for diversity and not assume that one strategy will suit all.

2.7 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 2 has identified the important aspects of online environments that are salient to those working within them. It has focussed on the enactment of teaching rather than the structural and technical aspects that are the building blocks of online programs. An understanding of the contextual aspects as described is vital to informing the research as part of the framework for the design of questions, discussions and analysis of data. The review of the online learning and teaching environment reveals it to be a complex and dynamic space. As a relatively recent construct and one in which expertise is still evolving, it is to be expected that there will be particular challenges for those who work in and manage such learning and teaching environments. Complex challenges

may exist for online tutors, at least initially, to understand how learning can be co-constructed, facilitated and supported in online environments. The extent to which tutors have a shared understanding of and commitment to the broader societal impact of providing online programs will influence how they approach their work and how they feel about it. There may be numerous challenges in working with technologies effectively, and in maintaining the level and nature of teacher presence that will be required to adequately support online learners. In order to guide inquiry about how motivation and engagement is experienced and impacted amongst casual academic staff working in online programs, further literature is needed that builds on the knowledge about the context itself. A review of literature that considers the experience of online teachers and of casual academic staff therefore follows in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

The Players in the Context: Casual Academic Staff Working in Online Programs

3.1 Purpose and Scope of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 contains an examination of the literature which describes and explains the practice and nature of casual academic work in higher education, taking a global perspective but focussing on the Australian context. The purpose of Chapter 3 is to complete the review of literature that informs the selection of the theoretical frames for the research which is concerned with casual academic staff working in online environments. That selection process is explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 completes the background knowledge that is needed in order to conceptualise how motivation and engagement theory and models can be applied to explain and measure how both are experienced by the research participants. Chapter 3 thus follows from the literature presented in Chapter 2 about the online teaching context, and contributes to an understanding about the nature of the work experienced within that context. A comprehensive understanding of both informs the formulation of the conceptual framework and later, the overall method and design of data collection instruments and tactics and the data collection and analysis procedures.

Literature that examines the nature of casual academic work is less extensive than that related to the online learning and teaching contexts that was reported in Chapter 2. As a growing but relatively recent focus for research generally, accounts of lived experience of casual academic work are few and tend to be constrained by limited, mostly industrial perspectives, albeit in very similar contexts to this research. The

review focusses on the Australian context after initially establishing that trends are global and relates key points that have been made in the literature about how the practice is viewed. In so doing, an agnostic view is taken of the desirability of the practice. The purpose of the review is to inform the research and its consequent recommendations, not to take a position on the practice of employing casual academics in Australian universities. The broad considerations that provided the parameters for locating and selecting relevant literature for this chapter are:

- How widespread the practice of casual academic employment is globally and in Australia
- What approaches there are to practices of casual academic employment and how they are viewed
- How casual status might impact on the academic work undertaken
- The approaches and strategies being used to support casual academic staff in their work

Consistent with the approach in Chapter 2, the broad considerations provide helpful boundaries that allow the review of literature to be well targeted to the research purpose. The first consideration regarding ubiquity of the practice of casual academic employment is addressed in Section 3.2, and then the remaining three considerations influence the selection of literature discussed across Sections 3.3 to 3.6 as broad and more specific contexts are reviewed.

Chapter 3 is organised into six sections, the first being this introduction to the purpose and scope of the chapter. Section 3.2 contains a description of the ways in which the practice of casual academic employment has grown, spread and persisted globally and in Australia, thus establishing the currency and significance of the research which addresses how to manage casual academic staff effectively and appropriately. Section 3.3 gives an explanation of how and why the practice has been problematised, identifying some literature signalling the aspects of practices that need exploring with the research participants and linking to theory about motivation and engagement. Section 3.4 serves to identify and discuss the way that the work experience of casual academic staff will be more susceptible to localised contextual factors than permanent academic faculty members, a salient consideration that is linked in the thesis to

motivation and engagement theory and to the research design. In Section 3.5, the connection is noted between the growth in online learning and teaching programs and the growth in casual academic employment practices, with links to the significance of that connection to the research. Section 3.6 contains a survey of some current and emerging practice from various locations for the support and development of casual academic staff. Chapter 3 concludes with Section 3.7. Chapter 3 will show that casual academic employment is growing, is here to stay, and follows global trends; that the practice has been problematised; that contextual factors influence the experience of being a casual academic more than they do for faculty academic staff; and that systematic, well-informed practices for the support and development of casual academic staff are beginning to emerge.

3.2 Growth, Spread and Persistence of Casual Academic Employment

The practice of employing academic staff on a casual basis is one that saw rapid and significant growth in the past 20 years, in particular. The trends can be discerned both worldwide and in Australia, and follow general global trends towards a more casualised workforce across industries (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2012; Burgess et al., 2008; Campbell & Burgess, 2001; Department of Education and Training, 2016). Not only are numbers of casual employees increasing but the practice of employing casual staff has spread from traditionally more volatile and less skilled occupations (such as seasonal customer service-based industries) and into the professions and industries that traditionally offered permanent career paths. Reflecting these trends, universities in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom have seen significant growth in their casual academic workforce (Bryson & Blackwell, 2006; Klopper & Power, 2014; Percy & Beaumont 2008). Furthermore, rather than being utilised only to manage unpredictable and short-term labour demands, it has become more common for organisations, including universities, to maintain persistent casual staffing components (Burgess et. al, 2008; Jacoby, 2006;).

The degree of estimation required in statistics surrounding employment of casual academic staff derives from the lack of accurate or specific information from individual institutions about casual employees (Klopper & Power; 2014, p. 101). However, a review of some key publications that captured data associated with the

trends is helpful. Responding to concerns that were beginning to surface, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) published in 2012 the report of its independent inquiry into insecure work. In that report, they claim that that one quarter of the Australian workforce was employed on a casual basis. The report made special mention of practices in Australian universities (p. 59), and suggest that universities have responded to decreased federal funding by achieving cost savings through a move to casual employment for more academic staff, effectively contracting out much of the teaching. The report presents figures that claim that the total number of employees at Australian universities rose from about 120,000 in 1996 to over 183,000 in 2011; a 53% increase over the 15 years surveyed. Their estimate is that the number of casual employees included in those numbers grew in this time from 40,740 to 73,592 – an increase of 81%. The statistics in this report do not explicitly state that only academic staff or those involved in teaching programs, are included; therefore, it can be inferred that these figures include all staff.

As a result of imperfect and varied statistical methods, direct comparisons cannot be made about growth or actual rates but it can be seen that Australia follows global trends, both in showing significant growth and in matching data from all countries showing rates of casual academic employment which are close to or exceed half of all academic staff. This claim is evidenced through some specific data provided from a number of sources, reflecting the trends in the more general data in the ACTU report. Firstly, Enders and Musselin (2008) in their report for the OECD inquiry into higher education to 2030, show that the number of casual teaching staff in Australian universities more than doubled between 1990 and 2005. The growth and percentages of casual academic staff were compared with those of the United Kingdom and the United States (p.102), as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1*Growth and Actual Rates of Casual Employment amongst University Academic Staff*

Country	Growth	Percentage of Casual Staff
Australia	More than doubled 1990 – 2005 (Robinson, 2005) 67% growth 1989-1998 (Percy et al., 2008)	60% in 2011 (May et al., 2011)
United Kingdom	6% growth 1994 – 2003 (Court, 1998; Robinson, 2005)	44.8% in 2003 (Robinson, 2005)
USA	21% growth 1975 – 2003 (Ehrenberg, 2005)	64% in 2003 (Ehrenberg, 2005)

Australian Federal Department of Education and Training statistics report that the estimated full time equivalent (FTE) component of university academic staffing taken up by casual staff has grown each year, with two exceptions, over the years 1996 – 2018. The number of casual staff has more than doubled over that time from 10, 185 staff in 1996 to 25, 091 in 2018. Years of significant growth were 2000 (10.2%), 2010 (11.9%) and 2018 (10.5%). The large-scale, fully online initial teacher education program offered by the research university commenced in 2009. Growth rates for casual staff well exceeded those for ongoing staff and were similar to those for ‘fractional full-time’ staff (those with ongoing contracts but who worked part time): the combined growth for ongoing staff over 1996-2018 was from 72,703, to 109, 022; an increase of 49.95% compared with a 146.4% increase over the same period for casual staff. The proportion of total staff represented by casual academics rose from 11.2% in 1996 to 18.7% in 2018. Growth rates and proportions for casual academic staff in Australian universities from 1996 to 2018 are displayed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Numbers, Growth Rates and Proportions of Casual Academic Staff in Australian Universities 1996 – 2018.

	1996		2018		Percentage Difference 1996-2018	
	Number of staff	% of total staff	Number of staff	% of total staff	Number of staff	% of total staff
Full time Fractional	65,254	78.7%	92,692	69.1%	+42%	-9.6%
Full Time Total	7,449	10.1%	16,330	12.2%	+108.1%	+2.1%
Faculty	72,703	88.8%	10,2992	81.3%	+49.95%	-7.5%
Estimated Casual	10,185	11.2%	25,091	18.7%	+146.4%	+7.5%

Additionally, Andrews et al. (2016) in a publication for the LH Martin Institute present figures (p.1) that show the growth in the proportion of casual academic staff as being from 40% of total staffing in 1989 to 56% in 2013. They too ascribe this growth to significant organisational change in response to increased and volatile student numbers, changes in student characteristics and changes to funding models. Actual numbers of casual staff are estimates only but based on superannuation data, they claim that there are more academic staff working on casual contracts than those on continuing contracts of employment.

These statistics do not reveal the precise nature of the work undertaken by the three sub-groups shown in the Department of Education data. However, Ryan et al. (2013) note that the higher education sector is “one of the highest users of casual employees” (p. 161). Percy and Beaumont (2008) estimated that sessional academics accounted for 50% of the teaching load in Australian universities, and further, that the figure could be as high as 80% of the first year teaching load. Faculty academics with ongoing employment typically have workload formulas that include allowances for research, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), as well as administration or leadership roles with teaching being just one component of their overall work. As casual

academics are allocated teaching and associated duties only, it appears reasonable to claim that the percentage of the total teaching load undertaken would be much higher than the percentage of academic staff who are casual. The Grattan Institute report (Norton, 2013) presents some data reproduced from the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, that gives credibility to this inference, showing that in 2011, 82% of the teaching only roles in universities were being undertaken by casualised staff (p.17), contrasted with 8% of research only roles and only 0.4% of combined teaching/research roles.

A perusal of the available data therefore allows a safe conclusion that numbers, proportions and growth rates of casual academic staff in Australian universities are significant and unlikely to change downwards. Therefore, the impact of achieving and maintaining high levels of motivation and engagement amongst casual staff, and therefore the impact on the quality of teaching programs, can be expected to be considerable. The following sections explore the literature to discern more about the nature of this form of employment, which in turn has informed inquiry about how best to achieve that.

3.3 Problematisation of Casual Academic Employment

Most literature on casualisation positions the practice and the upward trend as problematic. The problems are seen as being that the practice threatens the security of permanent staff, is risky to quality assurance, and is indicative of moves towards new managerialism in universities at the expense of traditional values of academic autonomy and excellence (Bryson & Blackwell, 2006; Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010; Jacoby, 2006; Percy & Beaumont, 2008; Rowbotham, 2010). Those writing from industrial perspectives position casual academics as a potentially exploitable or actually exploited group (Percy et al., 2008; NTEU, 2013). Other researchers take philosophical and political standpoints that link casualisation practices to neoliberalism, a political phenomenon characterised by beliefs that market forces, if left to operate and fluctuate freely, can enable human success and well-being (Dugas et al., 2018; Harvey, 2007). Dugas et al. also note that opponents of neoliberalism criticise casualisation practices as being exploitative and note that some sectors of higher education will be more susceptible to what Giroux (2014) termed the “predatory

capitalism” seen as an element of neoliberalism. There exists a political perspective that contends that creating destabilisation and anxiety in individual employees is a deliberate management strategy linked to a philosophical affinity with neoliberalism (Loveday, 2018). While not suggesting that the university seeks to purposefully destabilise their casual academic employees, research conducted by Brownlee (2015) in one Canadian university suggests that there is a political dimension to the way in which the institution does not make transparent the true number of casual academic staff employed. Brownlee contends further that “many universities were holding tightly to “the potentially embarrassing information” (p. 123) about casual academic staff numbers.

The studies above are not investigations of the way in which the role of a casual academic is actually experienced by the group nor do they seek to identify the learning and support needed by the academics that will impact on continued engagement and efficacy in their roles. The dominant narrative represents the experience of being a casual academic staff member in Australian universities, similarly to that elsewhere, as being less preferred and unwelcomed by the staff concerned. It has been positioned as serving the needs of the employing organisation only, often in a way that is framed as exploitative or at the very least, driven by economic rationalism. A brief survey of the titles of a number of publications that discuss the impact of casualisation in Australian universities reveals this problematised view. Examples are provided in Table 3.3 and will be discussed in this section.

Table 3.3*Publications Problematizing the Casualisation of Academic Staff*

Year of Publication	Title
2003	The tenured ‘Core’ and the Tenuous ‘periphery’: the casualisation of academic work in Australian universities
2008	The casualisation of teaching and the subject at risk
2012	Lives on Hold: ACTU inquiry into Insecure Work
2013	Casual Academic Staff in an Australian University: Marginalised and excluded
2013	McUniversities revisited: a comparison of university and McDonald's casual employee experiences in Australia
2013	Taking Teaching Seriously
2014	The Casual Approach to Teacher Education: What effect does casualisation have for Australian university teaching?
2015	Casualization (sic) of academics in the Australian higher education: is teaching quality at risk?
2018	The neurotic academic: anxiety, casualisation, and governance in the neoliberalising university
2019	A vision for radical university change
2020	Second class academic citizens: the dehumanizing effects of casualization (sic) in higher education

The overall perspective represented in these publications is that casualising academic staff is an inherently unfair practice that is unfairly applied, and that the practice leads to a reduction in teaching quality and, consequentially, student outcomes. That perspective is perhaps most uncompromisingly presented in Nodolny and Ryan’s article (2013) which boldly states that an increasing reliance on casual academic staff has directly led to the “McDonaldization” (p.142) of universities, and one which has been part of the discourse around the more generalised move to casualisation in professions rather than just in lower-paid, unskilled jobs such as McDonald’s workers. Nodolny and Ryan build on work undertaken by Hayes and Wynward (2002) and Ritzer (2004) who used the term to apply broadly to industries relying heavily on

casualised labour, and consider how that is being enacted in educational contexts. Each of the two central contentions of the negative nature of casualisation in higher education is explained below.

- **The practice is inherently unfair and unfairly applied**

The Australian discourse reflects the dominant narrative more globally which presents the casualisation of the academic workforce as a practice which is synonymous with exploitation and a less satisfactory experience of work.

In Australia, the report of the ACTU (2012) mentioned in the previous sub-section was generated from written submissions, hearings and case studies from around Australia between November 2011 and March 2012 and encompassed a wide range of work types. As expected from a trade union, the report takes the perspective of employee's rights and protection. The report frames the practice of casualisation of workers as no less than catastrophic, with the inquiry chair citing it as "the new divide" that has replaced the white/blue collar divide (p. 5) in Australia. The approach and language used throughout reflects a deeply antagonistic view towards work casualisation. As well as taking an oppositional position to the spread of casualised employment across the board, a further point of contention in the ACTU report that focusses on academic staff in universities, is that significant numbers of casual academic staff are not what the report terms "genuinely casual" (p. 59). Submissions are cited from staff in the hearings who have been engaged as casual academics or on fixed terms continuously for many years. The Coates and Goedegebuure report on their research project for the LH Martin Institute (2016) also notes that despite the original intent of casual employment provisions at universities, 62% of 3,000 casual academics surveyed in 2012 had been employed by the same university for more than one year and 46% for more than three years (p. 4). Both reports argue that it is unfair to retain casual employees on such long-term bases. Although this stance avoids the question of whether the positioning and view of casual employment has changed or needs to change, it is relevant to note the argument that the 25% loading that is applied to compensate for the lack of leave provisions was not designed to apply for such lengthy periods. Neither do casual employees have unfair dismissal protections, which again, becomes less fair when employment may have been continuous for a number of years.

The ACTU report is accusatory of universities, claiming that the practices described are compromising the social contract universities have to protect the public good and that in its treatment of casual academic staff, “the system is surviving on their goodwill – they care about the students and they make the sacrifices but this is totally unsustainable and is a recipe for disaster” (p. 59). Klopper and Power (2014, p.104) cite the National Tertiary Education Union and reiterate these concerns, further stating that university funding cuts would result in further casualisation, bringing with it greater risk to the amount of time and attention students could expect from their lecturers and referring to the casualisation of the workforce as the “dirty little secret of university expansion”.

One recent study (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2020) does investigate the experience of being a casual academic staff member, in this case in a regional Australian university. The research questioned participants about their current employment status (including other work), their sense of job security, their reasons for working as a casual employee and their general attitudes about work and work/life balance. The findings of the research were that, overall, the experience of being a casual academic employee was ultimately a frustrating one, as the commonly-sought pathway of casual to permanent employee status was largely not realised. The study undertaken by Gottschalk and McEachern was within the context of a business school and it would be interesting and useful to know whether perspectives and intentions of casual academics in that discipline mirror those from an education discipline, or whether perhaps education professionals might view simultaneous practice in schools and the university setting as quite appropriate as a longer-term way of working.

It can be expected that the research reported in this thesis will contribute to broadening the understanding of the experience of working as a casual academic staff member, through providing evidence of levels of motivation and engagement reported by those working in this employment mode. Further, evidence will show the factors that impact most on motivation and engagement for the case study group in this research, factors which may or may not derive from the mode of employment. In considering the ways in which the research university can best manage its sessional staff to optimise motivation and engagement, the discourse may then be able to move beyond a position

of inevitable inferiority, risk and exploitation associated with casual academic employment and this work may contribute to a discourse and culture of improvement.

- **Casualising academic teaching work reduces the quality of the teaching, which impacts negatively on student outcomes**

The assumed poorer quality of the teaching is found to emanate from three main factors: the lack of stringency applied to recruitment of casual academic staff, the engagement and remuneration model, and the lack of access to support and to professional learning. Although, as noted previously, in Australia casual academic staff likely account for 83% of the teaching-only roles, the Grattan report (Norton, 2016) claims that these casual staff members are not necessarily attracted or recruited on the strength of their teaching skills (p. 18). The LH Martin report highlights the variance in recruitment practices, wherein although processes for permanent and most fixed-term appointments are competitive, they are “invariably not” (p. 4) for casual staff, with most being appointed locally, informally and not in response to advertising. Klopper and Power (2014) note that the qualifications of casual staff are variable and can range from being well above to below the level of the programs in which they are employed to teach (p. 101). They argue further (p. 104) that the emphasis on expediency takes precedence over ensuring casual staff have the required skills and understandings of the learning needs of university students. The implication is therefore that in the absence of transparent and stringent selection criteria and consistent process, casual staff will be recruited without any need to meet competence or suitability benchmarks and that this will impact on the quality of the teaching and support for students.

The risks of reliance on a contingent and less well-paid workforce are highlighted by the ACTU report (2012) which claims that the sacrifice and unsustainability posited has led to lower educational outcomes and reduced teaching quality, due to casual staff not being remunerated for sufficient time to undertake their roles adequately (p. 59). A direct causal link is being drawn from the evidence given to the inquiry that some casual staff are underpaid, or perform a number of unpaid tasks, to a negative impact on student outcomes, although the influence of what are termed poor management practices is also noted (p. 59). Several authors have contended that casual staff, whose

employment can be discontinued or who may withdraw their labour at any time, will not have the commitment needed to assure a quality program and are in danger of being marginalised as ‘second tier’ employees who will then behave accordingly, to the detriment of students. (Kimber, 2003; Percy & Beaumont, 2008). The link between a sense of under-payment and under-performance is examined more robustly in the Grattan report (Norton, 2013), which argues for a more effective response to the greatly increased volume and diversity of students now engaged in tertiary education in Australia. An over-reliance on casual teaching staff is seen as one significant factor that has constrained the capacity of universities to cater for the learning needs of a changed student cohort. Norton acknowledges that measures of quality are somewhat inconsistent but examines student surveys for indications of student engagement with their learning and the wider support provided by the institution. While recognising that casualisation of teaching has come about partly because of the preference for faculty academics to direct their energies into their research rather than teaching (p.13), Norton contends that the complexity and multi-faceted approach necessary to engage and support a diverse student cohort across a range of learning opportunities is a responsibility that cannot be borne principally by casual staff.

Lower levels of support for casual academic staff and lack of access to professional learning are also cited as causal factors for compromised teaching quality. Klopper and Power (2014) provide a succinct and comprehensive account of the concerns being expressed in this regard. They agree with Percy and Beaumont (2008) and others in saying that as casual staff are most often recruited for their industry expertise rather than their teaching skill or familiarity with higher education institutions, the skills and support gap is magnified. Furthermore, lower levels of accountability for casual staff means that professional learning is far less likely to be mandated or monitored. As the sessional academic staff in the case study group are all qualified educators, their industry expertise is already in education, so this brings a strength to the role not shared by all casual academic staff. At the very least, then, this represents a challenge to the generalisation above, which needs investigating with the case study group.

A study undertaken by Read and Leathwood (2020) at the University of Glasgow focussed on the perceptions of casual academic staff regarding their legitimacy and status and whether or not they were viewed by students and other faculty members as

being less competent or of a lower status. The impacts included the job security and job satisfaction they experienced as a result of students perceiving that their learning and teaching experience may have been compromised through being taught by non-permanent faculty. While Read and Leathwood reveal a number of specific ways in which casual academics are marginalised and excluded in the case university, their study also points to the possibility that changes in management practices may alleviate these impacts. The identification of important management structures and processes which impact on the motivation and engagement of casual academic staff which is the focus of this research thus furthers the argument that poor experiences and outcomes may not have to be inevitable, and certainly that institutions have a responsibility to address the matter.

3.4 Influence of Localised Contextual Factors on the Experience of Casual Academic Staff

It appears that localised contextual factors influence the experience of being a casual academic more than they do that of being faculty academic staff. Standardised and centrally managed human resource practices apply more uniformly and stringently to ongoing staff: universities have formal and mandatory engagement and induction processes, professional learning programs, role parameters and workload formulas that are required to be applied to faculty staff and for the most part enshrined in formal enterprise bargaining agreements. The example of these processes as followed by the research university is similar across most institutions (The Research University, 2018a). Industrial enterprise bargaining agreements covering permanent staff will ensure that access to workspaces and other facilities is provided (The Research University, 2018b). Such formal agreements, as well as organisational culture and central and local administrative processes, usually ensure that staff are included in institutional communications, both work-based and informal or social. In the research university, there are aspects of formal agreements and policies that relate to sessional academic staff, such as pay rates and certain basic rights as employees. However, for sessional staff, both the nature and the management of all elements of organisational support and communications varies widely from one specific context to another, and a positive experience can depend far more on informed and effective local

management. To illustrate this, Table 3.4 summarises practice across one faculty at the research university, as reported in June 2018.

Table 3.4

The Research University: Practices for Management of Sessional Academic Staff

	Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff position	Recruitment process managed systematically	Workspaces provided on campus	School or faculty based professional learning provided	Additional payment made for PL and extra tasks
<i>School 1</i>	Y	Y	some	Y	Y
<i>School 2</i>	N	N	some	N	N
<i>School 3</i>	Y	Y	some	Y	N

The university undertakes biennial reviews of staff satisfaction and since 2019 this project has been known as Ngalang Waangi (Our Voice). Statistical information from the surveys conducted with staff for these reviews are now published within the university's business intelligence tool and available via staff login (The research university, 2019a). Data is not publicly available, and the survey tool has changed over the period 2014 – 2019, so reporting of the data cannot be precise. However, as the surveys differentiate between casual and ongoing full time or part time staff, and academic and professional staff, some valuable broad trends can be discerned from the data, as follows: over time, sessional academic staff members at the research university are most satisfied with the leadership of their unit co-ordinator, their safety, fairness and equity, their opportunities for performance reviews, and their access to resources. Their passion and engagement towards their work has been consistently rated as medium. Casual staff have been least satisfied with their pay and recognition, their feeling of being in a team and part of the university community, and the way they are inducted and trained. Some improvements have been seen in some aspects of the experience of sessional academic employment, while others remain problematic. The key areas of dissatisfaction are still pay, recognition and a sense of agency.

While parallels to practices in other institutions can only be inferred, it is becoming clear that institutions need to respond to the growing numbers and ratios of casual academic employees and recognise their responsibility to view and manage them as an integral, important and persisting component of their academic staffing profile. It is noted that the survey tool described above and the data collected through the university surveys conducted of sessional academic staff in 2014, 2016 and 2019 was useful in informing the instrument design for the research case study.

3.5 Casual Academic staff working in online programs

The literature and data presented in Chapters 2 and 3 show that growth trends for both online learning programs in higher education, and towards increasing reliance on casual academic staff, are well-established and generalised across geographical locations globally and institutions. While a generalised causal link is not established as part of this thesis, the associated growth patterns are noted. Further, it is relevant to note that for the particular context of the research case study, the growth in sessional academic staffing was a direct result of expansion into online learning program delivery. Therefore, it is valuable to consider that the situation of sessional academic staff whose experience is captured in the research, is one that is likely to be representative of that in other contexts, in that there will be significant numbers of casual academic staff teaching online, at least in Australia. Returning to some key findings of Chapters 2 and 3 allows the following observations, which are pertinent to the research.

While many practices associated with effective online learning environments identified in Chapter 2 appear as familiar and may be allowed for within the instructional design of online programs, not all may be enacted by all online teachers. This could be because of their views about how to interact appropriately with students and of the boundaries around those interactions, were developed through more traditional teaching experiences. It may arise from their current capacity within the constraints of their knowledge, skills and the time they have available. However, a further relevant factor may be that they are casual academic employees, and as such will be more susceptible to localised practices, less likely to be included in the mission and vision for programs and less likely to have access to systematic and targeted

professional development that will develop their skills and understandings. Therefore, in constructing the theoretical and methodological frame for the conduct of the research, it is vital to understand the potential impact of the combined effect of the contextual factors of working online and casual academic employment status. The question of relevant professional learning and support is a key component of that potential impact.

3.6 Support and Development of Casual Academic Staff

Research undertaken in the United Kingdom (Gaskell, 2013) proves informative in illustrating the importance of contextualised planning that is linked to the ultimate purpose of the program. Gaskell undertook ethnographic-based research in a context similar to that of this research, being a group of casual academic staff working in large-scale programs with the United Kingdom's Open University. Gaskell's research reveals that both motivation and engagement amongst the staff are critical to achieving the institutional purpose and confirms that the strategies to sustain both must be specific to the group. Those strategies should incorporate both the individuals' and the organisation's needs and preferences. Gaskell calls for the Open University to develop policies to guide the professional development of 'part time' (casual) academics, advocating an approach that reflects ideas of transformational leadership, espoused by theorists such as Burns (2003) and Sergiovanni (1990). Gaskell's work is relevant to this research because it shares a perspective that, ultimately, measures of the effectiveness of organisational strategies must derive from how well students' learning and needs have been addressed, not just how well the needs of the academic staff have been met. Success must ultimately remain tethered to the overarching purpose which is the education of tertiary students. However, the support and development of academic staff, including casual academics, will be crucial to achieving that overarching purpose.

Reporting on the Australian context, Smith and Bath (2004) contend that both Australian and United Kingdom universities have been slower to plan provision for the professional learning needs of casual teaching staff than have those in North America. While the North American experience may provide some leadership in terms of establishing the need for planned and purposeful management of support and

development, North American approaches may have some limitations. The focus for the design of most United States tutor training programs (TTPS) models is to meet institutional needs and manage risk, rather than build community and satisfy personal/professional development needs of the academic staff (Weimer, Svnicki & Bauer, 1989). If motivation and engagement are to be sustained through contributing to professional self-actualisation, then more holistic approaches may be more effective and preferred. There were some early signs of a strong response found in the Commonwealth Government policy paper: *Our universities: backing Australia's future* (Nelson, 2003). The paper identified the need for planned and purposeful support for professional development in learning and teaching for casual as well as full time academic staff. Although the advocacy for financial investment in professional development contained in the Nelson report did not directly arise from a concern with meeting these dual agendas, it did prompt critical review of effective strategies, such as that undertaken by Smith and Bath (2004).

An account of the way the development of staff for working in online education (albeit not necessarily casual staff) in one regional Australian university was undertaken by Taylor (2003). Taylor takes a cautionary approach and warns that if catastrophe is to be avoided, planning for staff development must be approached authentically and fully, and in a way that respects the complexities. One-shot expositions of what is considered essential information will not suffice. Instead, principles and processes associated with situated learning must be engaged with fully if success is to be sustained. These ideas resonate strongly with the implications revealed in this research. A study by Mueller et al. (2013) highlighted the correlation between growth in online higher education programs and attendant growth in casual academic staff teaching in these programs. Their study examined student performance and their findings were that students were advantaged if taught by full time faculty. That finding led them to recommend strategies for development, support, incentives and community for casual online teaching staff (p. 1). The question then becomes one of whether the differential student outcomes based on employment mode of the teachers will disappear if effective strategies are implemented. Because measures of student outcomes are not a part of this study, that question is not answered, but it points the way to some future quantification through further research. It would seem reasonable

to expect some correlation between the support and development of any group of teaching staff, and their performance and effectiveness.

In the work of both Kift (2007) and Harvey (2017), exhortations are found for managers to implement informed practice that properly supports the professional learning and general development needs of casual academic staff. Kift draws clear links to the effectiveness of the learning and teaching and further notes particularly that a great deal of teaching is undertaken by casual academics in the critical first academic year. Harvey emphasises the importance of systematising approaches within institutions rather than relying on 'hit and miss' or ad-hoc provision of support. The centrality of context is once again noted as a key consideration and Harvey advises against the simplistic application of pre-existing professional learning packages and models. The existing studies surveyed indicate that the management of casual staff working in online programs needs to be informed by a recognition that practices must align with the particular needs of the student cohort and the demands of the online learning environment, as well as with needs arising from the backgrounds and expertise of the staff themselves.

3.7 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 3 has presented key literature about the extent and the nature of casualised academic employment and the problematic ways in which the practice is viewed. The value to the research is three-fold: Firstly, and in common with findings about the ubiquitous nature of online learning programs, the review has established that the experience of being a casual academic staff member is one shared by a significant number of people and that Australia is in the forefront of the adoption of the practice. The positioning of Australian practice in that regard will mean that the research will be of interest and that there is a wide potential for its impact. Secondly, the positioning of the practice as problematic, and the identification of the key problems, point both to the need to address the problems and to some broad areas for inquiry about the source and nature of the problems. Both factors will help support work that takes a solution-focussed approach, which is the ultimate aim of this research, encapsulated in the thesis title. Finally, the literature about casual academic employment joins with

that about online teaching and learning contexts in informing the design and conduct of the research.

Chapter 3 contains an explanation of how the research was conceptualised as an inquiry into the motivation and engagement levels of a case study group of casual academic staff working in one online program. Motivation and engagement theory and the participants' experience of motivation and engagement was chosen as an effective way to explicate the lived experience of these staff members. That explication allows the identification of the key factors that impact on motivation and engagement. In this way, and through the application of models and instruments that measure motivation and engagement, clear links can be made to pragmatic structures and processes that optimise motivation and engagement.

3.8 Conclusion to the Review of Literature

The literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 reveals a field which has been burgeoning since late last century and which has engaged writers and researchers over that time in the fields of technological development, learning theory, learning design and management and leadership. The increased demand of online education has accelerated due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with necessity forcing the hand of some sectors or pockets still previously resisting or unprepared for the move to online provision of tertiary education. However, the availability of online education has developed over the past 20 years as a concept and a practice, with learning theorists expanding understandings and representations of learning constructs to accommodate the nature of online learning and teaching environments. While scepticism about the place of online programs in higher education, both globally and in Australia, has largely been forced aside by the exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic, some significant concerns remain about practices in places, and more generally, whether pedagogical orientations and appropriately-informed pedagogical approaches have adapted and developed sufficiently so as to meet the needs of learners. The increasing diversity of learner groups and learning contexts that has arisen as a result of the rapid expansion of online accessibility has made the challenge of meeting these needs more complex and difficult. The awareness that the rapid expansion, afforded by the

technologies and accelerated by the global pandemic, has also been accompanied by changes in the politico-social landscape, adds a further dimension to the challenges faced. The rise of what is variously described as economic rationalism, marketization or commodification of higher education, or as neo-liberalism, places an industrialised and somewhat uncomfortable light on the growing reliance on casual academic staff to teach in university programs. As growth in casual academic staff numbers has paralleled growth in large-scale online higher education programs, the need to prepare, support and develop casual academic staff in their work in online teaching as well as in their overall employment experience, is a critical and pressing area of responsibility for university leaders and managers.

CHAPTER 4

Theoretical Frame for the Research: Motivation and Engagement Theory and Models

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the research and inform its design. Chapter 4 contains six sections: Section 4.1 introduces the chapter and outlines its contents. Section 4.2 gives an explanation of the approach taken to identifying the relevant body of research and selection of the model in order to achieve the research purposes, including how considerations of the research context (as described in Chapters 2 and 3) were accommodated, as well as how the imperative for sound theoretical foundation for the research was satisfied. It will be shown in Chapter 5 of the thesis that addressing those requirements in the model and instrument selection supported appropriate development of the methodological frame and processes. Section 4.3 provides a justification of the broad theoretical perspective that is taken, being the relationships/networks perspective of organisations. Section 4.4 follows with an account of the development of motivation and engagement theory that is situated within the relationships/networks perspective and which is specific to the research. Section 4.5 contains a description of the JD-R model, situated within both the broad and specific theoretical frames described, which is used in the research to conceptualise and analyse motivation and engagement and shows how the model is situated within the theoretical parameters described. The JD-R model is described in detail and its application to the research is justified. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010), which is the instrument employed within the surrounding JD-R model to measure motivation and engagement levels amongst the research participants, is also introduced in Section 4.5. Chapter 4 concludes with

section 4.6 which firstly provides a summary concerning relevant theories and then states implications for the research design and methodology that arise from the application of the theory, model and instrument chosen.

In providing an account of the theoretical foundation for the research, Chapter 4 gives an explanation of the selection and application of motivation and engagement theory, models and instruments as the way of revealing effective structures and processes for the management of casual academic staff working in online programs. The research purpose is to identify and recommend structures and processes that managers can employ to optimise motivation and engagement amongst these staff members. The rationale for identifying such recommendations is that optimised motivation and engagement amongst these staff members will enhance their capacity to provide excellent learning and teaching for their students, as represented in Figure 1.1 on p. 8. The theoretical frame further provides guidance for the design of the inquiry with the case study group which comprises sessional academic staff working in one fully online teacher education program.

4.2 Establishing the Theoretical Frame for the Research

There is a wealth of extant literature about organisational theory and employee motivation and engagement generally. However, in surveying and selecting appropriate theory, models and instruments, it was important that the research purpose could be achieved by applying them. It is critical that the theoretical frame is able to provide a sound methodological basis. As well, achieving the research purpose will be dependent on paying attention to the known theory about the context of the research, being online learning teaching and learning environments, and the players in that context, casual academic staff members. That research has been presented in Chapters 2 and 3. The theoretical frame and models and instruments derived from it must accommodate the implications of what is known about the key contextual factors. Bearing in mind all of the above considerations, a list of requirements was compiled that helped to guide the review of theory and models and to consequently select an appropriate framework that is theoretically robust and recognised as a valid and reliable model. The model chosen:

- supports an approach that is qualitative and ethnographic in nature
- allows a full exploration of the contextual factors described in the preceding chapters
- captures diverse experiences and views
- accommodates the agnostic stance taken about the practice of casual academic employment
- does not require an hypothesis to be proven or disproven
- can be applied to quantify experience and the impact of discrete factors on motivation and engagement
- provides some guidance for categories or spheres of questioning in the data collection phases, contextualised to the particular research participants

The search for relevant and appropriate theory and models began with choosing the lens of the body of motivation and engagement theory as espoused by Kahn (1990, 2010); Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) and Meyer et al. (2010). This body of theory was chosen because, firstly, it can encompass the sense of moral and social purpose that is important for educators and, secondly, it permits useful analysis of components of experience that can be mapped to management strategies and practices. Instrumental to the achievement of this second aspect is the application of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) which is described in detail in Section 4.4. Firstly, in Section 4.3, is an account of evolutionary developments in motivation and engagement theory as applied to academic contexts, explaining the situating of the JD-R model within that body of research. The guiding questions that informed the selection and explanation of the theoretical frame for the research are:

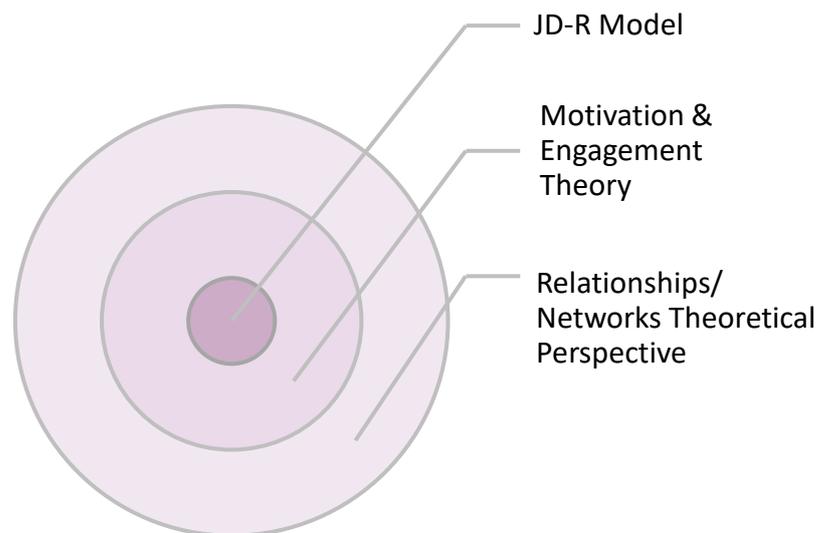
- What theoretical development pathways are most relevant to the research context?
- What model/s is/are best suited to the research to explain and measure motivation and engagement levels and impact?

A wide-ranging review was conducted in order to determine the most relevant theoretical foundation and model which could be applied to analyse how motivation and engagement is experienced, measured and impacted upon for the sessional

academic staff being studied. There were three major steps in determining the model used. The first step was to identify the broad perspective being taken as one of relationships/ networks theory; the second step surveyed the development of motivation and engagement theory that aligns with that relationships/networks theoretical perspective; and the third and final step was the selection of the JD-R model and the UWES as the most valuable conceptual frames for achieving the research purpose. Figure 4.1 represents the conceptual structure for this section and a full discussion follows in Sections 4.3 and 4.4.

Figure 4.1

Theoretical Frame for the Job Demands-Resources Model



4.3 Key Theoretical Developments Relevant to the Research: Relationships/Networks Perspective

This section details the process of establishing an overall perspective of employees and organisations and justifies the theoretical pathway followed. The perspective taken in the research is one that views organisations and employees as a series of networks and relationships. It will be demonstrated that this perspective aligns with the intent and application of the JD-R model. The networks/relationships perspective adopted

has been drawn from the work of Borgatti and Foster (2003), Brass et al. (2004), and Borgatti and Halgin (2011). Borgatti and Halgin (2011) explain that network theory is concerned with the systematic relational processes that can exist between employees and their organisations. The analysis of these processes can predict performance or outcomes, at either an individual, a specified group, or an organisational level. Familiarity with networks/relationships theory and an alliance with its precepts and perspectives is helpful as it provides a lens that goes beyond the personal psychological perspectives of the engaged state (as defined in the Glossary on p. 17) and provides reference to the groups or networks whose expectations and actions impact on motivation and engagement. The approach is considered appropriate to the research aims because, additionally, the perspective:

- **is conducive to being applied to diverse contexts**

Existing literature and this research demonstrate that the backgrounds, skills and qualifications of sessional academics seeking work in fully online programs are diverse. Their reasons for engaging in this work are expected to be more diverse than those found among academics pursuing more traditional university career pathways. Online sessional academics experience engagement and motivation differently, both from each other and compared with teaching academics in other roles, and they will have varying needs to support their motivation and engagement. As qualified and experienced teachers, the sessional academics in the research group can be expected to bring particular expertise, attitudes and expectations that may not be shared by other teaching academics. Therefore, an understanding of their needs allows the organisation to initiate and sustain the effective management practices that enable quality teaching.

- **takes an organisational perspective rather than personal or psychological**

The intention of the research is not just to investigate how motivation and engagement are experienced personally by casual academic staff, nor to seek new understandings about motivation and engagement per se. It is important to encompass these understandings and be familiar with the theories that have led to knowledge and understandings about personal experiences of motivation and engagement. However, the research seeks to further understand how these are experienced in a particular

context, and measure how motivation and engagement are impacted upon for the group of sessional academic staff working in online programs. Knowing this then informs the organisation about structures and processes that can be employed to optimise motivation and engagement amongst these sessional academic staff, so they are able to undertake their teaching roles effectively and serve their learners well. Therefore, the perspective of role fulfilment (an organisational perspective) that is taken in the relationships/networks view is more helpful than one which may take a perspective of personal fulfilment.

In order to identify valuable and relevant theory about motivation and engagement that aligns with the relationships/networks perspective, an account is presented of key developments over time. An historical view from the mid-20th century onwards provides contextual understanding for the development of motivation and engagement theory relevant to the research. General theoretical models of employee engagement and motivation were first surveyed. The breadth of disciplines that have contributed to current theory are also noted. Table 4.1 summarises the historical development of key parent and derivative theory and models that are precursors to the JD-R, with comments regarding their contribution and applicability to the research purpose. This summary demonstrates the situating of the JD-R model within broader theory and indicates the reasons for the choice of this model. Those reasons are then discussed in more detail after the table. The discussion addresses each theory in chronological order, and explains how relevance to academic contexts was a key consideration in determining the usefulness of the theories. It should be noted here that the terms engagement and motivation are often used together and sometimes even interchangeably in the literature, and there are overlaps in meaning and application. In this review, the two terms are examined together, although distinctions are made later when measuring motivation and engagement with the research participants and when considering organisational strategies that will enhance motivation and engagement. Table 4.1 presents a tabulated view of the chronological development of key theories and their discipline origins.

Table 4.1*Summary of Chronological Development of Relevant Theories*

Theory	Proponent(s)	Discipline	Comments
Hierarchy of Needs	Maslow (1954) Bruner (1966)	Psychology	Processes of self-actualisation. Application of Maslovian theory to formal and systemised education contexts. How learners and teachers are motivated and engaged.
Social Exchange Theory	Thibaut and Kelley (1959; 1978); Rusbult (1983)	Psychology/ Sociology/ Economics	Cost/benefit analysis of human relationships; transactional perspective. Includes work-based and personal/social interactions.
Organizational Role Theory	Kahn et al. (1964) Katz and Kahn (1966; 1978)	Sociology/ Social Psychology	Provided insight into the ways individuals' physical and emotional states impact on their work behaviour. Organisational perspective – how organisations can respond and manage.
Social identity Theory	Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986)	Social Psychology	Role of particular group memberships in forming self-concept. Individual behaviours as determined by individuals' perception of their status in and emotional attachment to a group.
Job Characteristics Model	Hackman and Oldham (1980)	Psychology	Principles designed to enhance work roles through creating effective psychological states. Work characteristics conducive to psychological states maximising motivation satisfaction.
Self-Determination Theory	Deci and Ryan (1985)	Psychology	Emphasises the importance of fulfilling individual psychological needs. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their contribution to self-regulation and choice.
Conservation of Resources (COR)	Hobfoll (1989)	Psychology	Explains how employees use individual and job resources to perform more effectively and avoid damaging stress. Positive and negative impacts of employment conditions.
Three-Component Model	Meyer and Allen (1991)	Psychology/HR Management	Emphasised commitment to an organisation, not just a job, and explained it as a psychological/emotional state with three key components.
Job-Demands-Resources Model (Organisation-Demands Model)	Bakker and Demerouti (2007) (Emerging)	Psychology/HR Management	Recognises interdependence and dynamic of the employee/work relationship. Context-dependent. Emphasises relationship between employee and organisation rather than simply a job.

A number of important insights about motivation and engagement have been found amongst these prominent theories that are salient to the approach taken in the research. The key points revealed from the canvassing of theory, which led to the choice of the JD-R model for the research, are that: the nature of work undertaken by employees will affect their sense of well-being and self-actualisation; some aspects of work and work conditions have a more powerful effect than others; individuals' characteristics, temperaments and circumstances will interact with work conditions to increase motivation and engagement or cause stress and dissatisfaction; employees experienced engagement with their organisation, not simply their job, and this impacts on motivation; motivation and engagement is a flux state and can be viewed as a dynamic negotiation of costs and benefits; organisations can and should understand motivation and engagement in order to optimise both, for the sustainability of the organisation and the well-being of its employees; and that a comprehensive understanding of specific contextual factors is needed in order to undertake this effectively. As well as those key insights, it is relevant to observe that disciplines informing motivational theory are converging, from those derived from psychology (cognitive, affective and social), sociology, and the traditionally less academically-based arena of business and more specifically human resources management. This convergence has contributed to the way theory has taken a more expansive view, encompassing organisational and not only personal perspectives. The evolution towards convergence of disciplines was another theoretical thread that was examined to inform the research. A discussion of some specific theory contributions follows.

4.4 Motivation and Engagement Theory Specific to the Research

A useful discussion of the evolution of motivation and engagement theory can be found in the work of Meyer et al. (2010) who contend that early, academically-based research has provided a strong theoretical foundation on which to address current concerns about engagement. They explain the ways in which the earlier research has informed a current understanding of engagement. Two key theories advanced by Meyer et al. (2010) as having particular value are Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory and Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model. These two theories have informed understandings crucial to approaching the research, building as they do on even earlier, foundational psychology-based theories and

frameworks provided by Maslow (1954; 1973) and Bruner (1966) which still have contributory value. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory has been predicated on one of Maslow's central contentions, which is that the expressive behaviours associated with self-actualisation often persist without external reward or reinforcement. Deci and Ryan identify two overarching motivational forms – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation - and examine the ways in which each contributes to self-regulation (Meyer et al., 2010). The ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and rewards have proven a robust lens through which to view motivation and engagement. Likewise, account should not be lost of the pivotal contribution of Bruner (1966) in discerning links and application from Maslovian psychological theory to the world of formal and systemised education and those who teach and lead teachers. The way in which Bruner's work has brought an appreciation of the personal, experiential, cumulative and transformative nature of learning to his study of educational contexts is helpful to an understanding of not just leadership in general but educational leadership in particular. Meyer and Allen's three-component model (Meyer, 1991; Meyer et al., 2010) maintains that 'commitment' must have affective as well as normative and continuance components. This means that employees must feel a sense of personal commitment to their work, and not only engage in observable behaviours that demonstrate they are working at expected levels and that these levels are maintained over time, in order to be seen as committed to their work. The normative and affective components become especially significant when considering the pedagogical foundations and moral purpose that can be expected to be important within a group of educators.

Each of these theories provides valuable elements that have contributed to ensuing developments, and knowledge gained from them has informed the research design and discussion of findings. Significant ideas or elements from the models and theory summarised above can be seen in the model that was chosen for the research, the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). For example, Meyer and Allen's central idea about commitment is accommodated within the JD-R model and the UWES which questions how subjects experience motivation and engagement and asks about feelings of commitment to the purpose of their work. Other influences are less overt, but the

description of the model following shows that the JD-R model aligns with the perspectives and beliefs of the theories summarised.

The summary and discussion of the development of relevant theories shows that until recently, questions of motivation and engagement arose from Psychology and related disciplines, and focussed on individuals and their psychological states, rather than taking organisational perspectives when forming understandings of motivation and engagement. This research into motivation and engagement amongst sessional academic staff working in online programs is important because it will help to build on more recent work that provides academic and theoretical foundation for organisational perspectives. Saks (2006; p. 600) noted that there was a “surprising dearth of research on employee engagement in the academic literature”. This is because until recently, concerns about employee engagement had been the province of business and management and took an applied and transactional view rather than an academic/theoretical perspective. There was little academic work that considered engagement amongst academic staff in universities. Saks predicted that this lack of academic foundation would soon be addressed; a prediction borne out both in his own later writings and in the growth of writing in this field in general. Key amongst such published work is Albrecht’s handbook of employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010, Ed.) In introducing the handbook, Albrecht notes that both research in employee engagement and consequent theoretical knowledge have proliferated since 2006 but that a number of fundamental questions are not yet fully answered. Of these fundamental questions, Albrecht (p.3) identified ten that were pertinent to research and practice. Three of the ten are of particular interest to this research and help form the basis for explaining the development of salient theory and justifying the choice of the JD-R for this research. The first two address in turn the ways in which motivation and engagement can be defined and characterised and the constraints of theory in being able to explain motivation and engagement.

- **Definitions of motivation and engagement and identification of their essential characteristics**

Albrecht’s work (2010) builds on that of a number of earlier theorists. Kahn (1990) was one of the first theorists to describe engagement or the ‘engaged state’, focusing

on physical, cognitive and emotional connections. Later theorists such as Schaufeli et al. (2002) adopted a more psychological perspective of the engaged state which is helpful in understanding internal states that employees bring to their work. The perspective adopted in these earlier theories is at the individual rather than organisational level and does not take a network/relationships view. Later, Macey et al. (2011, p.7) provided a behavioural and social definition of engagement that is quite valuable as it addresses the perspectives of the organisation as well as the academic staff. Macey et al. contend that engagement is “an individual’s sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort, and persistence directed toward organisational goals”. Albrecht (2010, p.4) points out the multiplicity of definitions of motivation and engagement in existing theories and the debate that surrounds them, but agrees with Kahn that engagement is commonly thought to possess two essential qualities: it is reflected in a positive and energised state that is clearly work-oriented, and it encompasses a genuine commitment to organisational success. Therefore, while it is recognised that debate persists about the definitive nature of motivation and engagement and its essential characteristics, these were the two qualities that were measured in some way amongst the case study group and which therefore helped to inform the inquiry questions given to participants. This measurement is discussed in detail in the methodology chapter.

- **Constraints of theory when applied to explain engagement and motivation**

Explaining or describing engagement and motivation allows some measures to be made of the ways in which it is experienced, both in terms of analysing the nature of the experience and the extent to which certain aspects are experienced by individuals. Albrecht (2010) cautions against claiming that any theoretical models will provide an ideal explanation, so with that caution in mind, theory can be canvassed to find a best fit for the research purpose. Canvassing of theory was undertaken for the research and resulted in the summary provided in Table 4.1. Many of the theories included in the table are mentioned by Albrecht (2006). Albrecht’s work has thus provided both some assurance that the selection process was sound and also some indication that no one theory can be viewed as absolute. Chapter 1 of this thesis indicated that the research undertaken is expected to contribute to elaboration of meaning and application of the JD-R model and it has been shown that a key consideration for its use is that it is

adaptive to different contexts and therefore in both regards is not an absolute model. The following section now examines the JD-R theory model in detail.

4.5 Overview and Description of the Job Demands-Resources Theory and Model

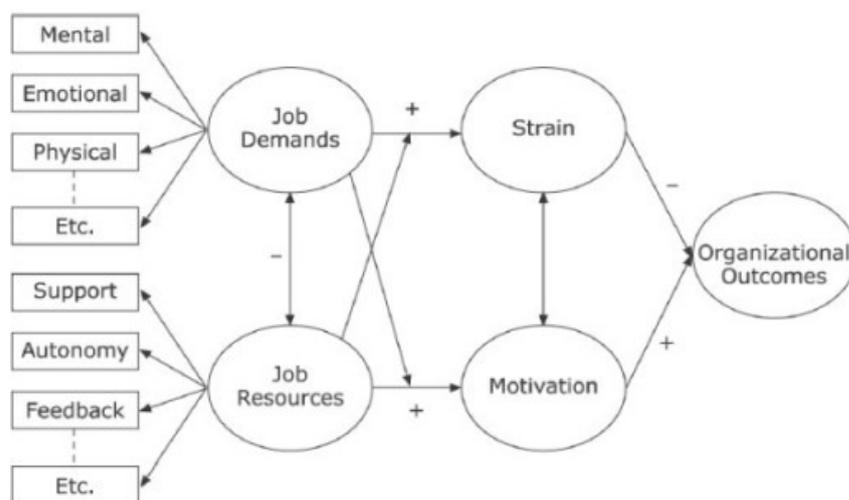
This section provides orientation to the JD-R model and explains how it has emerged from its theoretical foundation. The section also contains a justification for use in the research. The JD-R model was fully developed by Bakker and Demerouti in 2007, after earlier work by Demerouti et al. (2001). Later work by Bakker and Demerouti (2014) expanded on JD-R theory. Previous theory and models that explained and measured employee motivation and engagement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980; Herzberg, 1966; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist, 1996), while containing elements important to the formulation of the JD-R model, were found by Bakker and Demerouti to have limitations. These limitations included their focus discretely on either work stress or motivation experienced by employees and the lack of application of the models to diverse and rapidly-changing work contexts with multiple variables. The JD-R model proposes a dynamic perspective on motivation and engagement which includes the positive effect that activating personal job resources can have on motivation and engagement by ameliorating job demands.

Both job demands and job resources will vary for people and work situations and can be physical or cognitive in nature. Job demands will require energy and effort that employees find taxing, while job resources satisfy important needs such as feelings of competence and agency. Bakker and Demerouti (2014, p. 10) describe job demands as being elements that will contribute to such things as “exhaustion, health complaints and repetitive strain injury”, and job resources as those that engender “work enjoyment, motivation and engagement”. A job component will not be intrinsically a demand or a resource, but can be experienced as either. For example, workload as a component of how a job is experienced, can be motivating or can be a stressor, depending on its nature and intensity and on the temperament of the employee. This means that motivation and engagement will be impacted by the interplay of what employees bring to their role and the demands that they feel when undertaking them. Thus, if managers seek to optimise motivation and engagement, they must pay

attention not only to removing stressors but to enhancing resources for employees. Further, just as it cannot be assumed that what is experienced as either a job demand or a job resource will be the same in different work contexts nor the same for different people, it may not even be the same over time for the same person in the same work context. For instance, an employee may feel stressed and de-motivated by having to learn a complex technical skill when moving into a new job role, even though the person may have felt highly technically proficient in their previous role. However, if the employee was provided with support and valuable learning opportunities, the gaining of the new skills and their associated sense of proficiency might become an important job resource that enhances motivation and engagement for that employee. In this way, the JD-R model allows for complex, variable and dynamic interactions between job demands and job resources. Figure 4.4 is a representation of the model as it appears in Bakker and Demerouti (2007; p. 313).

Figure 4.2

The Job Demands-Resources Model



The key factors that justify the application of the JD-R model to the research purpose are that the model:

- **is well-established and robust**

Albrecht (2010, p.7) suggests the JD-R model is “probably the most widely-cited and wisely-used theoretical engagement model”. Albrecht points to recent meta-analyses

and qualitative reviews that have been undertaken (Halbesleben; 2010; Mauno et al., 2010) that show strong and reliable drivers of engagement and causal relationships consistent with the JD-R model. Albrecht concludes that the JD-R model “provides a useful unifying theoretical platform” (p.14) and posits that future research based on the consensus of ideas will contribute to systematic and coherent knowledge-building.

- **invites an organisational perspective**

Unlike other and earlier theories, the JD-R model explicates how organisations can work to enhance motivation and engagement in the service of their organisational aims. Enhancing organisational aims does not imply that employees’ needs or well-being are irrelevant but that the perspective goes beyond the individuals’ states of motivation and engagement. It recognises the interdependence of both groups: Bakker and Demerouti consider how the variable influence on outcomes from both resources provided by the employer, such as feedback and support, and those developed in the employee, such as resilience and optimism, can be demonstrated and measured. The interdependence between organisation and employee in determining motivation and engagement aligns with the network/relationships view discussed earlier and allows the organisational perspective that is taken in the research.

- **is flexible and context-responsive**

Application of the JD-R model requires that organisations determine strategy that responds to group needs and meets the particular challenges of the context. Use of the model accommodates the idea that while job demands and resources are relatively independent processes, job resources will have two dimensions: the development of personal resources as well as dedication to the tasks at hand. Bakker and Demerouti argue that a key strength of the model is its flexibility and adaptability to the specific occupation or context under consideration (2007, p. 113). While they maintain that the overarching grouping of factors into the two categories of demands and resources has universal applicability, both the particular factors within each category and the extent to which they act as a demand or a resource, will vary between situations. Demands are not presented as a finite list but grouped using terms such as “mental, physical, emotional” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 113). In applying the model, users are

encouraged to consider the characteristics of the particular context. Section 4.6 provides a summary of the key contextual considerations that were applied to the research design.

A third of Albrecht's fundamental questions referred to in Section 4.4 is relevant to the case for the selection of the JD-R model for this research purpose. This is the consideration of whether there are key areas for further research that build on theory and models developed so far. Responding to the third of the ten questions posed by Albrecht that have particular relevance provides the final point of justification for selecting the JD-R model, which is that it does provides room for further development and refinement. It is apparent from Albrecht's work (2010) that most research into employee engagement has been undertaken with quantitative methodology and so the measures of engagement have been quantitative instruments. While these instruments have been shown as robust and sophisticated (Joseph et al., 2010), Albrecht points out that little qualitative research into employee engagement has been undertaken that focuses on the intersection between employer action and its impact on employee engagement. Therefore, theoretical models have not been further developed in this way. Albrecht (2010, p.14) suggests that there is considerable room for further study that could elaborate the JD-R model to add complexity and further variables. Some of the suggested variables that bear relevance to this research are the inclusion of more flexible or uncertain working arrangements and of different ways of engaging with work such as through technology. Parker et al. (2001; p.419) call for an expansion of the JD-R model to be conceptualised as an "organisation demands-resources (OD-R) model" and this call has been noted by Albrecht (2010, p.14) in the introductory chapter to the handbook on employee engagement. In her review of Albrecht's handbook, Jones (2011) comments on "tensions found within engagement research" (p.643), maintaining this is due to both a lack of emphasis on the organisational perspective in favour of individual analysis and a focus on a positivist approach. Jones sees this as the result of dominance of psychology in understanding employee engagement, an observation borne out by the survey of theoretical models presented in Table 4.1 and described above. Jones advocates for the incorporation of considerations drawn from the fields of human resources and organisational culture. She suggests that an organisational perspective, rather than a personal/psychological

one, would be more helpful for leaders wanting to manage better, particularly in the face of extraordinary challenge. This perspective aligns with Parker et al.'s call for the development of the OD-R model and so the discussion takes account of this nascent model. Jones (2011) notes that it is important to be able to distinguish between engagement with a job and with an organisation. The forming OD-R model may provide a more focussed organisational perspective important to the research purpose. It is the overall purpose of the research to be able to reveal ways in which the organisation can foster engagement in order to help achieve quality learning experiences for students, rather than only contribute to the employees' own development. However, as the OD-R model is not yet fully-formed, its role has been to provide additional perspective for the discussion and implications for future research and it is the existent JD-R model that has informed the research design.

- **The UWES is situated within JD-R theory and model**

The UWES is the instrument used in this research to determine and measure motivation and engagement levels. The scale is presented in full in Chapter 6, at Figure 6.2, where instrument design for the data collection and analysis is explained. It was valuable to the research purpose and to the achievement of trustworthiness to be able to administer a measurement instrument designed to work within the theoretical framework of JD-R theory. Schaufeli et al. use the JD-R model as the conceptual framework for establishing the validity of the UWES, and its validity has been proven in a number of research studies, some of which use short versions of the instrument (9 and more recently, 3 items) drawn from the original 17-point scale used in this research (Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2019).

4.6 Conclusion to the Chapter: Implications for the Research Design

Chapter 4 contains an explanation of how current theories of motivation and engagement proliferate. In doing so early theories about the nature of the work experience and its impact on people can be revisited in order to identify theoretical threads that contribute to an understanding of how motivation and engagement can be understood, analysed and measured in this research. A theoretical perspective of relationships/networks proves valuable for examining relevant motivation and engagement theory, as does taking an organisational perspective, rather than a

personal/psychological point of view. The examination of models shows that any model used must emanate from theory which has been applied to academic contexts. The two joint and combining characteristics of the research context, which is casual academic staff teaching in online environments, and indeed the overall research purpose, fit comfortably into an organisational perspective. It is evident that a model is needed that is robust and well-established in order to provide clear guidance for the research and ensure its trustworthiness. JD-R theory and the JD-R model is appropriately robust; however, the model also provides some flexibility in order to accommodate different research method and some opportunity for enrichment through being applied in a different context. Further, application of JD-R theory calls for a perspective that encompasses the interplay between organisation and employee, thus aligning with the organisational perspective of its theory base.

There are several ways in which the theoretical frame was informative for the design of the research as a case study and the questioning of the research participants within the case study. Broadly, the chosen theoretical foundations allowed for research which is exploratory and qualitative in nature, seeking explanations and embracing nuanced and individualised views and experiences. Self-determination theory and the three-component model of commitment helped to guide questioning and inform observations of engaged behaviour. The JD-R (and to some extent, an emerging OD-R) theory provided an overall frame for designing questions for the case study participants, the formulation of conclusions about the particular organisational context and ways in which engaged behaviour might be enabled and enhanced. The UWES as an instrument to analyse and measure motivation and engagement levels is situated within JD-R theory and thus provides a valuable tool with a robust theoretical base. The UWES provided a structure that was embedded in the two questionnaires administered to research participants.

Taking an organisational networks perspective and applying the JD-R model helped inform questioning of the case study group. Participants were asked to reflect in terms of their relationships with each other and various parts of the organisation. The links between the theoretical structure of the JD-R and the design of data collection instruments and processes are fully demonstrated in the methodology chapter. The

discussion of findings from the three phases of the research that follows the methodology chapter shows how the ideas of networks and interdependencies within employee groups and between employees and the organisation have informed analysis of the data and the conclusions and recommendations that are eventually made. Similarly, using the JD-R model meant that questions and interview discussions with participants encompassed an approach that embraced the diversity of employees and their characteristics, skills and experiences, providing sufficient space for them to explore how their own and the organisation's resources and demands impacted on their motivation and engagement. Analysing and measuring motivation and engagement in terms of the UWES embedded in the model provided a clear and useful framework against which the aspects of the experience of casual academics working in the online programs could be examined, understood, and their impact ascertained.

The lens of JD-R theory and the structure of the JD-R model were applied to the findings from the literature relevant to the research purpose and the significant contextual factors of the online learning environment, casual academic employment, and what is known about the organisational structures and processes. As a result, a number of specific features of the group studied, and the online program in which they work, were able to be identified as likely job demands and/or resources for the research participants. These are discussed in the next chapter, which details the research method and explains how the data collection instruments were designed.

CHAPTER 5

Methodological Framework

5.1 Introduction

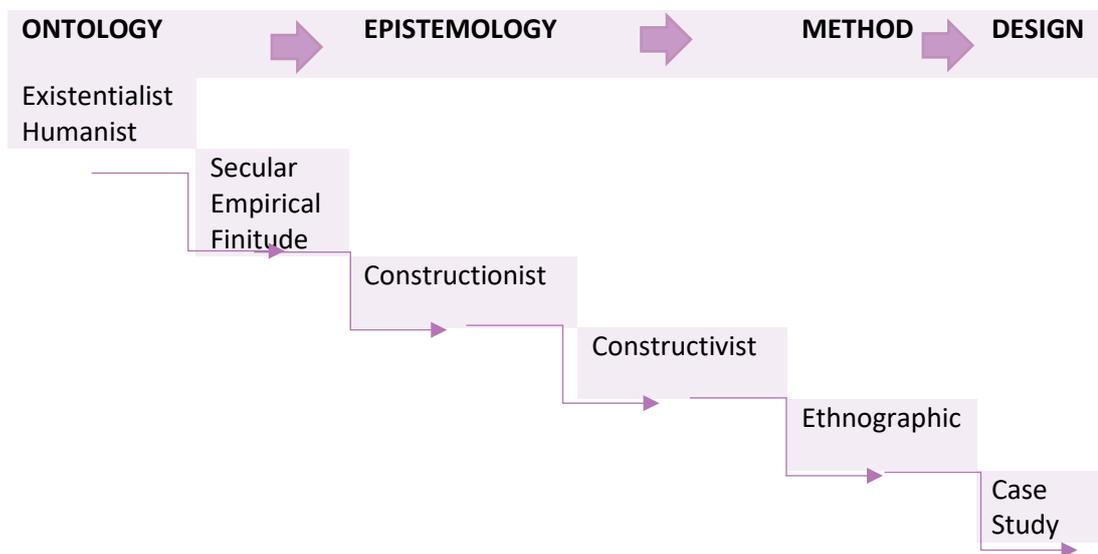
This chapter contains six sections. Following this introduction in Section 5.1, Section 5.2 contains an explanation of the methodological approach of the research, encompassing the ontological and epistemological foundations which guided the research design. Section 5.3 contains a more detailed examination of the ethnography which is the chosen research approach arising from the philosophical foundations explained. Section 5.4 outlines the reasons for choosing an ethnographic approach and the ways in which the approach is applied in this research. Section 5.5 provides a rationale for adopting the structure of a case study within which to examine the ways in which motivation and engagement is experienced by a group of sessional academic staff working in one online program. Understandings formed from that examination help to identify significant factors to guide staff responsible for managing similar staff and programs. Section 5.6 concludes the chapter.

5.2 Methodological Approach: Ontology and Epistemology

This section contains an explanation for the ethnographic approach taken and an outline of the ontological and epistemological perspectives that led to the choice. The section also identifies the method and structure that arose from those philosophical foundations. The examination of ontological foundation and epistemology provides a case for its suitability for the research whilst also identifying aspects that required careful attention in the specific research context. Figure 5.1 presents the philosophical pathway to the chosen method.

Figure 5.1

Philosophical Pathway to Chosen Method



5.2.1 Ontological Foundation

The explanation of ontological foundation is informed by the work of Crotty (1998) who contends that ontology sits alongside epistemology in forming the overall theoretical perspective on which a study must be based. Firstly though, ontology and epistemology are considered in turn because it is helpful to establish assumptions that are being made about "what is" before examining "what it means to know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10), or about ontology and epistemology, respectively. This discussion should provide a clear argument for the integrity and coherence of the approach taken.

It is important to state what philosophical assumptions are being made about the nature of knowledge. The first assumption is that the world exists outside of human beings and does so even if humans were not conscious of it. The world continues while we sleep and even in that part of sleep where we do not dream. The universe demonstrably existed before each individual was born and has persisted beyond the expiry of individuals. It cannot be proven that it will continue to exist for any given period of time but the assumption is that its existence will be not be dependent on the existence of human beings. This belief has been asserted by a number of existentialist philosophers, including Heidegger (1962); Kierkegaard (in Ferreira, 2009); Macquarrie (1973) and Sartre (1956). Further, the meaning of being that forms the

essence of existentialism, and which is supported here, is one which holds that as humans undertake interactions with the world and each other, our reality is formed by the choices we make during these interactions. In this world view, the idea of absolutism is rejected because the presence of choices and the potentially infinite number of possible interactions means there cannot be one pre-determined reality that exists outside of each individual's existence. Likewise, solipsism does not have a place in this world view, as it holds that only the mental reality of the individual exists, with no external component to reality through which to make choices of thought. Finally, objectivism is excluded as a way of explaining being because of its position diametrically opposite to that of solipsism in asserting the existence of external fact to explain all reality, denying the significance of interactivity of object and subject.

The form of existentialism that is supported here is the humanist view and thus one that neither insists upon nor rejects all notions of theism. While strict atheism depends on believing that humans have infinite ability to create the self by itself, humanism offers the view that there may be limits to the possibilities of projection and choice. Humanism as a philosophy has been much debated and at times misunderstood and misappropriated over the last century; taking this stance does not mean embracing all of its variously applied meanings. Excluded is the view of humanism that has been popularised as the belief in the ascendancy of humans above other organic and non-organic being. It is the central humanist tenet of finitude that is held here, deriving from the belief that we cannot assert with certitude that humans do have infinite ability to create the self. Even the interpretation of finitude has been debated and various interpretations used as grounds for rejecting the ontology of humanism. A useful representation can be found in Han-Pile's essay (2010) on Foucault's view on humanism where she argues with some of Foucault's basis for rejecting humanism so completely. In her essay, Han-Pile presents a case for empirical finitude, brought about through humans being immersed from birth in conditions over which they cannot have infinite control. As Han-Pile explains (p.29), humans cannot completely control (for example) our biochemistry and thus create our own realities of ageing and death, nor choose to engage in meaning-making through language by using a language we ourselves have constructed and which no others share. Even understandings about these matters, such as bodies of knowledge in themselves, are dependent on the

finitude that imbues knowledge-seeking. Thus, the ontology that has informed this study is one which holds that 'what is' is something that humans create, through making choices and projections that will probably have limitations, because they interact with the world. Accepting this view of what is does not imply that there is only one reality though, as each of us will only know reality as we perceive it, a central tenet of Aristotelian philosophy as explained by Moore (1905).

5.2.2 Epistemological Standpoint

The epistemological standpoint addresses what it means to know, the other side of the coin that must be explained along with the ontological foundation. Crotty (2013, p. 7-8) contends that there must be a philosophical stance underpinning both the ontological perspective that is taken and the epistemology that goes hand in hand with the chosen perspective. Crotty's view reflects that of Maynard (1994, p. 10) in saying that this philosophical grounding enables researchers to determine "what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate". This section of the methodology rationale therefore presents the philosophical stance taken towards the research. In so doing, some reasons for rejecting certain perspectives are helpful in clarifying the standpoint.

Firstly, an alignment with the evolution of philosophical and psychological thought about ethnographical research means that choosing this method implies an ontology that rejects positivism. Positivism is a paradigm that demands that reality is constructed through objectively observing and interpreting data (Erlandson et al., 1993). For the ethnographer, positivism denies the nature of the large part of social research that seeks to understand human behaviour because behaviour is contextual and subject to interpretation. A simple example social research question may suffice to justify and explain this world view: 'What is the meaning of a kiss?' A common answer to this question could be 'it depends' and answering it truthfully would be difficult without enquiring as to the participants' intentions or experiences. To depend on the positivist approach of only observing interactions would surely limit knowledge-finding. This is not to deny the value of positivist approaches in all situations but to assert that some phenomena are better known through different ontological standpoints and their attendant methods. Rejecting a positivist view and

working within a broadly interpretivist paradigm depends on the belief that because the social world is constructed by people, it is fundamentally different from the world of nature (Williamson, 2002). As the early anthropological researchers revealed, albeit not necessarily consciously, this demands different epistemology. The relevance of this early anthropology work is discussed further in Section 5.3.

Having identified the standpoint taken as non-positivist, and one which supports an ethnographic view, it is now defined further as constructionist. Crotty (2013) associates much of the work of the early ethnographers with an objectivist epistemological position, one which takes the view that knowledge exists already and needs only to be found or understood. In contrast, the constructionist standpoint, which is the one taken in this research, says that knowledge, or meaning, is not discovered extant but is constructed through "our engagement with the realities in our world" (p. 8). This position is more consistent with the non-positivist paradigm, because much ethnographic research rejects the positivist beliefs that are more usually linked to objectivist ontology. Critical to the constructionist view is the belief that subject and object interact in order to create meaning. This belief allows for the contention that knowledge about ostensibly the same phenomenon could be constructed differently at different times and by different people. A central tenet of the constructionist view is that this contention does not threaten the veracity of knowledge. However, it does demand close attention to method.

Objectivism has thus been judged inappropriate for this study; so too has subjectivism. Subjectivism holds that the creation of knowledge lies completely within the realm of the subject and is created, as Crotty expresses it, "out of nothing" (p. 9). Subjectivism is a perspective common amongst post-structuralist methodologies and one that might appear at first glance to align with the research purpose. However, its limitation lies in denying the process that occurs when research participants determine what is important, or concerns how they feel when they consider how they have interacted with the ideas and the lived reality of the particular context under inquiry. Equally crucially, subjectivism denies the constructionist view that lived reality includes being party to what others who are experiencing or investigating the same context think and feel.

The above exposition of the underlying philosophical standpoint informing this research shows it holds that: knowledge cannot be created only by empirical observation; there is no one objective truth to be discovered and claimed with certitude; and that achieving the overall purpose will best be served by exploring and explaining the ways humans interact with ideas and feelings and behave in certain ways that have meaning. Based on these beliefs, ethnographic method was deemed the most consistent and appropriate way to conduct the research. One further refinement is discussed, as it is significant to the design and application of data collection instruments and data analysis. The ethnographic method adopted sits within the qualitative frameworks advocated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 2018), and Guba and Lincoln (1989). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) return to their view of the central purpose of research (or inquiry) in the service of social justice and emphasise in this later work that while the multiple discourses contributing to the research landscape have made research inquiry increasingly diverse, qualitative research is still unified in its interpretive nature and the ways in which meaning is constructed from human interactions.

As well as being informed by a constructionist view of knowledge-formation as explained earlier, this methodology is further lived out in accordance with constructivist (Charmaz, 2000; Crotty, 2013) processes. The constructivist process derives from the element of a constructivist approach that emphasises, as described by Crotty (p.57) “the instrumental and practical function of theory construction and knowing”. It is essentially asking, ‘What is it that we can know (knowledge we can construct) that has meaning here and now for this group of people?’ There is a dimension of psychology as well as philosophy contained in this refinement, arising from concerns with the cognitive processes by which humans construct meaning or knowledge and not just with their perceptions of reality and knowledge in the broader sense. The alignment can be seen with the purpose of social research being one that seeks understanding in order to act to improve.

While psychologists such as Kelly (1955) focussed more on the individual constructions of reality (personal construct theory), constructivist social research concerns itself more with the way in which shared meanings are created amongst a group of people. Social constructionists such as Berger and Luckman (1966) drew

attention to the way in which people individually developed meanings for their activities together and so the constructivist epistemology further requires the constructionist researcher to discover and manage ways in which to access how those processes occur within and amongst a specified group, of which the researcher is part. They must know how shared meanings are made.

Having established philosophical foundations for the application of ethnographic method for the research purpose, the next section considers the origins and some of the development of ethnographic approaches. This discussion will clarify how the method has been applied in this instance and refine its parameters.

5.3 Foundations of Ethnographic Method

This sub-section places ethnography in an historical context, tracing its emergence through broad developments in philosophical, psychological and sociological thought. This historical background positions the ethnography in terms of the ontological and epistemological foundations that are discussed above. The links from those philosophical foundations to the method will be drawn through identifying core research strategies associated with ethnographic method that are utilised in the research. The discussion encompasses some consideration of the value, limitations or possible risks associated with these strategies. Looking to the past helps to explain the emergence of the ethnography as a valuable social research method. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century represented the beginning, in western culture, of systematic examination of the world beyond the givens of one's own religious, social and political context. Kant (1784) advocated for a 'maturity of thought' that demanded that humans should use their own powers of reasoning to reach conclusions and consequently behave in ways which would lead to personal and societal progress. Even prior to that, philosopher Descartes (1596 – 1650) had already influenced the Enlightenment thinkers with his central contention that everything external to us could and should be doubted and that an arrival at truth was contingent on our own processes – albeit, for Descartes, themselves dependent on a relationship with God.

If the Enlightenment can be viewed as the doorway that led into worlds and ideas outside of one's own unquestioned experience or destiny, then it is understandable that initial ethnographic explorations would have been to some extent untrammelled, and

yet based on scientific method of the age. In 1846 Kierkegaard was already concerned with the way in which scientific research into societies seemed to be very busily gathering objective data without necessarily then exploring that data in a meaningful way in order to arrive at some useful truth, which he saw as subjective but not less valid for that (Hannay, 2009). Here the essential question of social research can be seen to emerge: If research has discovered something about a group of people and the researcher has engaged in analysis to reach some kind of conclusion regarding its meaning, what should then be done with that conclusion: how should it inform actions? If we accept that the purpose of social research is to find out, understand, and then act in some way, then we are obliged to examine carefully how we undertake those activities or processes appropriately, and say that we can know something and that the knowledge gained is valid and valuable. The ethnography presents as one possibility for this process and purpose.

The ethnography as a social research method was initially the province of anthropologists such as Durkheim (in Alexander & Smith, 2005), Mead (in Wolcott, 1995) and Malinowski (1967). While one interpretation of their body of work might be that they approached their social groups as subjects, and even at times as something bordering on circus curiosities, that view has the benefit of historical perspective. All had a central tenet that in order to be able to properly speak about or for a group of people, the researcher must enter their world and live among them. Malinowski's journal entries, in particular, later led to some discrediting of the ethnography when they were revealed to be partly fictional. Nonetheless, the work of these early anthropologists was instrumental. Even Malinowski's failings themselves have allowed the light to fall on a solution, one which lay in questions of ontology on the one hand, or beliefs about constructions of reality and knowledge, and in those of epistemology on the other. With the generosity that historical perspective can bring, it is possible that Malinowski may not have been simply lazy nor mendacious but paralysed through a lack of conceptual and methodological frameworks.

The 20th century contributed much to the understanding of the way in which psychological principles are bound inextricably to any attempts by humans to interpret or understand each other, at individual and at group level. The consideration of the way in which humans construct reality through their own interpretations during

interactions with the world (Kelly, 1955; Rogers, 1965) supported in this way the work of sociologist Garfinkel (1967) who sought to explore to deep levels commonplace or daily social activities in order to better understand them. Erickson (1998) further advanced the application of ethnographic principles specifically to educational research, arguing that an understanding of the “kinds of things that make a difference in social life” (p. 1155) can be achieved through ethnographical research and that this approach is entirely appropriate to educational settings. Erickson contends that this is due largely to the approach allowing for contextual nuances and for deep investigation of what is observed in ways that recognise the forces of social interaction and individual experience.

The brief survey of the emergence and refinement of the ethnographic approach shows that the method is consistent with the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research. Attention now turns to how the method was selected and applied to this particular research.

5.4 Selection and Application of Ethnographic Method for this Research

Having established that the traditions and evolution of the ethnographical method are appropriate to the humanist constructionist paradigm and interpretivist/constructivist approach informing this research, the task is now to identify design and strategies to frame and manage the inquiry. The relationship of the researcher with the group being studied is complex: the researcher has been part of the group in the past, but is now working in a leadership and management role for the pool of sessional academic staff from which the study group was formed. This complex and seemingly-ambiguous relationship need not compromise the suitability of the ethnographic approach, which seeks to provide an insider’s view of the group behaviour and explain it through an interpretivist and constructive perspective. The experience of the researcher as a group member cannot help but inform such construction and explanation of meaning gained through interacting with the group in the course of the study. However, the complexities do demand that particular attention is paid to key aspects of effective ethnographic methods that support success and five methods in particular from different ethnographic methodologists were used as guidance for this research.

- **The establishment of collective understanding of group behaviour** (Punch, 1998).

Punch asserts that the basic purpose of the ethnographical study is to “know the meaning of the behaviour of a group” (1998, p. 7). This is a powerful and yet deceptively simple statement. It is very useful as a beginning point because not only does it clearly remind us of the essence of the ethnography, but also it permits valuable analysis on epistemological and strategic grounds. It suggests that we must decide how we will know when we know, as well as how we can best find out. The previous experience of the researcher as a group member, as well as the perspective afforded by the leadership and management role and the relationships with the sessional academic staff, helped to create a collective understanding of the group behaviour – for instance, in bringing understandings as a previous group member to form effective probing questions or to discern subtle differences between participants’ responses and recollections of their experiences.

- **Authentic access to the group and engagement with its members** (Bryman, 2012; Ch. 431).

Gaining effective access and enabling fruitful engagement requires careful planning but can be unpredictable. Bryman speaks of the requirement of intending ethnographers to make a series of decisions about how to engage with their groups and even warns that luck might be as important an element as careful planning. Whether we view it as luck, or more that the researcher's possible actions are subject to the caprice and inconsistencies of humans, it is useful to bear the point in mind. In this research, access to the group was managed because of the researcher’s role in the organisation, although some luck may well be required to ensure that a large and diverse enough group is available to provide their input as and when needed.

- **Following recognised conventions proven to be effective** (Bryman, 2012; Creswell 2018; Erlandson et.al., 1993; Punch, 1998).

A number of specific strategies for effective ethnographic research are well established and largely agreed upon. These are: that the researcher immerses herself in the group and does so for an extended period; that conversations are important, including those

that are informal or even accidentally observed; that interviews are helpful to further explore or probe issues or aspects not readily observable; and that extensive records are kept from the outset, contributing to the final reflective and analytical report from the ethnographer. This last characteristic is especially important because ethnographic research will typically unfold, rather than being tightly planned and conducted from the outset.

Links can be made from these essential elements of method back to the foundational epistemology and ontology: if we believe that understanding will be a process that is constructed through interactions between participants, including the researcher, and further requiring the (subjective) analysis of the researcher, then the method must encompass actions that will be multiple, varied in nature, prolonged, and probing, in order to enable deep understanding. It is not the intent of ethnographic studies to ‘uncover a single great truth’ or to necessarily prove or disprove a single hypothesis. The constructivist interpretivist paradigm allows that there are many truths and each may be constructed differently. The ethnographic approach enables a gradual building of a store of understandings about the ways in which the behaviours of a group impact upon or reveal a certain phenomenon or dynamic. Katz (2012, p. 259) argues that part of the brief of the ethnographer is to investigate people or institutions that may present “one face to outsiders and another to insiders” and so systematically move from being an outsider to an insider, if deep meanings are to be constructed. Strategies must therefore serve that purpose. In this research, the complexities of the researcher’s relationship with the group may create some particular challenges as the researcher is not currently fully considered to be a member of the group in the same way as those being researched. Casual observations and conversations cannot be incorporated into the data analysed in case group members are uncomfortable about a possible power imbalance. The gradual revelation of meaning occurred through the focussed, structured surveying and interviewing of the group members, the additional, contextual understandings already present in the researcher through previous group membership, and consideration of selected documents and processes which provide further context or illustration of the ideas and perspectives being raised and discussed.

- **Working with known research findings and advice in managing data** (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2018; Erlandson et.al., 1993; Punch, 1998).

There is a sizeable body of research and advice to guide researchers employing an ethnographic approach to the collection of data. Comprehensive guidance can be found, particularly for the conducting of informative interviews, and for the management and analysis of data.

- **Taking into account obstacles, difficulties and risks known to be associated with ethnographic research** (Bryman, 2012; Van Maanen & Kolb, 1985).

Most of the known challenges revolve around questions of authentic access to the group and the impact that the presence of the researcher and the research activities might have on the behaviour of participants. Obstacles, difficulties and risks faced in conducting this particular research are discussed in the following chapter where the research design is explained.

Sections 5.2 to 5.4 have justified critical methodological choices made for this research. The philosophical foundations for the approach and for the design and application of the research method have been explained so that the appropriateness of the research design is clear. The particular situation in this research and the role of the researcher has also been addressed. Section 5.5 outlines the research design, and explains how the foundations have informed the design.

5.5 Rationale for a Case Study

The research design is structured as a case study, taking into account the underlying ontological and epistemological foundations and approaches of ethnographic research discussed above. A number of salient characteristics of the research context led to the selection of a case study design. The decision was guided largely by the work of Creswell (2012, 2018), Creswell & Poth (2018), Yin (2018), Stake (1995), Flick (2015) and Erlandson et al. (1998). Other case study researchers and writers were also consulted. Each of these writers places the case study within the ontological paradigm containing ethnographic research and advocates the appropriate application of the design in achieving the fundamental aims of social research.

Firstly, Stake (1995; p. xii) developed an approach to case studies that clearly draws from traditions of ethnographic as well as other qualitative or naturalistic research methods. He explains that while cases in social research are most likely to be people and programs, not all programs or groups of people will necessarily be a case. It is the discernible boundedness of the group or program that marks its suitability as a case for structured study. As Stake states (p. 2) "the case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing", and "an integrated system". The focus is on the group as an object and the way it functions, rather than on the process aspects of a program per se. Stake identifies two major kinds of case study, naming the intrinsic and instrumental, with the latter applied in this research. In conducting case study research with the bounded group of sessional academics working in one online program, it is expected that understandings will be reached about what can impact on the motivation and engagement of such people working in such circumstances. This does not deny the essential particularisation that is at the heart of the case study. The driving force is not for maximum generalisation but for deep understandings about the particular case.

In order to achieve those deep understandings, the work of Yin is instructive. Yin (2018) advocates the application of a case study design where the research seeks to explain something and asserts that research questions in a case study will typically be framed in a manner that shows intent to explain rather than to quantify. Yin (p.4) suggests that case study research questions will more typically be "How and "Why" questions rather than "Who", "What", "Where", "How many" or "How much" questions. The framing of the research questions for this study, as stated in Section 1.4 of Chapter 1, demonstrates that the questions are seeking to explain. This is apparent through seeking explanation of experience, significance and implications. Recognising the need to explain then addresses another key consideration for the case study and helps place this research within the broad category (Yin, 2018, p. 12) named by Yin as an explanatory case study, which seeks to explain a situation that exists and which will typically contain research questions that ask "How" or "Why"; as opposed to an exploratory or descriptive study. Yin writes that this kind of case study is appropriate in contexts where the researcher does not need to have control over behavioural events, unlike an experiment. Further, that the study is applied to contemporary events and process, rather than examining historical documents. Yin concedes that not all case

studies will fit neatly into firm and exclusive categorical parameters. His overarching advice is that “gross misfits should be avoided” (p. 8).

Taking into account that the framing of the research questions can be seen to align with the fundamental intent of explanatory studies, it can also be seen that the research is undertaken using the key strategies Yin advances for data relied upon for explanatory case studies, being observations of behaviour and interviews of participants (p. 12). Table 5.1 summarises the justification for a case study design as the appropriate choice for conducting the research.

Table 5.1

Case Study Design as Appropriate Choice: Summary of Factors

Factor	Characteristic	Details
Group	Identifiable and bounded	The group of sessional academics in the “sessional pool” of one School at one University.
Context	Contemporary, process-oriented, non-interventionist	Interviews and observations of experience and behaviour, framed by relevant theory.
Purpose	Explanatory, instrumental	To explain how the management practices of one School impact on the motivation and engagement of the case study group, in order to make recommendations for effective practice.
Research Questions	Seek to explain rather than quantify	Two “How” questions. Two “What” questions that endeavor to analyse process and practice and lead to recommendations.
Data sources	Varied and numerous	Purposeful group formation, in-depth interviews, observations of practice, supporting documentation that explicates process.
Data analysis		Coding and categorising, pattern-making, triangulation through documents and observations,
Writing	Narrative style, inclusive of participants’ and researcher’s voice	Thick description; writing relates process of constructivist meaning-building over time.

There are two significant characteristics of the research context that will impact on motivation and engagement: these are the online environment in which the staff work, and the casual basis of their employment. Chapters 2 and 3 contained discussion of these key characteristics of the online learning and teaching environment and of casual academic status. Chapter 4 provided important theoretical perspective about how motivation and engagement might be viewed and experienced by the research participants. The idea that optimising motivation and engagement is essential if both program quality and the student experience is to continue to improve is not diminished by being set within an online learning environment or amongst casual academic employees. Therefore, it is important to take into account the two significant contextual factors when examining motivation and engagement, and particularly when considering management structures and processes that will optimise them. Taking an explanatory case study approach allows deep and prolonged inquiry that provides opportunities for participants to tell their stories about the individual ways that they experience motivation and engagement, within the shared environment of these two significant contextual factors.

5.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 5 has provided a detailed account of the philosophical and theoretical foundations that guided the research approach and design and led to the decision to structure the research as a case study. The chapter has drawn the philosophical pathway from ontological beliefs towards a method that is consistent with them and has explained how an ethnographic approach can be applied even though there are aspects of the researcher's positioning that may not be standard for an ethnography.

Chapter 6 will provide details of the overall structure of the research, which is a case study organised into three iterative and cumulative phases. The data collection and analysis procedures for the case study are presented in detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

Research Design and Phases of the Research

6.1 Introduction to the Chapter

Chapter 6 contains an account of the design of the research and has eight sections. Following this introduction, Section 6.2 provides an explanation of the way case study research method has been applied across the research design. Section 6.3 outlines the structure and purpose of the organisation of the research into three phases and Section 6.4 explains the key trustworthiness tactics associated with case study method that were applied to provide quality assurance for the research. Sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 then follow with a detailed account of the approach for each of the three phases. Section 8 concludes the chapter.

6.2 Application of Case Study Method

This section explains the method that was followed in applying the principles of ethnographic research and observing the established conventions of case study design. Every ethnographic researcher must grapple with the demands of gathering, managing and analysing data effectively and efficiently. While positivist or quantitative data management may rely more on the researcher mastering statistical tools, the ethnographer is faced with a mountain of data that calls for skill and discipline to sort, categorise, record and analyse. The management of these processes, and the methodological theory which informed their management, are described in detail in this section.

In keeping with the ethnographic approach, the meaning-making centres on the qualitative data collected and analysed in Research Phase 2 through the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Although some quantitative data contributed to the study, the quantitative data collected through Survey Questionnaire 1 and Survey Questionnaire 2 served to either guide, further define or provide a measure of trustworthiness of the complex themes, sub-themes and elements that emerged from the analysis of conversations. Both survey questionnaires contained open-ended, free-text items that were qualitatively analysed. In this way, the research design and strategies approach mirrored Creswell's (2018) description of mixed-methods research which provides "more insight" (p. 184) into a problem and can result in stronger understandings. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, 2010b) argue that the non-dichotomous approach afforded by the mixing of data types can be especially helpful when robust findings are needed to inform policy and practices for positive change. The approach therefore provided the robustness and confidence in the research findings required to be able to make recommendations for practice that would improve the experience of sessional academic staff. The researcher has a significant ethical responsibility to ensure that advocating for certain actions or approaches will bring positive results. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 273) identify nine characteristics of mixed-methods approaches, a number of which are present in this research because the researcher sought strategies that would provide that assurance. Principal amongst these is the iterative, cyclical approach to the research design which welcomes data from various sources and a diversity of respondents from within the group, as well as the focus on the research questions and problem as the determinant of the data collection and analysis method, rather than the method being pre-determined. The inclusion of figures and diagrams, also a feature of this research, is a further characteristic of the mixed methods approach identified by Tashakkori and Teddlie.

The recommendations of Erickson (1998) were influential in informing the organisation of phases of data collection and analysis. Erickson argues that strong qualitative research depends on both "looking and asking" (p. 1159) with each aspect being used in ways that are complementary and iterative through the overall process of data collection and analysis. The description of the three phases will demonstrate how both looking and asking was included in each phase, and how the insights from

each informed the next, and helped with the subsequent analysis across all phases. The description will also show the ways in which another key recommendation from Erickson was employed, which is to follow patterns or hunches (p. 1159) and seek confirmatory evidence of them through other methods, such as documents. This last recommendation relates directly to the key tactic proposed by Yin (2018) and included in Table 6.2, which is to use multiple sources of evidence.

The case study group was drawn from a single research site. As mentioned in section 5.5, justification for a single-case case study must be robust, and the following key points provide this justification. Researching single sites is consistent with qualitative and ethnographic studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 150; Yin, 2018, p. 49-54) and was considered appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, the research site and context represents what Yin calls a common case (p.50), whereby an “everyday situation”, in this case, the experience of working as a sessional academic staff member in a fully online program, can be observed and interrogated in order to explain a social process and relate it to a body of theory. Such cases should provide insights for decision-makers in that and other similar contexts. Secondly, the number of group members (117) was judged to be sufficient to be able to gain valuable whole-group data collection at the initial and final data collection stages. Thirdly, it was deemed large enough and diverse enough to allow further sampling and formation of a smaller group for in-depth interviewing, thus providing evidence of comprehensive analysis of meaning-making that remains aligned to the research purpose and questions. Finally, the site was well-known to the researcher and access to the group presented no barriers that would constrain the required diversity of or communications with the group members. This final point raises a potential research risk as well as contributing to ease of access. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 150) warn of the risks associated with researching in “one’s own backyard” (p.150) in case “dangerous knowledge” is created. These authors strongly recommend including multiple validation strategies to ensure that the findings are accurate and useful or in Guba & Lincoln’s (1989) terms trustworthy and dependable. The full accounts of data collection and analysis provided in Sections 7.2, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3 and 9.4 demonstrate that multiple strategies were used in this case, namely, participant checking, member checking, corroboration of evidence

through complementary documents, and iterative research cycles which incorporated a variety of data sources and a diversity of participants.

- **Data Collection**

The top-level organisation of data collection was in accordance with purposeful sampling techniques and purpose (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018); a qualitative research strategy whereby research participants are chosen to comprise a small group which is representative of the larger group to which they belong. In order to gain a good understanding of the "central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206) of how motivation and engagement is experienced by sessional academic staff, the group of such people currently in the School of Education at the research university, and working fully online in sessional academic roles, was identified as the case study group. This site and this group was thus intentionally sampled. Miles and Huberman (1994); Miles et al. (2020); Bryman (2001); Creswell (2012) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) all discuss the sampling strategies that can be employed when engaging in purposeful sampling. A key consideration was that the case study group should be a representative group (Flick, 2015, p. 212) and this consideration was addressed through two key strategies: Firstly, all members of the group (n = 117) were invited to participate in the first phase of the data collection. This maximised the opportunity to form a group large enough to be considered representative. Secondly, maximum variation sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 153-4) was undertaken following the first phase of data collection. Although the sample for Research Phase 1 was not purposefully selected, criteria were determined for the selection of the sample group for interview. The determination of criteria that differentiate participants is described by Creswell and Poth as the distinguishing feature of the approach which seeks to maximise the variation between participants in a sample. As discussed in Chapter 3 wherein the literature concerning the nature of casual academic employment was reviewed, the point was made that the sessional academic staff should not be considered a homogenous group. It is likely, therefore, that group members will have differing motivators and will be engaging in this work for different reasons at the time of inquiry. Creating a diverse group, and recording the aspects of diversity, therefore helps to provide confidence that the research will avoid generalising findings to groups of people to whom they may not apply. In order to manage maximal variation

sampling, close attention was paid to certain indicators of diversity, and so data about particular demographic and other characteristics was collected as part of the initial collection phase and recorded for analysis and planning of Phase 2 of the research. These characteristics are shown in full in Chapter 7 where the data from Phase 1 are analysed and discussed.

- **Data Analysis**

In keeping with the overall nature of this case study as explanatory, the analysis was initially approached within the broad theoretical framework provided by the JD-R model and the UWES. As Yin (2018, p.181) states, some case study data analysis approaches will call for alignment to theoretical propositions that informed the data collection – and before that, the research problem and questions. In this case, the data needed to be analysed in order to determine the ways in which sessional academic staff were impacted by their experience of sessional employment in the fully online program, and that impact needed to be analysed according to theoretical models. It was a research aim to be able to claim how the various aspects and factors present in the employment experience impacted on motivation and engagement, as measured by the UWES, and what factors were seen as significant resources and/or demands. Thus, the literature pertaining to the case study context and its players, as well as the theoretical framework concerning motivation and engagement, guided the case study analysis and the selection of appropriate tactics and indicated the relevant contextual conditions that needed to be described and the experiences that needed to be explained. It also allowed the resulting analysis and discussion to inform the JD-R model itself, providing evidence of different ways in which job demands and resources can be configured because of the particular context – most significantly, because of the fully online, remote nature of the working environment and casual academic employment status.

The overall analytic technique employed was one of explanation building (Yin, 2018, p.191) again in keeping with the research as an explanatory case study. Yin describes explanation building as a kind of pattern-matching which seeks to explain how one thing leads to another, otherwise referred to as causal relationships. The goal in this research was to analyse the data through building an explanation about the case – in essence, to be able to say how or why certain aspects of the experience of sessional academic employment in one program affect motivation and engagement. The

narrative built should identify and to some extent explain causal sequences. Yin warns that these explanations may not be complete and that the causal sequences may not be precise, but the conclusions and resultant recommendations should provide some useful guidance for action. In this case and for this research, that action should be the decisions and processes determined by managers of the sessional staff and the programs in which they work. Further, and reflecting Yin's argument that the explanations built should reflect 'theoretically significant propositions' (2018, p. 192), the explanation contributes to the expansion of the application of the JD-R model and its theory base to explain motivation and engagement.

6.3 Structure, Purpose and Approach of Phases 1, 2 and 3

The section provides an overview of the organisation and structure of the data management. The overview presents the three phases of data collection and analysis and indicates the method and strategies used in each of the three phases. It explains how the findings from each phase informed the next. Each of these phases is explained by providing a rationale for each, details of the design and administration of the instruments used, and of the data analysis tactics.

The data collection and analysis processes for the research were organised into three phases, with Phase 1 containing two parts. The three phases were cumulative, with the data collected and analysed in each part and phase informing the ensuing stages and contributing to the responses to the research questions. Phase 1 served to establish the parameters for the ensuing phases, gathering data that determined what the members of the sessional staff pool should be asked initially about their experience of their work and their motivation and engagement, and who should be included in the in-depth interviews that formed Phase 2. Analysis of the data from the interviews then in turn informed the decision and the manner in which to return to the sessional pool in Phase 3 to measure the potential impact of elements of the work experience identified through Phases 1 and 2. The response rate for Survey Questionnaire 1 was 35% (n = 41, from 117 invitations) and the response rate for Survey Questionnaire 2 was 28% (n = 30, from 108 invitations). Some of the respondents to Survey Questionnaire 2 may have been the same as those for Survey Questionnaire 1. The 15 interview participants for Research Phase 2 were drawn from the 41 Survey

Questionnaire respondents. Therefore, the total number of participants in any phase of the research cannot be quantified although is known to be between 41 and 71. Full discussion of implications of participant numbers is provided in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 where the data are analysed and discussed, as well as in the concluding chapter where possible limitations of the research are presented.

An overview of the mapping of the research questions to the chapters is provided in the thesis overview, in Table 1.2. An overview of three phases of the data collection and analysis process is provided in this chapter and is displayed in Table 6.1. A full account of the data and findings for each phase in turn is discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. The phases are mapped to Research Questions 1 to 4 and Table 6.1 shows the key data collection instruments and analysis tactics associated with each. A rationale for each phase, details of instrument design and administration, and the analysis approach used, are provided in Sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7.

Table 6.1*Three Phases of Data Collection and Analysis*

	Phase 1: Establishing the Parameters		Phase 2: In-depth Inquiry	Phase 3: Testing Findings
Research Question/s addressed	R.Q. 1: How M&E are being experienced		R.Q. 2 How elements impact on M&E for interview group	R.Q. 3 Importance of elements to whole research group R.Q. 4 Importance of particular factors
Instrument		Survey Questionnaire (SQ) 1	Semi-structured interviews	Survey Questionnaire (SQ) 2
Other data sources	Selective Review of Australian Practice		Observations Documents and frameworks	
Participant group		117 survey invitations; 41 responses	15 participants drawn from 41 SQ 1 respondents	143 survey invitations; 32 responses
Analysis strategies	Narrative	Coding & Categorising of: Demographic data; Role and Experience in role	Interview transcription Coding Categorising Theming Journalling	Frequency analysis Data graphing Text analysis Coding Categorising Journalling
Purpose of analysis	To guide instrument design, questioning and analysis	To gain baseline data on motivation and engagement To form a diverse group for interview	To identify and interrogate significant factors to build meaning; To subsequently check significance to the wider group	To determine applicability of factors to wider group To determine relative impact of significant factors
Trust-worthiness strategies	Drawn from peer reviewed studies, findings and measurement methods	Checks of demographic and employment data	Interview technique Recording Participant checking Member checking Data triangulation	Complementary data sources

The principal data analysis tactic used through the three phases of the research was that of coding, leading to categorising and theming. Other tactics such as journalling and graphing helped to build meaning and provide trustworthiness checks for the data. The coding, categorising and theming processes were undertaken manually and managed in Excel spreadsheets, which are provided in the appendices to this thesis. More information about the coding approach is provided in sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 which describe the method applied in each of the three phases of the research. Detailed accounts of the analysis undertaken through the coding and other processes are provided in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, where the data from each research phase is analysed and discussed.

6.4 Quality Assurance: Trustworthiness Tactics

This section contains an account of how the design, conduct and evaluation of the case study have been managed to provide confidence that the research project is altogether sound. The section signals the specific strategies that have been utilised and the research methodology theory that has informed them. Those strategies are then further explicated and illustrated in Sections 6.5 to 6.7 which relate in detail how the method has been applied across the three phases of the research.

The case study as a robust research design has met with scepticism from some quarters. This scepticism has been firstly at the broad level (Stake, 1995), deriving mainly from the term ‘case study’ being applied in situations that are not formal research projects; for instance the case study provided to illustrate a magazine article or give life to a policy document or report. Criticism has also been directed at specific elements of design (Yin, 2018 pp.81-90). Most pertinent to this research design is the point made by Yin that addressing criticisms about single-case studies will rely on a strong argument for the particular case group. In common with all formal research, there is an onus on researchers applying case study design to demonstrate that the design is robust. This demonstration must address considerations of trustworthiness and dependability, albeit framed in ways and using terms more usually applied in qualitative research methodology such as validity and reliability. Yin provides a representation of what he names “tactics” (p.43) that address, in turn, construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Although other writers use the terms validity, reliability, dependability and trustworthiness somewhat differently

(Creswell, 2018, pp. 252-3; Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 131 – 151), all are concerned with ensuring data collection and analysis strategies contribute to confidence that method is sound and that conclusions can be believed. Yin’s representation is a useful guide, even though his choices of terminology suggest application to quantitative rather than qualitative studies and data analysis technique. The tactics he advocates are sound and provide robustness to the study.

Table 6.2 displays Yin’s recommended tactics as applied to this research in order to achieve trustworthiness, organised in accordance with the research phase in which they occur. The detailed explanation of the research method that follows later in this chapter will illustrate how the tactics in Table 6.2 were applied as contributing to the overall research robustness in accordance with qualitative measures of trustworthiness, dependability and transferability (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Table 6.2

Yin’s Tactics for Research Robustness as Applied to this Research

Research Phase	Case Study Tactic	Element of robustness addressed
Overall Design	Use theory in single-case studies	External validity
Data Collection in Phases 1,2&3	Use case study protocol	Reliability
	Develop a case study database	Reliability
	Maintain a chain of evidence	Reliability
	Use multiple sources of evidence	Construct Validity
Data Analysis & Discussion in Phases 1,2&3	Pattern matching	Internal Validity
	Explanation building	Internal Validity
	Incorporate review by key informants	Construct Validity
	Member checking	Construct Validity

Stake (1995, p. 131) and Creswell (2013, p. 264) suggest numerous ways in which case studies can be evaluated as holistic pieces of work. Key amongst these criteria are a clear conceptual structure with cohesive parts, strong definition of the case, an engaging sense of story, sufficient data, sound assertions and good attention to representing voice, including that of the researcher. These criteria will be returned to in the research evaluation provided in Chapter 10, the concluding chapter of this thesis. The following three sections explain the organisation of each phase of the research.

6.5 Research Method for Phase 1: Establishing Parameters

Section 6.5 comprises three sub-sections: the rationale for Phase 1 and its organisation into two parts is provided in sub-section 6.5.1; a justification and description of the approach for Part 1 is given in sub-section 6.5.2, and an account of the instrument design, data collection and coding approach for Part 2 is provided in sub-section 6.5.3.

6.5.1 Rationale for Phase 1

The purpose of Phase 1 of the data collection and analysis was to establish the parameters for the questioning of staff to determine the elements of the work experience that are important to motivation and engagement and how both are currently being impacted. Phase 1 was organised into two parts. Part 1 comprised a selective review of Australian practice in the management of casual academic staff, and was undertaken to provide background understanding of how casual academic status is experienced. The first part of Phase 1 gathered and analysed data that determined what the members of the sessional staff pool should be asked initially about their experience of their work and their motivation and engagement. That data was then gathered in the second part of Phase 1 through a structured survey questionnaire. The second part of Phase 1 collected baseline data about how motivation and engagement was currently being experienced by the case study group, including measured levels of motivation and engagement, and also collected personal and demographic data that informed the composition of the smaller group invited for in-depth, follow-up interview in Phase 2 of the research.

6.5.2 Purpose and Approach of Selective Review of Australian Practice

A review of practice was conducted to ascertain what is known about the factors that might be particularly relevant to motivation and engagement for employees in situations such as the research participants. In order to review situations likely to be similar to the research context, and thus most likely to indicate salient characteristics for questioning, the review was limited to Australian practice. The review sought to reveal aspects that may be problematic or not being given due attention, as well as known constituents of effective practice. This information provided valuable guidance for the construction of the initial survey questionnaire that ascertained baseline data about motivation and engagement levels. The information gathered was also useful

background to the data collection and analysis more generally, with the review revealing some potentially significant factors for key lines of questioning with participants. Data was collected from perusing websites, reports and published papers concerning higher education contexts in which one or more factors were present that align to the research context: online programs, staff working online, and a casual academic workforce. It was demonstrated in the review of literature in Chapters 2 and 3 that casual employment and working in fully online programs often co-exist and so findings about the casual academic experience can be inferred to some extent to be relevant to the online environment as well, even if that combination was not expressly presented in the accounts of practice surveyed. It is possible that there may be compounding impacts on motivation and engagement and some indicators for compounding impact are noted.

The data includes some organisational responses to the imperatives of managing and supporting academic staff, although again, it was not always explicit which contextual factors were common to those of the research group. Practice was surveyed that deals with: support for academic staff in general, support for casual academics, support for remote staff, and support for staff working in online programs. The analysis of data found in the review of practice is presented in Chapter 7, where the significance of the information for instrument design and lines of questioning are discussed. Completing the review contributed to achieving the purpose for Phase 1, which was to pose some initial questions that would indicate the ways and extent to which sessional academic staff, working fully online in the School of Education, were experiencing motivation and engagement. The purpose was achieved in the second part of Phase 1 through the administration of a survey questionnaire, named Survey Questionnaire 1. An account of the design and administration processes for Survey Questionnaire 1 now follows.

6.5.3 Purpose and Approach of Survey Questionnaire 1: Design, Data Collection and Coding Processes

- **Design**

The design of Survey Questionnaire 1 was informed by theory in the following ways: firstly, it recognises the broad theoretical notion, reported in Chapter 3, that employees' experience of motivation and engagement will emanate from an interplay between the individual, their circumstances and their self-view, as well as the

organisation, the conditions of employment, and those conditions are managed. The interplay of those factors is a characteristic of the relationships/networks perspective explained in Chapter 4. Further, JD-R theory holds that motivation and engagement will be impacted in different ways and to differing degrees by different staff members even though subject to the same circumstances and management conditions.

Survey Questionnaire 1 was constructed using Qualtrics survey software (see Appendix 6.1). Figure 6.1 displays the 14 items in the questionnaire and the possible response choices. An error in numbering the items in the Qualtrics program resulted in there being no Item 10, and so while the items are numbered through to 15, there are only 14 items in total. Items 1 – 9 of Survey Questionnaire 1 collect data about the respondents which was used to formulate a diverse group for the deep inquiry in Phase 2 of the research. A full explanation of the diversity factors is provided later in this section. Items 11 to 14 collect data about the respondents' experience of their work as sessional tutors in the fully online program. Item 11 asks the respondents their reasons for seeking the work and their expectations in terms of 11 given dimensions and then Item 12 asks how their experience has been in terms of those same dimensions. The need to include these two items arose from considering the JD-R model, explained in Chapter 4, to help discern whether an element of the work experience is serving as a resource or a demand. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explained that job demands can be experienced not just by the presence of identifiable elements, but the absence of other elements that are considered important to the employee.

The choices within questionnaire items 11 and 12 arose from data from the review of practice as well as from anecdotal knowledge gained from recruiting and managing sessional staff. The choices provided a useful starting point for reflection and reference later. In this way, the contextualisation possible and desirable within the application of JD-R theory and the JD-R model, as discussed in Chapter 4, has been applied to the questionnaire construct. Item 13 of Survey Questionnaire 1 comprises the 17-point UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) mentioned in Section 1.6 and reproduced in Figure 6.2. Item 14 is an open-response item inviting respondents to describe anything that they think influences the way they feel about their work as a tutor in the online program. Item 15 ask the respondent's name, required for organisation of the interviews but replaced by a self-selected pseudonym at interview.

Figure 6.1

Survey Questionnaire 1

ITEM	QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS			
1	What is your current role within the School of Education's OUA (online) courses?	Tutor Unit Co-ordinator Not currently working in a unit			
2	Please indicate the number of Study Periods you have worked as a tutor in the OUA courses	1-3 4-10 More than 10			
3	Please indicate the number of Study periods you have worked as a Unit Co-ordinator in the OUA courses	Never	1-3		
		4-10	Over 10		
4	Please indicate the course/s you have worked in	Bachelor of Education (Primary) Bachelor of Education (ECE) Post Graduate			
5	Select the calendar year you began working as a tutor in the OUA courses	2009	2010	2011	2012
		2013	2014	2015	2016
6	How would you describe your life stage?	Retired or semi-retired from a previous career Currently working in my main career outside of (this university) Not currently working elsewhere but will return to my main career later I consider my work with OUA to be my main career Other – please describe:			
7	Please indicate your age range	Under 30	30s	40s	50s
		60s	70s	80s	
8	What is the highest qualification you have completed	Bachelor Degree	Master's Degree		
		Grad or PG Diploma	Doctoral Degree		
9	Please state current study status	Not currently studying Currently studying towards:			
11	Please state the main reasons you sought work with (University) OUA	Likert Scale with 11 dimensions and 4 possible ratings for each from Extremely Important to Extremely Unimportant or N/A			
12	In my work with (University) OUA, I have found that:	Likert scale with the same 11 dimensions from Item 10, with 4 possible ratings for each from Definitely True to Definitely Not True			
13	These questions ask how you feel about your work. Please answer only about your work as a tutor with (University) OUA.	The 17-point UWES as shown in Figure 6.2			
14	Please describe what factors influence how you feel about your work (full text in App.6.1).	Open response – unlimited characters.			
15	Your name	Open response			

Embedding the 17-point UWES (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010) at Item 13 of Survey Questionnaire 1 gave a robust and consistent measurement of the degree of motivation and engagement currently being experienced by the respondents. The measurements gave data that allows comparisons between respondents and provides links to later phases of the data collection and analysis. The 17-point UWES is reproduced in Figure 6.2. It was shown in Chapter 4 that the UWES arose from key theorists working in the development and application of JD-R theory and models, and it is therefore consistent with its theoretical tenets. The UWES employs a three-factor structure: vigor (sic), dedication and absorption, and draws from a database of 60,000 employees across continents and countries. Schaufeli and Bakker (2010, p. 17) found that while the three-factor structure enables fine-grained analysis that could be helpful to organisations, the strong correlation between the factors meant that conclusions could safely be drawn about overall motivation and engagement for surveyed groups.

Figure 6.2

The UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010)

Item	Statement	Measure of	Options (for each item)
1	When working, I feel full of energy	engagement	Always Most of the time About half the time Sometimes Never
2	I find my work full of meaning and purpose	motivation	
3	Time flies when I am working	engagement	
4	When working, I feel strong and vigorous	engagement	
5	I am enthusiastic about my work	motivation	
6	When I'm working, I forget everything else	engagement	
7	My work inspires me	motivation	
8	When I get up in the morning, I look forward to my work	motivation	
9	I feel happy when I am working intensely	engagement	
10	I am proud of the work that I do	motivation	
11	I am immersed in my work	engagement	
12	I can continue working for very long periods	engagement	
13	My work is challenging to me	motivation	
14	I get carried away when I'm working	engagement	
15	In my work, I feel very resilient, mentally	motivation	
16	It is difficult to detach myself from my work	engagement	
17	In my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well	motivation	

The second purpose of Phase 1, also achieved through the administration of Survey Questionnaire 1, was to elicit demographic and other information that would enable formation of a smaller group that was as diverse as possible. The smaller group would then comprise the staff members who would be invited to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview. All respondents to Survey Questionnaire 1 were asked to indicate whether they would be willing, if invited, to take part in such an interview. All questionnaire respondents indicated they would be willing so this did not create a barrier for follow-up interviews. The quest for diversity in the interview participants addresses the point made by Creswell (2012) about guarding against generalisations that may not be applicable to the whole group. Forming a group as diverse as possible for the deep inquiry in Phase 2 was the first step towards guarding against unsound generalisations. Later discussion of analysis strategies will show that Phase 3 of the research was concerned with checking with the whole case study group to determine the extent to which the factors revealed in interviews were significant for them.

Table 6.3 displays the group member characteristics that were incorporated into the survey questionnaire in order to maximise diversity. Categories and codes were generated to analyse this data in preparation for Phase 2 of the research. The categorising and coding process is explained in full in Chapter 7.

Table 6.3*Dimensions of Group Member Diversity in Survey Questionnaire 1*

Categories	No. of Codes Generated	Examples of Codes Used
1 Motivation & Engagement (M&E) Level(as per UWES)	6	H – high HM – high medium
2 Age	7	1 – under 30 2 – 30s 7 – 80s
3 Sex	3	M, F, O
4 Current Situation	7	1 – working elsewhere 2 – retired from previous career
5 Role	3	1 – tutor 2 - UC
6 Years of Employment	10	Year of commencement e.g. 2009
7 Experience in Role	4	1 – 1-3 study periods 2 – 4-10 study periods
8 Course/s Taught	2	1 – ECE 2 - PRI
9 Reason for Choosing This Work	11	1 – can work from anywhere 2 – fits in around other commitments 3 – keen to work with PSTs

All items were set to a forced response, so participants could not proceed through the survey without answering all items. Participants chose responses from choices for each item as shown in Figure 6.1, from a drop-down list pre-populated with the response choices for each item. Multiple responses could be chosen for items 10, 11 and 12.

- **Data Collection**

Survey Questionnaire 1 was distributed via email to all 117 members of the pool of sessional academic staff in the School of Education. The covering email explained the broad research purpose and attached to the email were a participant information sheet and a research participant informed consent form (see Appendix 6.2). Group members were given two weeks to return questionnaires, with a reminder email being sent ten days after the initial invitation. 41 questionnaires were returned, with 11 of these being

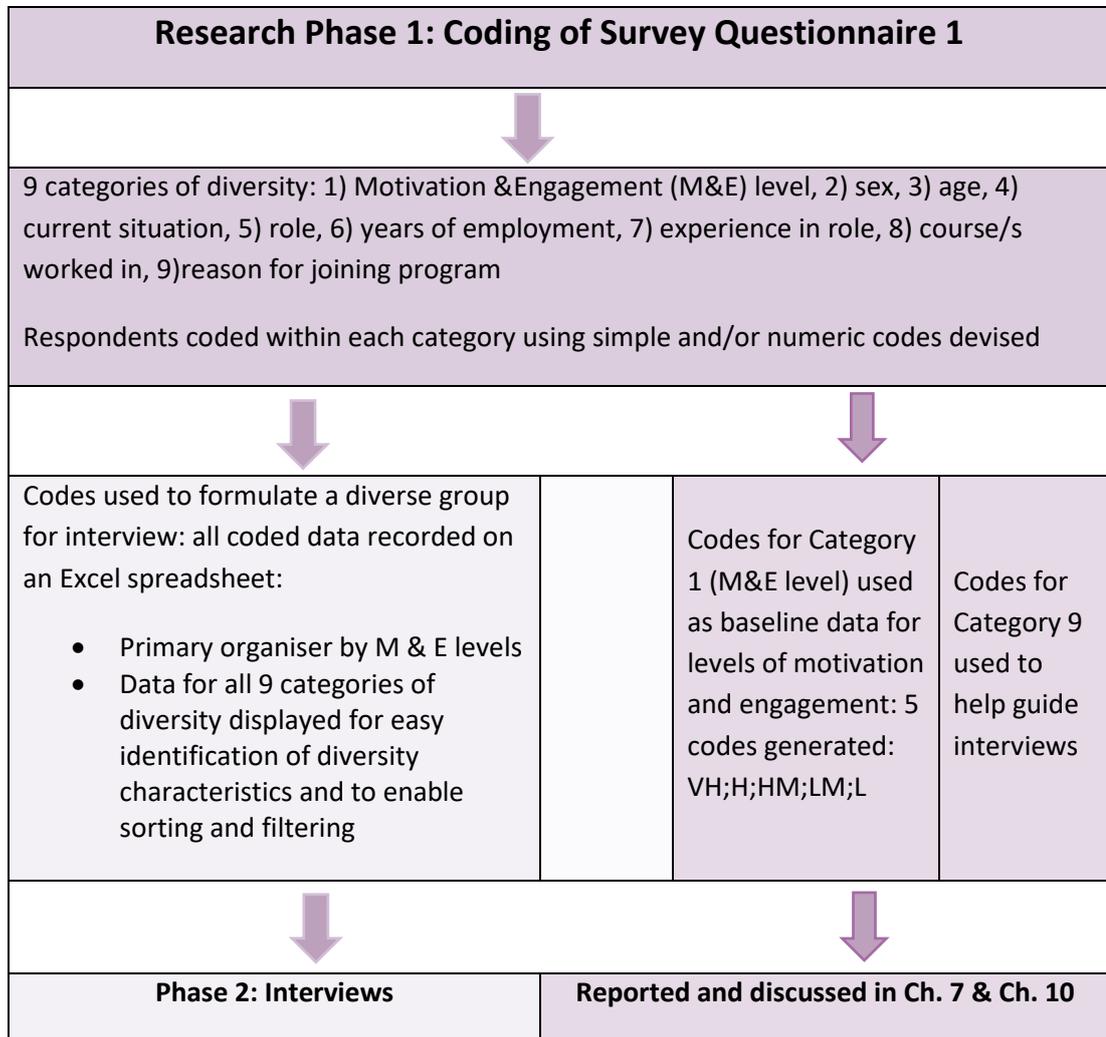
returned after the reminder email. The eventual response rate was therefore 35%, a rate lower than anticipated but one which provided sufficient respondents to select a diverse group of interview participants for Phase 2 of the research, and sufficient data to gain some baseline understanding of how motivation and engagement was being experienced, as well as to guide the in-depth inquiry for Phase 2 of the research where the bulk of the data was to be gathered.

- **Coding**

Coding for Phase 1 was simple and was undertaken to provide baseline data about motivation and engagement levels being experienced by the research participants and to formulate a diverse group to invite to interview. The codes for Category 9 (reason for choosing this work) were also useful in providing some background information about participants to aid the interview process. The two pathways and purposes are represented in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3

Key Coding Processes for Research Phase 1



6.6 Research Method for Phase 2: In-depth Inquiry

Section 6.6 comprises two sub-sections: sub-section 6.6.1 contains a rationale for Research Phase 2, and sub-section 6.6.2 provides an account of the instrument design and approach to data collection and coding the interviews.

6.6.1 Rationale for Phase 2

Phase 2 of the research comprised an in-depth inquiry conducted through semi-structured interviews with a sub-group of the initial group surveyed in Survey Questionnaire 1 in Research Phase 1, who were the interview participants. The

approach to selection of a diverse group of interview participants has been described and discussed in Section 6.5. Creswell (2012, 2018), Creswell and Poth (2018), Erlandsen et al. (1993), Flick (2015) and other methodologists working with qualitative research method recognise the value of in-depth interviews in explorations of experience. A principal source of the value is the opportunity to ask open-ended questions and thus allow respondents to interpret the questions in accordance with their perspectives and construct their own answers that will arise from their understandings of the questions (Creswell, 2018, p. 158). Flick (2015, pp. 140-141) recommends the semi-structured interview when there is no requirement for every interview to be identical, which makes the semi-structured interview apt for exploratory case studies such as this research. Flick further recommends a semi-structured interview in particular if it is considered useful to be able to insert probing questions, as the interview unfolds, that explore certain aspects in greater depth. The purpose of the interviews for the research was to seek explanations of how motivation and engagement are experienced by different people in the same group, and identify the factors that impact on their levels of motivation and engagement. The opportunity to reflect, respond to prompts, and importantly, to reiterate, self-edit or add to what was said, is an important part of meaning-making. Interviews provide these affordances and so the semi-structured, face-to-face interview was chosen as the most appropriate instrument to allow construction of meaning, within the framework of the guiding questions.

Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 158) outline a number of alternatives for managing interviews, including the face-to-face, individual interview where it can reasonably be expected that the participants will be comfortable about sharing ideas and able to communicate them effectively. Creswell and Creswell recommend that whether the researcher chooses to conduct individual or group interviews, care must always be taken to ensure all participants have the opportunity and are comfortable to share their thoughts freely (p. 159). It was also important to bear in mind the cautions of Erlandson et al. (1993) concerning motivations for people to respond to requests for interview. While it was deemed unlikely that "boredom or loneliness" (p. 72) would have been a motivator in the case study group, it is possible that some sessional staff members may have been motivated to respond because they wished to please management, or

because they may have felt that responding would place them in a positive or favoured light. Some participants may have sensed an opportunity to express grievances. While it was considered that motivations for participating in interviews would not in themselves threaten the trustworthiness of the data collection process, it was important to make it clear to interviewees that they should speak freely and that there would be no link between what was said in the interview and any staffing processes or decisions. None of the participants exhibited any reluctance to express their ideas or temper strongly felt views, and that there was a broad range of feelings about the ways in which they experienced their work. Therefore, despite being aware of the need to consider possible constraints to candid discussion, the interview was still considered the most effective data collection strategy for the research purpose. In designing the structure of the interviews and managing their administration, a number of important factors were considered, each of which is recognised in the literature as demanding of attention. These factors are explained in Sub-section 6.6.2.

6.6.2 Instrument Design, Data Collection and Coding Processes: Semi-Structured Interview

- **Design**

The semi-structured interview format is displayed in Figure 6.4. A number of factors informed the design, including: findings from the review of literature in Chapters 2 and 3; the theoretical frame explained in Chapter 4; considerations about how to structure and conduct the interviews, informed by methodology principles explained in Chapter 5; and by the selective review of Australian practice undertaken as part of Phase 1 of the research. The ways in which those factors helped to determine what to include in the interview prompts, as well as providing later reference points for the analysis and discussion, are explained in full after Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4

Semi-Structured Interview Format

ITEM	PROMPT	ADDITIONAL NOTES/ PROMPTS AS NEEDED
Preamble	Thanks and appreciation for your time and for participating. Statement about impartiality – speak freely. Check that permission is given to record. Please select a pseudonym Purpose of interview is to talk further about the impact on your motivation and engagement as a tutor, of the actions or lack thereof of the organisation – what is it that WE do or don't do that makes a difference?	Emphasise this is not about students' behaviours
1	Icebreaker – a brief summary of your current role and the roles you have had as a sessional academic with the SoE and for how long	Check against demographic data on survey
2	To start thinking, can you tell us about the times that you have been conscious of feeling highly motivated and engaged, and what factors might have contributed?	A particular time in the Study Period, a particular unit or team, time of year, etc.
3	Now thinking about times when these were low – what was impacting?	
4	Are you able to identify certain actions, strategies, activities or behaviours that the School engages in regularly that help you feel motivated and engaged?	Mention some of the regular activities such as SETLD, the newsletter, awards)
5	What about ad hoc or occasionally?	Examples such as emails of thanks, helpful timely info
6	Is there anything you're aware that we do that impacts negatively?	
7	Is there anything you are pleased that we don't do, and would impact negatively if we started?	
8	Is there anything you wish we did do or that you think we could do?	
9	Generally, how aligned with and connected to the goals and purpose of the organisation do you feel?	Mention Curtin values – extent to which you share them, believe the SoE abides by them
10	Is there anything else you'd like to mention?	
Close	Thank you for your participation. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript for your approval – de-identified using chosen pseudonym.	

Broad influence on the design and administration of the interview was exerted by the findings of the literature review presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Returning to the findings of Chapter 2, a number of practices were identified as being indicative of good quality online learning and teaching programs and environments. While many of those practices appear as familiar to educators and may be allowed for within the instructional design of online programs, not all may be enacted by all online teachers. For example, the capacity of online teachers to provide effective levels of teacher presence in online environments could be limited by their views about how to interact appropriately with students and of the boundaries around those interactions that were formed through more traditional teaching experiences. Their current capacity may also arise from constraints of their knowledge, skills and the time they have available. Therefore, the interviews needed to provide points of inquiry with the sessional academic staff to determine their propensity towards these behaviours, their skill and agency to enact them, and the role of the organisation in developing and supporting that skill and agency. Motivation and engagement theory, and particularly the organisational relationships/networks perspective as described in Chapter 4, indicates that whether or not motivation and engagement are impacted upon may depend on the dynamic that individuals experience between their perceived expectations for the role of online teacher and their capacity to meet those expectations.

Further informing the interview design were the findings from the review of theoretical frameworks as reported in Chapter 4; specifically, the confluence of two key findings: firstly, that JD-R theory and the model emphasises that not all employees experience motivation and engagement in the same ways and that job demands and job resources will be different for different people; and secondly, that the dual contextual factors of being a casual academic staff member and working in online programs must be accommodated in the way that the interviews were constructed and administered. The guiding questions needed to be either general enough, or tailored appropriately, to draw out what was important about those two contextual factors in terms of the way motivation and engagement is experienced and impacted.

The significance of having strongly motivated academic staff members in assuring quality in higher education has been understood for some time. For example, Rowley

(1996) stated that the relationship between motivated academic staff and quality programs was clear and strong. Rowley's statement is no less powerful or relevant now, and is very relevant to the research. The same can be said for the complexities and challenges for managers that Rowley discusses, knowing that not everyone is motivated by the same things. To illustrate the significance of individual, contextual perspectives, financial remuneration for instance is just one motivator and will be rated as more or less significant by different staff members. Working fully online or being paid as a casual academic staff member may or may not impact directly on the significance of that factor to motivation and engagement. However, if it were the case, for example, that academic staff working fully online feel that a proportion of their workload is unseen because of the online environment, then they might be more sensitive to perceptions of fair remuneration and that may then impact on their motivation and engagement. Therefore, the nature of the online environment must always be part of any examination of what impacts on motivation and engagement, and of recommendations for structures and processes to optimise them. Rowley (1996) enumerates what she termed dissatisfiers (p. 15), and this list of dissatisfiers was consulted to help inform the topics explored in the semi-structured interview that was part of Phase 2. Rowley's work thus helped contribute to data trustworthiness.

Further to these theoretical influences, the selective review of Australian practice undertaken in Phase 1 also joined with the literature review findings to allow identification of some specific features of the group studied, and the online program in which they work, which could be posited as likely to be job demands and/or resources for the research participants. Bearing these features in mind helped guide questioning as well as a frame for analysing and interpreting the responses. A full account of the information gained from the review of practice undertaken is presented in Chapter 7, where the data from both parts of Phase 1 of the research are analysed and discussed.

The interviews included some key prompts to provide sufficient structure to keep conversations focussed but allow room for individual variation and emphasis on different issues as relevant. The prompts were worded to elicit open responses rather than closed questions that might draw dichotomous or simple responses or funnel respondents in a certain direction. Flick (2015, p. 140) presents four criteria for guiding

and conducting semi-structured interviews which have been drawn from the early work of Merton and Kendall (1946). These criteria encompass refraining from directing the interviewee, enabling specificity of the definition of the experience for each interviewee, allowing a broad and varying range of meanings about the issue to emerge, and enabling deep, personal contexts of the interviewee to inform their responses. Flick's advice aligns well with the case study research design and with the epistemological standpoint taken for the research, as explained in Sub-section 5.2.2. Attention to these criteria led to the decision to schedule the interviews for a minimum period of 30 minutes each and to avoid scheduling interview times too closely together. The organisation of the timing and duration of the interviews will be detailed in the next minor section where the data collection is described.

Ten question prompts were devised, as shown in Figure 6.4, with an orienting question at the outset and a general question as Prompt 10 to provide an opportunity to add anything further. A preamble, prior to starting recording, acknowledged their time and expressed thanks for participating, outlined the interview and research purpose, requested permission to record the interview, requested a pseudonym and reassured participants that the researcher was impartial. In devising the prompts it was important to try to maintain focus on the ways in which staff were managed and supported by the organisation and the impact that had, positively or negatively, on their motivation and engagement. It was acknowledged in the introduction that although students' behaviour could have a strong effect on motivation and engagement, in this case, the emphasis was on the organisation's actions or inactions. Question 1 served as an orientation and to establish rapport, allowing participants to settle into the interview. Question 1 prompted participants to summarise their experience in the role of a sessional academic staff member in the fully online program. The responses provided a checking point back to the experience data reported in the survey questionnaire. There was also opportunity to incorporate some specific aspects of the interviewees' characteristics or responses. Erlandson et al. (1994) recommend pleasantries and icebreakers as warm-up strategies and to indicate the tone and level of formality of the interview. The final question, which was an open question, prompted participants to talk about any matters that they wanted to mention that had not emerged from the preceding questions. Providing a prompt such as this is recommended by Flick (2015;

p. 151) to allow participants an opportunity to express their own views and feelings. It was possible that participants had not covered everything when responding to the prompts. Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 157-159) provide specific advice for the interview structure and protocols that include putting participants at ease and allowing opportunities for further comments and additions – the overarching purpose must be supported, which is one of gaining detailed, accurate and candid views. Prompts 2 – 9 of the research interview-format provided the main body of the interview and most interviews proceeded in accordance with the protocol. Details of the data collection process undertaken in the interviews follows.

- **Data Collection**

Fifteen sessional staff members were scheduled to participate in an interview. Interviews were scheduled at a time and place that suited participants and allowed access to a comfortable and private space. Erlandson et al. (1993, p. 92) advise interviewers to spend time thinking about how the participants can be placed at ease in order to facilitate open conversations. This includes the choice of venue for the interview. In inviting participants to interview, all were asked to nominate their preferred venue; either a room in the School of Education building, or their preferred venue which may have been a work place or home location. Attending to considerations of convenience and comfort for the participants meant that it was difficult to schedule group interviews, and all but two interviews were individual. In organising the interviews, it became apparent that there was some advantage gained through familiarity with the participants. There were no barriers of threat or anxiety associated with unfamiliarity with the institution, buildings or researcher. Participants seemed keen to share their experiences and valued the opportunity to discuss their views and perspectives more fully. They appeared appreciative of the interest that was being taken in their welfare and experience, and conscious that they had an advocate for their interests.

Of the 15 interview participants, 12 were located locally and opted for a face-to-face interview. Three were located elsewhere and interviews for these participants were conducted using Face Time, an Apple iPhone technology that all were familiar with

and to which they had easy access. Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 158-9) note the various affordances of technologies in providing synchronous and asynchronous interview processes but advises that care should always be taken to ensure that the chosen mode suits the purpose and the participants and will elicit the needed engagement. Although some interviews were conducted remotely, none were audio-only and so the distancing sometimes experienced through audio phone calls was not a barrier. Face Time technology was used for all participants unable to attend in person and no additional costs were incurred by participants in using this technology for the interview. Participants interviewed using this technology were all situated in their own homes, in most cases in a study or similar room of their home. All had organised privacy, although one interview was briefly and delightfully interrupted by the family dog. One Face Time interview was subject to a signal disconnection but a connection was quickly re-established and the interview proceeded without further hitch. All participants who chose a face-to-face interview opted to conduct the interview in a room in the School of Education building. Familiarity with the building was helpful although there were some challenges with parking availability that caused anxiety for a few of the participants. A number of different rooms in the building were booked for interviews, depending on availability, but each provided easy access, comfort and privacy.

The interview stage of the research overall extended beyond that initially planned because several participants, as well as the researcher, needed to reschedule due to illness or unexpected absences. The first interview was conducted on 4th September 2017 and the final one on 9th October 2017. All participants gave express permission for the interview to be recorded, and this spoken permission was itself recorded at the outset of each interview. Creswell and Creswell (2018 p.169) recommend recording to ensure an accurate record but also advises researchers to make some notes to guard against any impact of equipment failure. Creswell and Poth (2018, p.158) suggest that decisions should be made ahead of time about whether transcription software will be used and what the protocols for exclusions from the transcripts will be. Using an iPhone to record provided a reliable method and one which produced good sound quality. Creswell further discusses the value of recording interviews because it frees the researcher from making copious notes which will both risk being incomplete or

accurate and detract from the attention that can be paid to the conversation. All interview recordings were added to the case study database, as advised by Yin (2018). The recordings form a valuable data set that could be revisited for further analysis if a variation to purpose was warranted. The recordings also represent part of the enduring record and accountability trail for the research evidence. This record has been further strengthened by creating and retaining a documented transcript of each interview. The value of creating both a recording and a transcript to support effective analysis will be discussed in Chapter 8 where the data from Phase 2 is analysed.

Transcription software Trint was used to aid transcription. Transcription software cannot be assumed to be completely accurate (Johnson, 2011; Matheson, 2007) and so a number of actions ensured the transcription was a true and accurate record of what was said in the interview: all transcripts were reviewed by simultaneous listening to the recording while reading the software-generated transcript; volume was adjusted in instances where the recording quality was poor in sections; the recording replay was slowed to ensure all words were captured; some sections were replayed a number of times to ensure accuracy in the transcript; and all interview participants were sent a copy of the edited transcript and recording and provided an opportunity to check that the transcript was a true and accurate record of their interview.

Participants were also given the opportunity to redact any part of their interview that they may not have been comfortable having retained as data. However, none took this opportunity. This decision is viewed as a positive indication that trust had been established and that participants were comfortable that their anonymity was protected. Some of the views expressed and experiences related in the interviews were confronting and/or minority views, so it was valuable to the research to be able to include these contributions. One of the concerns associated with ethnographic research is that the researcher may not be a trusted partner and so participants may edit their responses or withhold more negative or controversial views, fearing unwanted repercussions. That fear was a particular risk in this research because participants were all aware of the role of the researcher in the school and the relationship to sessional staffing processes. An awareness of this risk informed the strategy employed at the outset of each interview which was to state that their responses would be recorded and

used for the research purposes only and retained in complete confidence within the bounds of the research data. Nothing that they shared would be relayed to another party for any other purpose nor applied to any other school processes. Even though these risk management measures were instituted, it was still reassuring to find that no participants chose to redact controversial or minority views from their transcripts. Including all contributions means that data comprehensiveness and veracity is enhanced. (Creswell, 2018). The example from Interview 1 (Appendix 8.1.1) illustrates the assurances given:

Researcher: "and just to reassure you that the only place that this is going to go is straight from here on to my computer where it will be secured via the steps that I said in my ethics approval that I would take. So it will come off the phone..... but you can be confident that I'm not going to be using your real name. So on that note just to again just reassurance that this is me as a researcher now, it's nothing to do with me in my work. .So you can feel quite safe to express opinions or tell me about experiences that you've had knowing that that's got nothing to do with you or your paid work force or my position in the school, so you know; please do feel free".

Participants were advised that each interview would last 30 minutes. Most individual interviews were completed within that time although those with more than one participant took longer. The longest duration was 65 minutes. Once participants were settled and comfortable, the interviews began in the manner planned. An unhurried pace was set, with time taken to check that respondents had sufficient time to elicit reflective and deeper responses for each question and interview section. The first question served well to help participants settle into the interview and set the tone, which was informal and chatty. Opportunities were taken to mention something about the participant known to the interviewer to help establish rapport. This establishment of rapport is illustrated in the example from Interview 3 (see Appendix 8.1) where the participant's longevity in working in the online program was mentioned:

Researcher: "So to start with could you just for the record give us a brief summary of your current role in terms of the OUA tutoring? And just how long you've been doing it and what sorts of roles you've done in the time that you've been working

Participant: OK; so five years now. It's gone quick. Five years, so I started as a tutor. In EDP250 and then became a unit co-ordinator ever since after that - accelerated quite quickly. So UC for probably four years. Four years.

Researcher: And while you've been unit coordinating, you've still been tutoring for the whole time haven't you?

Participant: Yes. Yes. I've never just been a UC and I haven't had a study period off, and yes, always lucky enough to get an offer. So, yeah, pretty much continuous.

Researcher: Yes continuous for that long time. Yes it's a while now isn't it?

Participant: And every SETLD Val!

Researcher: Yes that's right. OK".

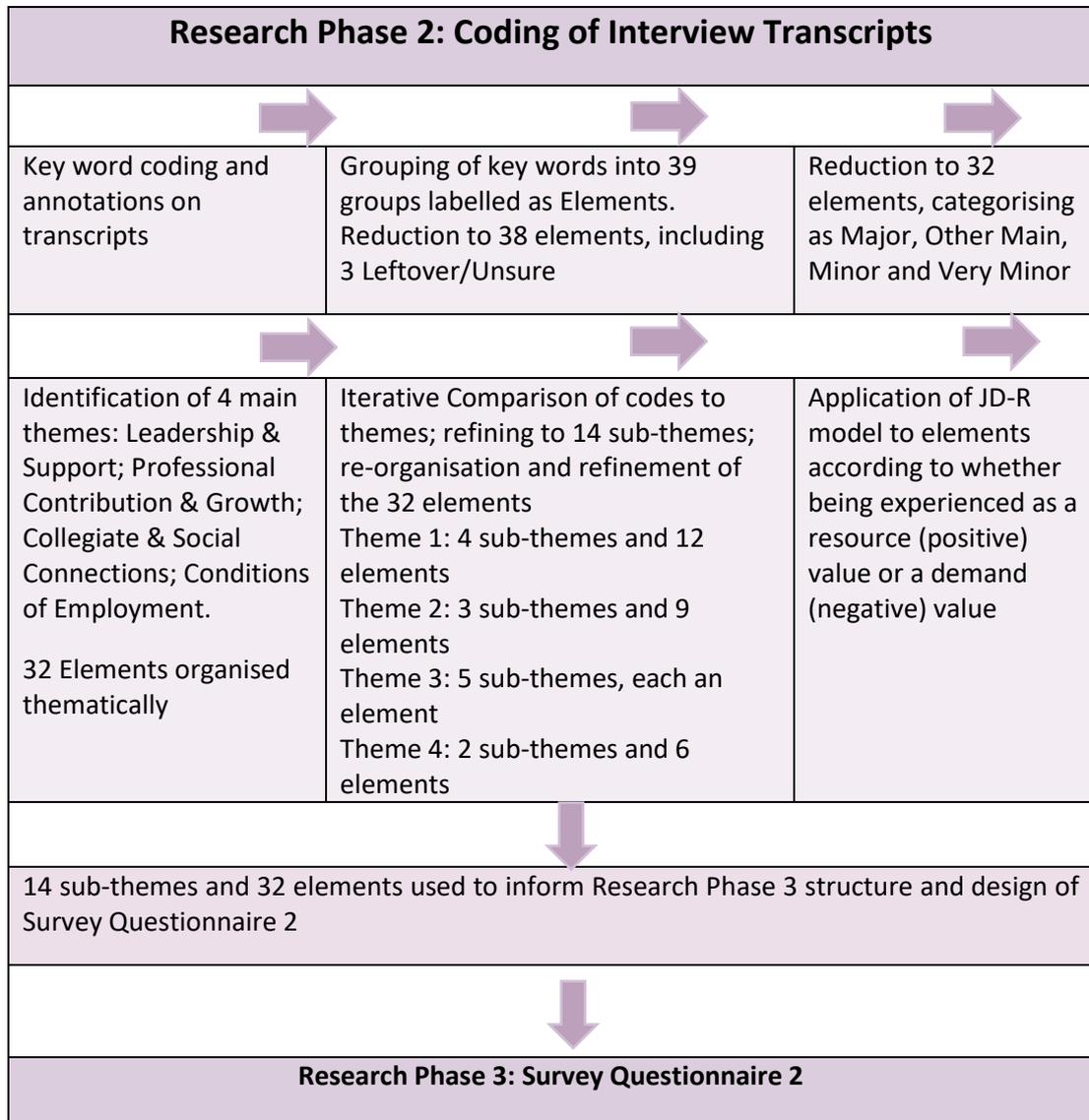
Some adjustments were made to the conduct of the interviews throughout the interview phase. These are detailed in Chapter 8 where the findings from Phase 2 of the research are analysed and discussed. Creswell (2018) reassures the researcher that adjusting interview technique as interviews progress is a valid and useful strategy appropriate to ethnographic research. It would be counter-productive to construction of meaning if an important consideration was ignored in favour of persisting with a strictly identical interview format, and the principles of the semi-structured interview allow for variation between interview experiences (Creswell, 2018). Forming an explanation of experience and understanding of the subject must always be the primary concern.

- **Coding**

Coding, categorising and theming for Phase 2 was more complex than for Phase 1 and involved multiple steps. The process is represented in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5

Key Coding Processes for Research Phase 2



The contribution to meaning-making made by the interviews is discussed fully in the data analysis for Research Phase 2 in Chapter 8. Tactics used, such as journaling and member checking, ensured that the meaning-making was duly robust and scrutinised. There were no aspects of the way the interviews were constructed or conducted that were found to impede gaining the information needed to address the research questions. The data collection stage of Phase 2 of the research was deemed successful. Data gathered from Phase 2 led to a change in the originally-planned purpose for Phase 3. An explanation of Phase 3 follows in section 6.7.

6.7 Research Method for Research Phase 3: Testing Findings - Survey Questionnaire 2 and Complementary Data Sources

Section 6.7 comprises three sub-sections. Sub-section 6.7.1 contains a rationale for Research Phase 3, Sub-section 6.7.2 provides detail of the instrument design and approach to data collection and coding of Survey Questionnaire 2 and Sub-section 6.7.3 contains an account of the complementary data sources that were accessed to contribute to research trustworthiness.

6.7.1 Rationale for Phase 3

The third and final phase of the research involved two components. The first component was the return to the original full sessional staff pool for a further survey. This was a departure from the planned strategy for the final phase but the outcome was that Phase 3 played a more valuable and robust role in answering the research questions. The changed strategy led to the design and administration of an additional data collection instrument. An account of the instrument design, administration and approach to data coding for Phase 3 is provided in sub-section 6.7.2. The second component of Phase 3 was to collect data from additional complementary sources in order to provide robustness and trustworthiness of the information reported by participants that contributed to conclusions and eventual recommendations.

Originally, it was thought that the final phase of data collection and analysis would comprise participant checking (Erlandson et al., 1993) and further exploration of experiences or phenomena mentioned in interview. It was anticipated that it might have been necessary to provide an additional opportunity for interviewees to talk more freely, if their initial interview had been in a group situation. All such members were offered this opportunity but all expressed their comfort that they had sufficient opportunity to express their own views fully and frankly. Furthermore, anticipated doubts proved unfounded about whether responses would be clear or fulsome enough to be able to be interpreted correctly or coded and categorised effectively. This may have been due in some part to the researcher's familiarity with the context and was thus a distinct advantage of using the ethnographic approach chosen. Nonetheless, reflection on the group composition and on findings led to the view that it would be necessary to help validate the findings by returning to the full group. As mentioned in

Sub-section 6.5.3, caution needed to be exercised about the representativeness of the group interviewed. It was possible that those surveyed and interviewed may have been likely to be more motivated and engaged than others. The degree of diversity within the group that was achieved was sufficient to generate a wide range of responses and clearly identify factors that impacted on motivation and engagement. However, it did not provide full confidence that findings about the nature or degree of the impact could be generalised to the entire group of sessional staff initially surveyed. A decision had to be made about how the themes, sub-themes and elements that emerged from Research Phase 2 could confidently be claimed to answer Research Questions 3 and 4. Some further canvassing of the full sessional pool (n=117 in Research Phase 1) was deemed necessary. While the opportunity for new or additional data about themes was not closed off, the intention was to ‘test’ the veracity and therefore dependability of the themes, sub-themes and elements that had emerged to ensure that the findings were representative of the group experience. Accordingly, the decision was made to construct and administer a second survey questionnaire. As explained in Section 6.2, Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue that drawing from quantitative data sources need not compromise qualitative-based studies. The focus remains firmly on the data and method needed to most adequately answer the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 273).

6.7.2 Instrument Design, Data Collection and Coding Approach: Survey Questionnaire 2

- **Instrument Design**

Survey Questionnaire 2 was constructed using Qualtrics software, with the format as shown in Figure 6.6 (see Appendix 6.3 for the instrument as presented in the Qualtrics software). The questionnaire presented the elements identified through the interviewing and data analysis processes as impacting on the motivation and engagement of the sessional staff. The 32 elements of work experience that were identified in Research Phase 2 were reduced to 25 for the purposes of Survey Questionnaire 2 and a full account of that reduction process is provided in Chapter 9. The questionnaire asked respondents to report the nature and extent of impact for each element. Impact was measured using the same 17-point, full version UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, Ch. 2.) used for Survey Questionnaire 1.

Figure 6.6

Survey Questionnaire 2

ITEM	THEME	QUESTION	RESPONSE OPTIONS
1	Leadership & Support	How does the nature and extent of leadership and support provided by your UC impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	4 point Likert Scale from Helps a Lot to Hinders a Lot, measured for each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement listed in the UWES
2		How does the general information and advice about courses, units, trends etc., provided at the SETLD days impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
3		How do the functions of the Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
4		How does the way in which the Blackboard for your unit is set up for you each Study Period impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
5		How does the IT advice and support provided by the School of Education's LTS team impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
6		How do the Teaching & Learning resources provided on the School of Education Blackboard site impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
7		How does the nature and extent of other information provided to you by the School of Education impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
8		How does the nature and extent of other information provided to you from Curtin University centrally impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
9		Taking into consideration the elements of Leadership and Support identified in these questions, please describe any circumstances which, should they occur, would cause you to discontinue your role in the online program:	Open response – no character limit
1	Professional Contribution & Growth	How does being placed in a unit in which you feel confident of your subject area expertise impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	4-point Likert Scale as above
2		How does your access to specific professional learning through the regular SETLD program impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
3		How does having professional contributions acknowledged and rewarded through the regular staff awards at SETLD impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
4		How does the extent to which you have general opportunities to learn and grow in your professional expertise through your work in the online program impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
5		How does the extent to which you have opportunities to innovate and contribute your ideas and feedback impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	

6		How does engaging with the Tutor Reflection Tool at the end of each Study Period impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
7		How does the extent to which you feel a part of the mission of the School of Education impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
8		How does the extent to which you feel part of the mission of XXX University as a whole impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
9		Taking into consideration the elements of Professional Contribution and Growth identified in these questions, please describe any circumstances which, should they occur, would cause you to discontinue your role in the online program:	Open response – no character limit
1	Collegiate & Social Connections	How does having access to the Staff Lounges on the School of Education Blackboard site impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	4-point Likert Scale as above
2		How does having the opportunity for informal networking at the regular SETLD days impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
3		How does having other, flexible opportunities to engage informally with colleagues impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
4		Taking into consideration the elements of Collegiate and Social Connections identified in these questions, please describe any circumstances which, should they occur, would cause you to discontinue your role in the online program:	Open response – no character limit
1	Conditions of Employment	How does the way in which the EOI and staffing processes are managed each Study Period impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	4-point Likert Scale as above
2		How does your view of the balance between the workload expected and the remuneration you receive impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
3		How does the way in which the pays are managed administratively impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
4		How does the flexibility you have to work at times and in locations that suit you, impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
5		How does the extent to which you feel comfortable to take a break for a Study Period or more if you choose, impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
6		How does not being offered work (when you have sought it) in a particular Study Period impact on these indicators of motivation and engagement?	
7		Taking into consideration the elements of Conditions of Employment identified in these questions, please describe any circumstances which, should they occur, would cause you to discontinue your role in the online program.	Open response – no character limit

In designing the questionnaire, a matrix framework was firstly constructed in accordance with the categories that emerged from data analysis from Phase 2, mapped against the 17 UWES items (see Appendix 6.4). The broad themes of *leadership and support*, *professional contribution and growth*, *conditions of employment*, and *collegiate and social connections* were listed, with the sub-themes for each of these and within those, the 32 elements derived at the end of Phase 2.

Although the multiple-choice items were all derived directly from the themes and sub-themes identified in Phase 2 of the data analysis, not all of the 32 eventual elements recorded and analysed in Phase 2 were included in the questionnaire. The process of reduction is explained fully in the analysis of Phase 3 in Chapter 8. A full account of the coding and categorising processes which resulted in the final 25 elements that were measured in the Survey Questionnaire 2 is provided in Chapters 8 and 9, which explain the data analysis steps for Phases 2 and 3 of the research. The planning matrix maps the 25 measured elements to the themes and sub-themes, and the groups of items for each theme were then able to be presented as sets of questions for the questionnaire. Eight items were included for the theme *leadership and support*, eight items for the theme *professional contribution and growth*, six items for the theme *conditions of employment* and three items for the theme *collegiate and social connections*.

It has been established in Chapter 4 that the UWES is a robust measurement schema, and it was administered again in Survey Questionnaire 2 in order to provide consistency of measure. In Survey Questionnaire 1 it was important only to determine general levels of motivation and engagement. However, to address Research Questions 3 and 4 adequately, it was critical in Phase 3 to not only identify the elements that impact on motivation and engagement and understand how these are experienced but to also to determine the degree of that impact wrought by each element. Organisations must have a well-founded knowledge of the relative and absolute significance of various elements if management is to be effective. Further consideration of this last point led to an open-response question being asked after each of the four sets listed above. This question asked respondents to consider the previous set of items and identify what might be ‘deal breakers’ within that category: the circumstances, if they existed, that would cause them to withdraw from the work as a

sessional teacher in the online program. This added four items to the survey, with the survey total being 29 items. Although it would have shortened the survey to ask the 'deal-breaker' question just once at the conclusion to the survey, it was considered important to retain the structure and specificity of the themes and sub-themes to help with accuracy of analysis and thus maximise the useable data. As the survey was complex, instructions were provided at the survey's outset, with an example of the way in which the open-response item could be completed. Survey responses indicated that respondents understood the requirements, although one respondent criticised the length and time impost of the survey.

- **Data Collection**

Survey Questionnaire 2 was distributed via email to all members of the sessional teaching pool. There were some changes to the group composition and overall size over the period between Survey Questionnaire 1 and Survey Questionnaire 2 but as there was no requirement to survey the same individuals both times, this was not a limiting factor. Survey Questionnaire 2 could be completed successfully without having engaged in Survey Questionnaire 1. The growth in the overall group size from 117 to 143 members was seen as an advantage in maximising the chances of a representative response. The survey link was sent to 143 sessional staff via email, with a two-week period for responses. A reminder email was sent shortly before the closing date and then the survey was extended for a week and a final email sent in an attempt to elicit more responses. However, a total of 32 responses were received. While the response rate of 22% was lower than the 35% achieved for Survey Questionnaire 1, it will be apparent in the later analysis and discussion in Chapter 8 that the response rate was sufficient to be able to draw robust inferences.

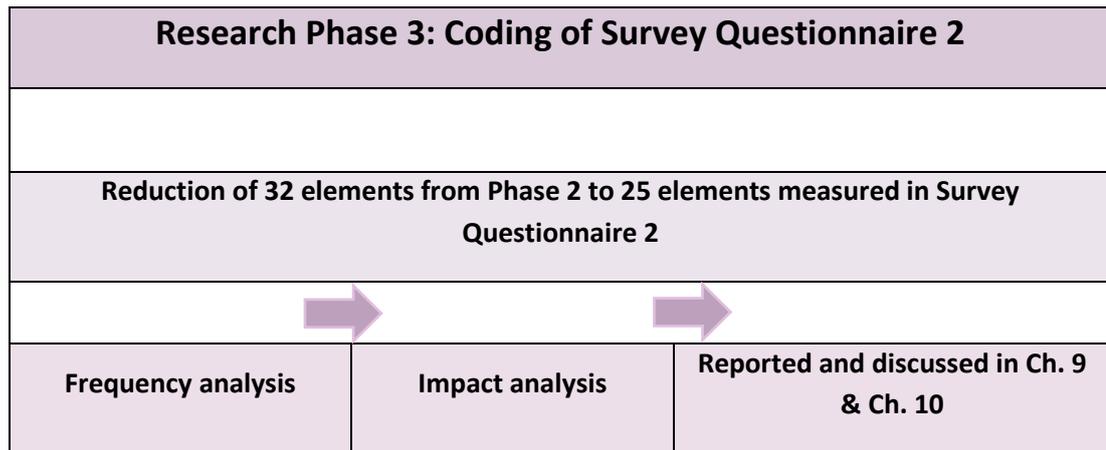
- **Coding**

The identification of themes in Phase 2 of the research became an organiser for 32 elements of the work experience, the presence or absence of which could impact on motivation and engagement. 25 of the 32 elements of the work environment were measured in Survey Questionnaire 2 and further analysed and discussed in in Phase 3 in order to determine their significance within the broad group in the case study location. A full account of the reduction from 32 to 25 elements for the purpose of the

questionnaire is provided in Chapter 9 where the coding for Phase 3 is explained in detail. The findings about the elements informed conclusions about implications and recommendations for managers seeking to optimise motivation and engagement. Key coding processes for Research Phase 3 are shown in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7

Key Coding Processes for Research Phase 3



6.7.3 Complementary Data Sources

The importance of gathering data for case study research from a number of different sources is emphasised by Creswell (2012, 2018), Creswell and Poth (2018) Stake (1995), and Yin (2018). While questionnaires and interviews can provide the largest proportion of the primary data and these are both recognised as key data sources for case studies, there should also be data gained from alternative and complementary sources and strategies. Therefore, some appropriate complementary data sources were sought for the research. The decisions about which data sources to select were based on their relevance to the most significant findings from the other data collated and analysed in Phases 2 and 3 of the research, and organised in terms of their alignment to the themes identified through the analysis. Those themes are fully discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. As well as contributing to understandings of the salient themes, the approach helped provide confidence that key findings and eventual recommendations were subject to trustworthiness checks. For instance, it will be shown that motivation and engagement were enhanced by having access to paid professional learning tailored specifically to sessional academic staff, and so a sample

program from a professional learning morning and the registration numbers were perused and the record provided (see Appendix 6.5.5). Table 6.4 summarises the complementary data sources used in the research, indicating how each adds insight and trustworthiness to the data gained through the surveys and interviews. Each of these additional sources is described in this section, explaining the reasons for choosing the source, the contribution made to the data sets, and any limitations associated with each. Table 6.4 also indicates where examples of each data source can be found in the appendices.

A number of key documents were perused and collected as complementary sources. The primary purpose of the documents is to provide evidence of trustworthiness to the data as part of an accountability trail that can be returned to as an enduring record. (Erlandson et al; 1993). Beyond providing accountability and veracity, the documents contributed to gaining a fuller view of some of the items mentioned by interview participants: in particular, School of Education or university processes or functions that impacted on their motivation and engagement. For example, several tutors mentioned the tutor reflection framework as a useful structure that affected their motivation and engagement in the area of professional contribution and growth. That document was located and perused in order to understand its nature and contribution and provide an evidence trail (see Appendix 6.5.3).

Table 6.4*Complementary Data Sources*

Theme	Document	Contribution	Appendix
Leadership & Support	Unit team meeting record template	Structure available to all teaching staff	6.5.1
	Moderation plan template	Detail of an important structure required of all UCs	6.5.2
Professional Contribution & Growth	Tutor Reflection Framework	Structure designed specifically for sessional academic staff	6.5.3
	Example SETLD program	Indication of content that contributes to tailored professional learning	6.5.4
	SETLD registration record	Evidence of extent of tutor participation in the program	6.5.5
Collegiate & Social Connections	Sessional Staff Awards templates	Structure designed specifically for sessional academic staff	6.5.6
	‘Online Connections’ newsletter	A community-building device	6.5.7
Conditions of Employment	Work engagement agreement	Structure designed specifically for sessional academic staff.	6.5.8

6.8 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 6 has provided a full explanation of the three phases of the research and the rationale for each, along with details of how the data collection instruments were designed and administered and the approach to data coding across the three phases. The chapter has explained how the study has been constructed as an explanatory case study, with each phase built on the one preceding and that Phase 2 of the research contains the most significant data for the explanatory case. The chapter has shown how the JD-R theory and model informing the research that were discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 helped to inform the design of the methods and the analysis of results that now follows. The analysis and discussion of findings from each of the three phases of the research is provided in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

CHAPTER 7

Results and Discussion of Phase 1 of the Research: Establishing Parameters

7.1 Introduction to the Chapter

Chapter 7 is the first of three chapters which present the results from data gathered and instruments administered in the three research phases and discusses the relevant findings. Accordingly, Chapter 7 contains analysis and discussion of the data that was collected in Phase 1, which comprises two parts: the selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1 (n=41). As explained in Section 6.5 of Chapter 6, Phase 1 of the research was foundational to later data collection activities. The focus of Phase 1 was on providing background knowledge about what might impact on motivation and engagement for casual academic staff working fully online and gaining baseline, measurable information about motivation and engagement amongst the case study group. This background and early data then informed the design and conduct of Research Phases 2 and 3. The results of analysis and discussion in Chapter 7 address Research Question 1:

How is motivation and engagement being experienced by sessional academic staff working in one fully online program?

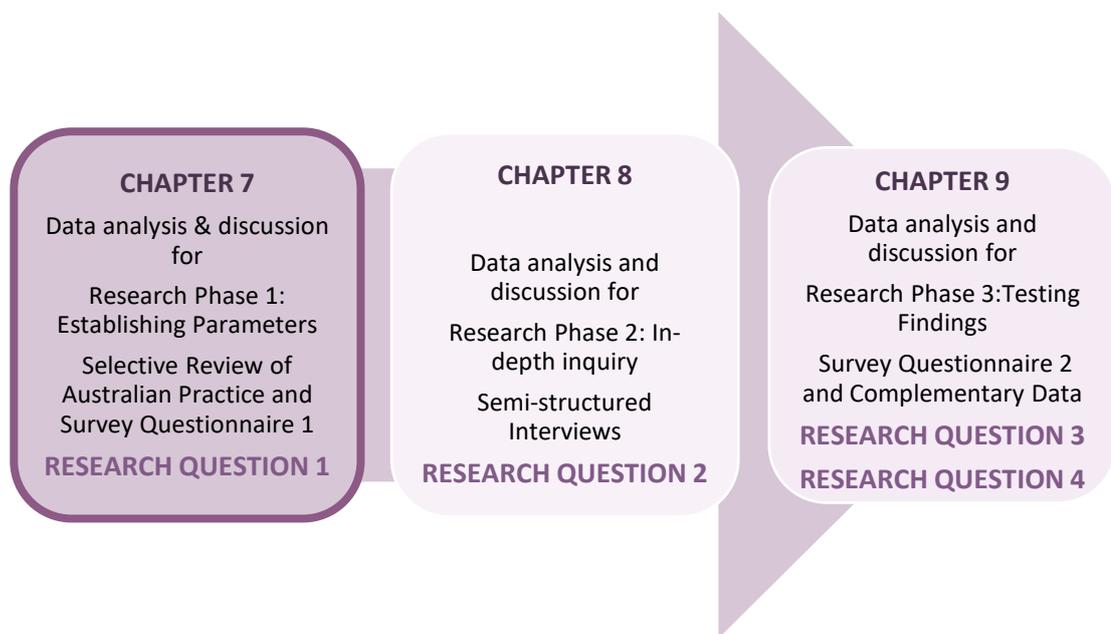
The focus of the first part of Phase 1 was to collect background information about what factors are known to be relevant to motivation and engagement for employees in contextual situations similar to those of the research participants. The second part of Phase 1 then surveyed the actual case study group to ascertain relevant demographic information about the case study participants and to generate some early directions for

the ensuing research phases. Chapter 7 is therefore organised as follows: section 7.2 contains a discussion of the data from the selective review of Australian practice, then section 7.3 presents analysis and discussion of the data collected through Survey Questionnaire 1. In Section 7.4 is a summary to address Research Question 1, and then section 7.5 concludes the chapter with stating implications for Phase 2 of the research.

Figure 7.1 shows the position and function of Chapter 7 in the overall analysis and discussion of data for the research and its relation to the research questions. The full schedule showing the thesis structure and placement of research questions was provided in Table 1.2 in Chapter 1.

Figure 7.1

Position and Function of Chapter 7



7.2 Data Analysis and Discussion from the Selective Review of Australian Practice

The purpose of the review was to survey current practices and viewpoints about practices of managing casual academic staff in Australian higher education settings and those who work online in order to understand what might be especially relevant to their motivation and engagement. The review was designed to find data that identified areas of sound practice as well as aspects that may be absent or problematic, and thus

scaffold the interrogation with the case study group. The sessional academic staff that formed the case study group not only teach their students online but, for the most part, they also work remotely from the campus themselves and interact with the organisation online. Information was therefore sought which would provide insights that could be applicable to academic staff both working and teaching online and with casual academic status. No accounts were found of cases where both factors were explicitly present. However, as casual employment and working in fully online programs often co-exist, findings about the casual academic experience can be inferred to some extent to be relevant to the online environment as well. The possibility of combined impacts on motivation and engagement where both contextual factors exist and some indicators for a combined impact are noted. Three broad considerations guided the scope and content of the data collected in the review:

- The ways in which the contextual factors of working online and of casual academic status might impact on staff
- How this impact might be linked to motivation and engagement
- How the combination of working fully online and casual academic factors might impact on motivation and engagement

All university courses function as part of the various systems that create and sustain them, and management systems will generate decisions about the crucial components that impact on all stakeholders, including casual academic staff. It was noted in Section 3.4 of Chapter 3 that the management of casual staff tends to be controlled more locally by departments rather than being centrally managed by the institution and that this could reasonably be expected to result in wider variations both between institutions and between faculties and departments within institutions. The review identified what is known about good practice which could optimise motivation and engagement and problematic aspects which might diminish them. The review was organised into three parts: firstly, a review of the way online programs in general are managed and some key insights relevant to the research; secondly, significant points about how academic staff, including casual academic staff, are supported through the provision of professional learning and development and, lastly, some considerations about the way that casual academic status and working in online programs might have

a combined impact on motivation and engagement. The review thus contributed data that informed the design of Survey Questionnaire 1.

7.2.1 Management of Online Programs

Two Australian publications provide valuable perspectives of current practice in the management of online programs. The first of these reports on an ethnographic sociological study of infrastructure development for online learning undertaken by Davis et al. (2008) who argue that as tertiary institutions are essentially social systems, they will evolve and develop in response to their own context. Accordingly, contextual factors must always be considered when seeking to adopt or apply practices, models or processes from other contexts. Allied to this view are two key principles that the authors contend should drive infrastructure development: firstly, that the needs of the intended students should be well understood and addressed and, secondly, that the true and full intended learning outcomes of the program should be clear and shared. The importance of gaining strong and clear understandings of learners' needs when designing fully online programs was noted in Section 2.4 of the literature review.

Davis et al. recognise that gaining a comprehensive picture of students' needs can be difficult to attain but the identification of the complex elements of this needs analysis will help others to be more aware of where to look and what to ask. This insight was useful to the approach to data collection and analysis: as an initial teacher education program, the true and full intended learning outcomes of the program under research will extend to broader moral imperatives or societal goals and thus, motivation and engagement may be impacted by the extent to which the sessional staff members are aware of those purposes and feel aligned to them. For educators, one aspect of their self-validation or actualisation will be whether they believe that they are serving the needs of students and of the program as well as possible.

The second publication from Australia stems from the work of Stone (2017) undertaken for the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. Useful and specific guidance is represented in the publication *Guidelines for Improving Student Outcomes in Online Learning* (Stone, 2017). The guidelines were devised after consultative research with education practitioners in 15 Australian higher education institutions that offered online programs, as well as with the Open University UK. The

guidelines allow paths to be drawn from what is known will be effective for students, back to what organisations must do to support good student outcomes in online programs. There are some key components that relate particularly to the management of casual academic staff, given that the correlation between online programs and casual academic staff has been established. Table 7.1 shows the implications of the guidelines taken from Stone’s report which are expected to be salient. The key considerations framed for each of the implications found helped to inform questioning and analysis of responses in the interviews conducted in Research Phase 2.

Table 7.1

Implications from the Guidelines for Improving Student Outcomes in Online Learning (Stone, 2017).

Guideline	General Implications for Institutions	Considerations for data collection and analysis
Know who the students are	Staff must be aware of the circumstances, characteristics and learning needs of online students and understand they will differ from campus-based cohorts	Whether recruitment, induction and ongoing PL processes for sessional staff enable them to develop awareness of the characteristics and needs of online students, and a commitment to developing their practice to maximise their students’ learning.
Explicitly value and support the vital role of ‘teacher presence’	Teaching staff must establish online learning communities and be skilled in building teacher-student relationships online	Whether remuneration and training of sessional staff are sufficient to allow them to develop expertise and spend the time needed in establishing and maintaining productive learning and teaching relationships online.
Engage and support through content and delivery	Appropriate and robust technologies must be provided that support valid and engaging content and pedagogical intent	Whether sessional staff are provided with PL and support in the use and application of the technologies chosen to engage students. Whether they are recognised for and placed in units on the basis of their content expertise.
Invest in online education to ensure access and opportunity	Core business, not a peripheral nor low cost second-class option	Whether sessional staff are consulted on workloads and remuneration and whether they feel they are fair, and feel a part of the School’s broad mission.

One further study led to a useful inclusion in the questioning of research participants. Phelps et al. (2000) write of the philosophical tension between what can roughly be described as commercial or management perspectives and the advancement of academic pursuits. While this tension is not new, they contend that it can be heightened as universities move more towards the provision of online programs. This discussion by Phelps et al. links to the tension described in Section 3.3 of the literature review where the influence of economic and political ideologies and practices is described as problematic. They claim that there will be an increased need for management and academic staff to work more collaboratively than they may be accustomed to, as university systems and academic intent must align if students' needs are to be met. Solutions must be brokered collaboratively with more varied stakeholders. An awareness of the necessarily closer collaborative and operational relationships between academic and professional support staff in online programs led to the exploration of these relationships in the interviews and Survey Questionnaire 2.

The review of practice in the management of online programs has identified three key considerations that guided questioning of participants and meaning-making in the data analysis and discussion. First amongst the significant aspects is that inquiry into the role dimensions for casual staff (which are more likely to be subject to local decision-making) working in online programs can be informed by recognised frameworks that itemise essential elements of quality online programs: valuable frameworks have been developed in and for Australian contexts. Secondly, that the full vision and purpose of the online programs must be clear and shared with all stakeholders and, finally, that new ways of working will demand more collaborative relationships across roles in the university.

The indicators of successful practice discussed are likely to be linked to the motivation and engagement levels that those working in them will experience. The discussion in Section 3.6 of the review of literature indicated that motivation and engagement will be impacted by the extent to which employees feel competent and confident in fulfilling the demands of their role. The next part of the practice review therefore looks specifically at the role of professional learning and development in supporting casual academic staff working in online programs, focussing on the Australian context.

7.2.2 Professional Learning and Development: The Australian Context

Accounts from practice in Australian universities help to frame the inquiry in ways that accommodate the dual significant factors of online learning and teaching and casual academic status in the context of the research undertaken for this thesis. Literature and theory discussed already in this thesis emphasise that context is critical and the consideration of context is central to this research. The cases and projects discussed provide some comparison across contexts that helped to inform the research. The cases were found to be especially informative because of similarities in methodological approach (particularly those which surveyed staff) and staff demographic characteristics. Focussing on Australian research in this sphere is justified through the inference that the similar contexts will have relevance to this research group and, through the words of Marina Harvey (2107), in saying that “Australia is taking the lead in good practice and in the scholarship of teaching and learning with sessional staff” (p. 2). Harvey’s important work with the Benchmarking Leadership and Advancement of Standards for Sessional Teaching (BLASST) responds comprehensively to the challenges and changes wrought by the growth of reliance on casual academic staff in Australian universities. The work has included the production of a framework of standards (BLASST, 2013) for the enhancement of learning and teaching and for management and administrative policy in casual academic staff environments, which has been positively received internationally as well as in Australia.

Therefore, taking guidance from this framework indicates that the research conducted will not result in a parochial interpretation and that the guidance is robust and internationally affirmed. The standards provide useful guidance for questioning the research participants about the nature of their experience. Specifically, items taken from the BLASST framework for exploration with the research participants are: the resourcing to support them in their roles; the professional development provided; recruitment, placement and orientation procedures; communications about role expectations, rights and responsibilities and key policies; inclusion of sessional staff in general newsworthy items and opportunities; administration of pay processes; and the expertise and support provided by the leadership.

The rest of Sub-section 7.2.2 reports on specific case studies of practice or projects undertaken in the management of professional learning and support for academic staff. Some of the work has been concerned with staff development for online teaching, although without reference to whether casual employment status was a feature. Other studies are concerned specifically with the support of casual teaching staff without any reference to online learning and teaching environments. No study was found that dealt with the specific combination of casual staff teaching fully online and so some conclusions are drawn through extrapolation. Nevertheless, the survey of cases and practice generally is useful in guiding inquiry with the case study group and it is expected that this research will contribute an informative differentiated case. The relevant case studies and projects are presented in chronological order.

- **Ellis and Phelps (2000); Southern Cross University**

Ellis and Phelps recognised early in the move towards online programs that the support of teachers transitioning into online learning and teaching environments will require strategies different to those for face-to-face teaching. Their paper describes the collaborative action learning model that was followed by the teaching team to develop new pedagogical approaches for online teaching. In common with Taylor's account above, it encompasses technological, pedagogical and managerial issues. One key challenge mentioned by Ellis and Phelps is that of pressure to formulate policy and guidelines "on the run". (Ellis & Phelps, 2000, p. 26). This pressure may be keenly felt if circumstances are that a move into online programs has been hurried, possibly as reactive to institutional directives or strategies, and where insufficient time is allowed for careful and strategic planning. If these forces do apply, then it can be expected that practice will evolve and improve over time, as faculty staff and leaders gain knowledge and expertise and apply it to their specific context. It is therefore relevant to inquire and note comments from the sessional staff participants whether they think the professional learning program has become more closely targeted and better-resourced over time.

- **Wallace (2002); Southern Cross University**

Wallace reports on the experience of a team from Southern Cross University as they navigated the change to online learning and considers the ways in which the identities of both the University academic manager and the scholar/teacher/researchers in the team were both challenged and developed by these moves. Staff development was identified early in the process as being of critical importance to the success of the initiative, and a needs analysis was undertaken before planning commenced. Interestingly, development of technical skill was seen as the starting point, rather than developing shared understandings of the rationale for the change and of the pedagogical and design challenges and implications for meeting desired learning outcomes. Nonetheless, this work reveals that the development of technical skill is a significant element of effective support and thus underlines that this factor should be interrogated with the case study group for this research.

- **Smith and Bath (2003); University of Queensland**

Smith and Bath undertook a critical review of the ways in which professional development is provided to academic staff, both continuing staff and casual employees. They emphasise the tension between supporting “wholesale implementation of training programmes (sic)” (p. 108) and tailoring programs to the idiosyncratic needs of the local contexts. Their findings indicate that the motivation and engagement of academic staff in the service of student outcomes will not be enhanced if professional learning programs are imposed on the staff without due regard to their particular needs. That insight from Smith and Bath’s study helped to indicate the importance of questioning the case study participants in this research to see whether they thought professional learning opportunities were tailored to their needs.

- **Taylor (2003); University of Southern Queensland**

The case study report published by Taylor chronicles the transition of what she describes as a previously small, regional institution towards its repositioning as an internationally recognized e-university (2003, p. 75). The metamorphosis encompassed technological, human resource, pedagogical and management initiatives,

and Taylor argues that successful change occurred where it was quite gradual and where it was well-planned. One of Taylor's central contentions is that staff development is an essential component of effective change management. Taylor makes a powerful statement that emphasises the inherent risk in deep change processes, in saying that "Staff development is the catalyst which allows the evolutionary process to move forward less catastrophically". (Taylor, 2003, p. 75). Taylor's work provides a further perspective for inquiry about impacts on motivation and engagement in the case study group, being whether professional learning is planned carefully to align with the directions and evolution of the school and its work in the online programs.

- **Wilson and Stacey (2004); Deakin University**

While not a specific case study, Wilson and Stacey (2004) discussed the necessity of developing tertiary teachers into effective online teachers in their paper. Their work is instructive as it focuses on the development of technical skills in the service of sound pedagogy in online learning environments. Their argument is premised on the perspective that social constructivist learning can (and should) take place in an online learning environment, a position that has been argued in the literature review in Section 2.5. Wilson and Stacey contend that effective management and facilitation of online discussions and collaborative activities is a cornerstone of creating a constructivist online learning environment. While those insights and recommendations are well-accepted and have been noted in Chapter 2, the important link that Wilson and Stacey make to staff development is relevant to this discussion. The authors urge faculties to ensure that teaching staff are given appropriate professional learning to enable them to manipulate the technology and platforms confidently and competently, a finding that aligns with those of Wallace as reported above. They also recognise that cultural and pedagogical change can be difficult and slow, especially if faculty staff members are reluctant or unwilling to support changes that may have been outside their control. For the most part, Wilson and Stacey's paper focuses on upskilling staff in the use of the technologies per se, not on how to translate an effective teaching pedagogy to the online space overall. However, it does explicate a list of various roles that the online teacher needs to assume: these include other aspects such as process facilitator and

advisor. Wilson and Stacey also mention the importance of establishing presence and supporting relationships, although they stop short of saying that teachers need to be taught explicitly how to do that online. There are several implications for questioning drawn from Wilson and Stacey's work, including the consideration of whether there will be sufficient depth and breadth of essential skill lying within the faculty group that is charged with planning and delivering the professional learning for online sessional staff.

- **Wood and Mate (2012), Victoria University**

Supporting the stance taken in this research that a deficit situation should not be assumed, were the findings of the project undertaken at Victoria University by Wood and Mate (2012). The project, which included questionnaires and focus groups with 24 casual staff and their managers/co-ordinators, found little evidence that the student experience was impacted by the nature of employment or that students rate sessional staff lower than they do continuing staff in student evaluation tools. However, the experience of those staff members and the interactions they conduct with students do impact, and "crucial to the sessional staff member's effectiveness" were the relationships with unit and course leaders and access to University resources, especially for professional learning and development. The project also noted, as has been found elsewhere, that the diversity amongst the sessional staff group was a relevant factor, with wide variation in background, qualifications, and motivation for undertaking the role. Categories of casual staff were formed, based on these variances. One of the key findings of the Victoria University project was that the student experience could best be enhanced by tailoring or prioritising certain kinds of support depending on the category of casual staff member. While the findings should not necessarily be replicated exactly in other contexts, this finding highlights the importance of devising contextually-appropriate strategies.

- **Klopper and Power (2014); An Australian University**

The article published by Klopper and Power (2014) begins with an overview of the significant issues surrounding sessional academic staffing practices, but its main purpose was to report on a project that sought to provide an effective model for the

employment and support of sessional academic staff. The rationale for the project was to manage risk and respond to concerns about the quality of sessional staff. Self-efficacy theory was used as a foundation, with the researchers explicating the link between self-efficacy and effective teaching (p. 106) and surveying 22 casual staff working in one University faculty. The project resulted in the production of an online professional development program and resource kit for casual staff (p. 105). Although Klopper and Power's research uses self-efficacy theory rather than motivation and engagement theory, their project proved particularly informative and provided some valuable direction for factors to explore with the case study group. Overall, the research findings were that the casual staff enjoyed their work and felt that they did it well, although they were constrained by heavy workloads, the need to juggle their sessional work with other work commitments, and the lack of time to devote to their professional development as casual academic staff. Specifically, the items in Klopper and Power's survey questionnaire (p. 108) were able to be categorised to inform the items and discussion points contextualised for this research. These can be broadly described as: skill level for the work being undertaken; clarity of role expectations; facility with the systems and software; and access to and support from unit/course leaders.

The findings reported in Sub-section 7.2.2 concerning professional development and learning contributed rich information that guided Phases 2 and 3 of the research. It was apparent that inquiry must address several critical factors, including:

- a) the broad range of skills that are a part of the role of online tutor, and the extent to which casual tutors think they know what these are, and feel that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill them;
- b) the extent to which tutors are guided, upskilled and supported to use the digital technologies inherent in the online programs they work in;
- c) the extent to which they feel they are well supported and guided by university leadership generally;
- d) the extent to which they feel they are included in broad aims and missions of the program, and have opportunities to provide contributions and input; and
- e) the extent to which they feel that the conditions of their employment are fair.

The work represented in the selective review of Australian practice contributes to knowledge about the current position of research in Australia in this area and thus provided data that guided the construction of Survey Questionnaire 1, as well as the later interviews, analysis and discussion. The work surveyed aids understandings about how certain groups of sessional academic staff (in this case, those working in large-scale, fully online programs) might experience motivation and engagement and what can impact on levels. Whether or not motivation and engagement are impacted upon may depend on the dynamic that individuals experience between their perceptions of expectations, their capacity to meet them, and their beliefs about their appropriateness. The final part of this section posits some conclusions about how the knowledge and understandings gained from the review could be significant when considering the combination of being a casual academic employee working online in online learning and teaching programs. These conclusions will thus make the link to the specific context under research.

7.2.3 Combined Effect of Working Online and Casual Academic Status

The identification of some significant characteristics and dynamics of online teaching and learning has guided inquiry to determine how they might link to motivation and engagement. Likewise, examining the nature of the casual academic employment position provides some further insights into how that employment basis might impact on motivation and engagement. There are indications as shown in the preceding discussion that these circumstances often co-exist, and they do exist for the employees in the case study group in this research. Therefore, it is critical to consider both and to further consider that the two circumstances might combine to enhance impact on motivation and engagement. Organisations will need to pay attention to any such combined effect in order to respond effectively with strategies that can optimise motivation and engagement for these employees. For the casual academic staff member, their autonomy and capacity to influence some of the aspects of organisational response to identified imperatives for sound online learning and teaching may be limited, or at least, more complex to negotiate.

However, in drawing connections to the motivation and engagement of casual staff and the practices of the organisation that will optimise them, the role of casual

academics in influencing and enacting those responses is highly relevant. The findings from the literature (for example, the Latham and Faulkner study reported in section 2.5) suggest that the degree to which the sessional academic staff teaching online have agency in key areas impacts on their efficacy and may well be important to their personal motivation and engagement. Those key areas are the extent to which they are able to suggest, embed and utilise appropriate learning technologies effectively, contribute to learning design, create constructivist learning environments, tailor and adapt their pedagogical practice to include diverse learners and advance social justice, and provide sufficient teacher presence and support for their students. These dimensions have therefore also informed the questions asked of the case study group and the findings analysed and discussed. Doing so allows specific and relevant measurements of motivation and engagement in their particular context and eventually, recommendations for optimising both.

7.2.4. Conclusion to Section 7.2

The selective review of Australian of practice and the conclusions subsequently made have been valuable in demonstrating how the critical element of context which is central to the methodological approach has been taken into account. Important factors identified are reflected in the structure and content of Survey Questionnaire 1 and the in-depth conversations in the semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 2 of the research.

Another key insight noted in this chapter has been that the way in which casual academic staff are managed is significant and that practice can be effective or problematic. Therefore, the expectation is that there will be several components to the ways the sessional staff in the research group are managed which will impact on motivation and engagement. These components are likely to include the ways in which the sessional staff are recruited, inducted, deployed and supported. With important contextual factors identified that are likely to impact on motivation and engagement, the discussion now moves to the data that was collected in the second part of Phase 1, the administration of Survey Questionnaire 1. As well as collecting some baseline data about motivation and engagement levels, Survey Questionnaire 1 had a methodological purpose which was to enable the creation of a diverse and

representative group for the in-depth interview process. A discussion of the data collected in Survey Questionnaire 1 follows.

7.3 Data Analysis and Discussion for Survey Questionnaire 1

The purpose of Phase 1 of the research was to gain necessary background about the context and consider how motivation and engagement of those working in contexts such as that under research might be experienced and impacted, and then to pose some initial questions that would indicate the levels of motivation and engagement the sessional academic staff were experiencing. While the first part of Phase 1 focused on gathering some data about current practice that informed the questioning, the second part of Phase 1 places more emphasis on methodological purpose. The resulting data from the questioning in Survey Questionnaire 1 provided baseline data about motivation and engagement levels, through the embedding of the 17-point UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) as Item 13 of the survey questionnaire. That process was explained in Sub-section 6.5.3 and the UWES is presented in Figure 6.2. Respondents' responses to the 17-point UWES questions enabled initial reported levels of motivation and engagement to be identified.

As well as collecting that data, Survey Questionnaire 1 also asked questions about the characteristics of respondents that, when analysed, enabled the compilation of a sub-group of research participants to invite to follow-up, in-depth interview. As explained in Sub-section 6.5.3 the aim was to form a group of interview participants which was as diverse, and therefore as representative, as possible. The analysis and discussion of Survey Questionnaire 1 data therefore has two parts: firstly, data about motivation and engagement levels, and secondly, the data that informed interview group selection. The data about motivation and engagement levels became one of the diversity factors informing interview group selection.

7.3.1 Motivation and Engagement levels

All 41 survey respondents completed the items which measured their motivation and engagement in accordance with the UWES. As indicated in Sub-section 6.5.3, reported levels of motivation and engagement was one factor that contributed to the formation of a diverse group of interview participants. Consequently, respondents

were organised in a consistent manner into categories relating to their current levels of motivation of engagement. From responses to each of the 17 points in the UWES completed at Item 13 of Survey Questionnaire 1, motivation and engagement levels were organised into five categories as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2

Five Categories of Motivation and Engagement Levels: Results from Initial Survey Item 13; the 17-point UWES

	Item 13 UWES Scale Responses	Category
1	All 17 indicators rated as “most of the time” or “always”, with some as “always”	Very High
2	Majority of 17 indicators rated as “most of the time”, with none lower than “about half the time”	High
3	Indicators ranged across ratings with majority above “sometimes”	High Medium
4	Indicators ranged across ratings but with none above “about half the time”	Low Medium
5	Majority of 17 indicators rated at or below “sometimes”	Low

- **Coding Process**

Simple codes were assigned to each of the above category labels. For Item 13, motivation and engagement levels as indicated by the 17-point UWES, the largest group was coded as having high levels, followed by high medium, very high, low medium and the smallest group classified as low. The number of respondents in each category is displayed in Table 7.3. The complete database of coded data for Phase 1 is at Appendix 7.1.

Table 7.3*Number of respondents in five categories of motivation and engagement levels*

Category	Code	No. of respondents	Broad Group
Very High	VH	8	High = 21
High	H	13	
High Medium	HM	11	Medium = 19
Low Medium	LM	8	
Low	L	1	Low = 1
TOTAL		41	41

These data then became the principal organiser used to form the diverse group for interview with the data being organised in accordance with levels of motivation and engagement as the first step in formulating the diverse group. Although motivation and engagement levels were clustered more to the high levels than expected, there was still sufficient spread for the methodological purpose of selection for interview. An account of that process follows.

7.3.2. Formulation of Diverse Group for Interview in Phase 2 of the Research

- **Coding Process**

All survey questionnaire responses were recorded firstly as raw data (see Appendix 7.2) and then subsequently organised in a spreadsheet, with the data organised in accordance with codes generated for each item (see database Appendix 7.1.1). This spreadsheet formed the first item for a case study database, as advocated by Yin (2018, pp. 130-134). Such databases are valuable not only to provide all-important audit trails (Erlandson et al, pp. 39-40) but also because the data can be returned to at later dates to provide direction for future inquiries. Most codes were simple and explicit such as for Item 3 where respondents indicated their current role as either tutor or unit co-ordinator, coded as T or UC. The function of these simple codes was to help manage the data more efficiently. Other items needed more complex codes to achieve efficiency and some codes were created for additional purposes. The approach to coding for Item 13, motivation and engagement levels, has been explained in subsection 7.3.1. Other codes are outlined and explained in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4*Coding Protocol for Survey Questionnaire 1 Data*

Item	Code	Reason	Result
Name	Initials of first and surname	To provide anonymity in the thesis but allow re-identification for follow-up if needed	All respondents' names were recorded using initials, with a numerical identifier where initials were common to more than one respondent – e.g. MB1, MB2. A separate record was kept showing full names.
Sex	M = Male; F= Female; O = Other		All respondents reported as either M or F.
Age	Numerical code derived from the age decade, from 30s (category 1) to 80s (category 6).		6 categories of age were represented by numerical codes 1 – 6.
Current Situation	Numerical code derived from numbering life stage in the questionnaire item	To simplify manipulation and representation of data	6 categories were represented derived from the choices given in the questionnaire.
Role	T = Tutor UC = Unit Coordinator		Codes were able to be easily viewed and presented graphically, to guide interview selection in accordance with the various aspect of group diversity.
Years' Experience	Number in whole years counted from year of joining		
Experience in role of Tutor and/or UC	1 to 3 Study Periods: LE (Low Experience) 4 – 10 Study Periods: ME (Medium Experience) More than 10 Study Periods: HE (High Experience)		Codes enabled simpler comparisons between respondents across each of the items in the survey. Will assist with any future data analysis.
Course/s worked in	ECE = Early Childhood Education PRI = Primary		
Reason for joining	Numerical code derived from numbering the reason for joining given		10 choices for the reason for joining the program, including “other”. Respondents chose as many as applied and the most significant reasons were displayed in order of importance, followed by less important reasons in brackets.

The data set from Survey Questionnaire 1 is valuable beyond the specific purpose to which it is applied for the current research. Not all data collected has been directly used for the consequent phases of the research in this instance. For instance, data could be further analysed to provide a basis for exploring factors such as the degree of gender balance amongst respondents, any relationships between the age, current situation of respondents and their reasons for choosing the work of a sessional academic, and any relationships between the factors above and the level of motivation as measured by the UWES. In this case, the initial survey questionnaire data set was analysed to determine the most diverse (and by implication, representative) group for invitation to participate in an in-depth interview.

- **Further Analysis**

The next step in the data analysis was to take the organised data from the responses (see Appendix 7.1.2) and use them for selection of candidates for interview. As explained in Section 7.3.1, motivation and engagement level was the primary organiser. Respondents were listed in descending order according to their levels of motivation and engagement, grouped into the categories that were created and explained in Section 7.3.2 and shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3. The results for all the characteristics used to form a diverse group for the interviews conducted in Phase 2 of the research are shown in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5*Characteristics of Survey Respondents Selected for Interview*

No.	M & E level (UWES)	Sex	Age	Current situation	Role	Years of service	No. of active SPs	Course/s worked in	Reason/s for joining
1	VH	F	3	6	UC	4	HE	PRI;ECE	1,5,6,7, (9,10)
2		M	5	6	UC	4	HE	PRI:ECE	1,2,4,6,7, other, (5,9,10)
3		F	5	2	T	1	LE	PRI	1,2,7,10 (6,8)
4		F	2	1	T	1	LE	PRI:ECE	1,2,6, (5,7,8,9)
5		M	3	1	T	4	ME	PRI:ECE	1,2,5,6,7,9
6	H	F	4	1	T	3	ME	PRI:ECE	6,7, (1,2,8,9,10)
7		F	3	1	T	4	HE	PRI:ECE	1,2,6,7, other, (4,8,9,10)
8		F	1	3	UC	4	ME	PRI:ECE	7,9, (1,2,6,8,10)
9		F	2	1	N/A	3	LE	PRI:ECE	(2,6,7)
10		M	5	2	T	8	HE	PRI	7, (1,2,6,10, other)
11		F	6	2	N/A	3	LE	PRI:ECE	1,2,6,7 (4,10)
12		M	5	1	N/A	6	ME	PRI:PG	2,6,7, (10)
13		F	4	6	T	8	HE	PRI:ECE	1,6, (7,9)
14		M	5	6	UC	3	LE	PRI	2,5,8,(1,6,7,9,10)
15		F	3	5	UC	5	HE	PRI:ECE	1,2,4,6,7,8, (9, 10)
16	HM LM	F	3	6	UC	7	HE	PRI:ECE	1,2,(4,5,6,7,8,10)
17		F	2	3	N/A	5	ME	PRI:ECE	6,7,(1,2,5,8,10 other)
18		F	3	1	T	4	ME	PRI	1,2,7,8, (6,9,10)
19	L	F	2	1	T	6	HE	PRI:ECE	1,2,4,6,7,8

The methodological purpose for Survey Questionnaire 1 and data analysis was achieved, with some limitations that are discussed in Section 7.5. Table 7.5 shows that 19 questionnaire respondents were identified for interview, and the coded responses to the items that influenced selection are recorded. The aim was to firstly create group diversity through variation in motivation and engagement levels, and then within that, to create diversity through the other eight dimensions that were explained in Chapter 6 in Sub-section 6.5.3 and displayed in Table 6.3. Those dimensions were sex, age, current situation, work role, number of years of employment, experience in the role, course/s teaching in and reasons for choosing to work as a sessional academic in the online program.

The results show considerable diversity amongst the eight secondary dimensions, across different motivation and engagement levels and within similar levels. No one secondary dimension of diversity seemed to influence levels of motivation and engagement positively or negatively. This relationship between diversity dimensions and motivation and engagement levels was not analysed closely, as the purpose of this phase was to form a broadly diverse group for interview. Results were sufficient to provide confidence that there was no apparent diversity dimension which determined motivation and engagement levels, and so selection for interview would not need to take that into account. For example, five respondents were selected for interview from among the group of 11 tutors who were categorised as having very high motivation and engagement. Table 7.6 shows the diversity found within that group of 11 tutors.

Table 7.6*Additional Diversity Characteristics for Respondents Experiencing Very High Motivation and Engagement*

Diversity Dimension	Data
Sex	8 x Female; 3 x Male
Age group	Range from 20s to 60s
Current situation	Most categories represented, except “beginning academic career; no other work or family commitments; “taking time out from main career” and “other”.
Role	4 x tutor; 7 x Unit Co-ordinator
Years’ Service	Range from <1 year to 7 years
Experience in role	3 x Low Experience; 3 x Medium Experience; 5 x High Experience
Course/s worked in	1 x Primary only; 9 x Primary and Early Childhood Education
Reason/s for joining	Range of reasons, with only “to avoid working with others” not chosen by any of the 11 respondents.

Selection for interview was therefore able to proceed on the basis of logistical considerations of availability and ability to either attend in person or engage with digital technologies. There was some minor randomising of selection where no such considerations were apparent, based on distinctiveness of initials to help guard against possible confusion in the records. In a few cases, respondents had advised that they would be unavailable; two had discontinued employment since the survey. Each respondent selected for interview was contacted via email with an invitation to participate (see Appendix 7.3). The invitation included an enquiry as to whether the respondent had any objection to taking part in a group interview if one was offered, rather than an individual session. The email advised about the expected duration and the proposed format of the interview, and sought respondents’ availability and preferred venue for the interview.

Item 14 was the final item in the survey questionnaire. It was an open-response item which asked respondents to:

“Please describe what factors influence how you feel about your work: what affects how engaged and energetic you feel towards your work. Consider factors that arise from you and your circumstances, and those associated with the work and the organisation”.

Responses to Item 14 did not contribute to the diversity data used to determine the interview participants. Including Item 14 provided some data that was coded to give some early indications of what topics might impact on motivation and engagement for this group of employees and which could be conceptualised as either job demands or resources. These indications complemented information gathered through the selective review of Australian practice and helped guide questions asked in the semi-structured interviews undertaken in Phase 2 of the research.

Ten broad topic areas were discerned from noting key words in the responses, and responses that mentioned the key words were enumerated. For example, each person who mentioned the key words ‘collaborate’, ‘collaboration’ or ‘collaborating’, added to the tally for that broad topic (see database Appendix 7.1.3. The responses were tabulated in rank order from most to least respondents mentioning the topic. A summary is provided in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7

Responses to Survey Questionnaire 1 Item 14: Topics Impacting on Motivation and Engagement

Topic Impacting on Motivation and Engagement	No. of Respondents who mentioned the Topic
Collaboration with colleagues	5
Support from the organisation	5
The unit co-ordinator	4
Personal professional growth /professional challenge	4
Contribution to the profession	3
IT – skills development, demands, affordances	3
Professional autonomy	2
Workload/competing demands	2
Unit content and expertise	2
University policies and processes	2

Taken together, the data from the selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1 provided the information needed to respond to Research Question 1, which helps guide the subsequent research phases and eventually achieve the research purpose.

7.4 Response to Research Question 1: How is motivation and engagement being experienced by sessional academic staff working in one fully online program?

The response to Research Question 1 encompasses not only the levels of motivation and engagement being reported but also the nature of the experience in order to state how motivation and engagement is being experienced. Thus, all the data from both the selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1 was analysed.

Data from the selective review of Australian practice indicated that motivation and engagement for the group of casual staff working in the online program will be connected to and influenced by the following characteristics of the work experience:

- The need for the teaching staff to apply online learning and teaching pedagogies, as well as hold content expertise
- The need for them to be proficient in the learning technologies employed
- The need to manage student relationships online, as well as deliver content
- The ability to balance work/life commitments
- The extent to which sessional staff feel included in the organisational network and consulted
- The extent to which sessional staff feel that they are adequately remunerated for their efforts
- The extent and nature of support and professional learning accessible to the sessional staff

Responses to Survey Questionnaire 1 confirmed that motivation and engagement may be influenced by characteristics of the work experience similar to those identified in the review of practice. That data joined with the measurement data for current levels of motivation and engagement as per the 17-point UWES to provide strong guidance for the in-depth investigation with interview participants. Responses to the open-

response item of the questionnaire illustrate the importance of the localised context, which is a key aspect highlighted through the literature review and theoretical framework. Importantly, the data from the survey indicated that motivation and engagement is being experienced at generally high levels, with 51% of 41 respondents categorised as currently experiencing high levels, 46% medium levels, and only 3% categorised as experiencing low levels. The additional data from the review of practice and Survey Questionnaire 1 enabled in-depth inquiry to proceed to understand why motivation and engagement was being experienced as generally high and where it was not, why that might be.

As well as responding to Research Question 1, Chapter 7 provides an explanation for the ways in which the data collected and analysed informs the next phase of the research, the in-depth interviews. A summary of the implications for the research is provided in the concluding section to this chapter.

Section 7.5 Implications for Research Phase 2: In-depth Inquiry

An account has been given of the way the data from Survey Questionnaire 1 was used to form a diverse group for interview. Research Phase 1 also provided valuable direction for the conduct of the in-depth inquiry through semi-structured interviews in Phase 2. As well as forming useful contextual background about the environment and the participants to inform wording and guide conversations in the interviews, decisions about what prompts to include was informed by both data sources: data from the selective review of Australian practice and data from the open response item (Item 14) in Survey Questionnaire 1. As well as these two data sources, the prompts were informed by methodological considerations, responding to recommended guidelines for the conduct of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2012, 2018), Creswell and Poth (2018), Erlandson et al. (1993), Flick (2015), and Frankel et al. (2015). An overview is provided in Table 7.8 of how the data from the selective review of Australian practice, the initial survey questionnaire and methodological considerations, all influenced the interview prompts. The process described and the table demonstrate how this approach to the interview structure was a valuable trustworthiness tactic.

Table 7.8*Key Points Informing Design of Interview Prompts*

Source	Key Points	Interview Prompt/s Informed (Prompt Numbers)
Phase 1 Selective Review of Australian Practice	Important to allow participants to explore the relationship between the organisation's structures and processes and their M&E, from several angles. This enables clarity about how the satisfiers and dissatisfiers are experienced by different people and whether factors contribute positively to motivation or only minimise dissatisfaction (Rowley, 1996).	2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7
	Important to prompt discussion of SETLD, IT support, pay and conditions as access to PL and support are known to be crucial. Important also to give an opportunity to talk about whether participants feel they are being remunerated fairly for the work they do (Stone, 2017).	3,4,5,6,7,8
	Important to gauge whether participants feel part of the organisation's mission (Stone, 2017).	9
Phase Survey Questionnaire 1 data	Interviewer able to make links to data provided, to establish a connection and place participant at ease.	1
	Additional prompts were taken from the survey responses and used as needed: e.g. the UC, IT support, SETLD, staffing processes, IT support.	2,3,4,5,6,7,8
Methodology Guidelines (Flick, Erlandson et al.; Frankel et al.; Creswell)	Warm up; establish rapport	1
	Reference to some responses in earlier interviews were used to prompt/probe responses to see whether a factor was shared or to gain a different view.	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9
	Provide reflection time to modify or enhance a response; draw out anything participant may have been unsure about mentioning	10

The numbered prompts devised for the interview are shown in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2

Semi-structured Interview Prompts

Number	Prompt
1	Please could you give a brief summary of the roles you have held and the extent of experience in them
2	Can you describe some times when your motivation and engagement has been high? Are you able to identify what organisational factors may have contributed to these high levels?
3	Are you able to think of some actions, strategies, activities or behaviours the School engages in regularly that increase your motivation and engagement?
4	What about one-off or ad hoc actions, strategies, activities or behaviours you've experienced that increased your motivation and engagement in a particular instance?
5	What has been impacting when you have felt less motivation and engagement, and are you able to identify how the organisation's actions caused, helped or did not help this impact?
6	Is there anything you think the organisation could or should do that would increase your motivation and engagement?
7	Is there anything you think the organisation does NOT do that you see as a positive that helps with your motivation and engagement? (i.e., that you are glad it does not do)
8	Are there any factors that if introduced, or if removed, that would prompt you to discontinue in the role?
9	To what extent would you say you feel personally aligned with and connected to the goals, vision and values of the organisation?
10	Is there anything else you'd like to add or clarify further?

- **Limitations**

The number of interview participants was not pre-determined but the goal was to create a group of between 10 and 20, a range supported as appropriate by Creswell (2018), Stake (2012), and Yin (2015). Fifteen participants were eventually interviewed after the selection process was completed. As explained in Sub-section 7.3.1, responses to Survey Questionnaire 1 were analysed firstly according to the level of motivation and

engagement reported to achieve as much spread in this item as possible when determining the group for interview. Other indicators of diversity were then also considered and the group to be invited to interview was determined (see record at Appendix 7.1.4). Interviews were scheduled and records kept of dates and times (see Appendix 7.1.5).

Ideally, the interview group would have comprised sessional academic staff who reported an evenly-spread mix of the five categories of motivation and engagement levels that were determined from the data (see Table 7.2), namely Very High, High, High Medium, Low Medium and Low. Then from each of those categories, participants would have been selected in accordance with the other eight diversity factors, to create as diverse a group as possible. However, as shown in Table 7.3, the spread found was skewed towards higher levels and so this could not be achieved. Those tutors experiencing low levels of motivation and engagement in their work may have been less likely to respond to the survey questionnaire. This finding raised some concerns about the possibility of sample bias (McNulty, 2008, p. 308) and signalled a need to pay attention to that in the later data collection phases. The rationale for the design of Phase 3, provided in Chapter 6, Sub-section 6.6.2, includes a response to the concern about possible sample bias.

While it was important to note this possible constraint in case it limited the breadth of response or the representativeness of the views expressed in the interviews, there was no imperative to abandon the practicality of scheduling in order to achieve sufficient diversity. Despite the reduced diversity in the aspect of motivation and engagement level, there were no other limitations to the diversity found and so the purposeful planning for a diverse group was limited only by the one aspect described. Table 7.5 shows the wide diversity amongst the other diversity indicators. Some awareness of possible constraints of diversity and representativeness may have been needed in any case even if the original diversity sought had been attained. Overall, confidence was achieved that the processes applied in Phase 1 of the research achieved the purpose of generating a sufficiently diverse and representative group for in-depth interview.

7.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 7 has provided a full analysis and discussion of the data that were collected in Research Phase 1, which had three purposes: firstly, to survey current practices in Australia to discern some likely topics or issues for inquiry with interview participants; secondly, to gain an initial sense of how motivation and engagement was being experienced in the case study group; and thirdly, to provide a pool of participants from which to form a sample group with maximum variation for interview in Phase 2.

As well as formulating a sufficiently diverse group for interview, Phase 1 achieved the purpose of providing some direction and guidance for the semi-structured interviews, through the identification of common broad topics found in accounts of practice and mentioned by questionnaire respondents in connection with their views about their motivation and engagement and through gaining a base measure of levels of motivation and engagement currently being experienced. Several topics emerged from the open-response question (Item 14) that were valuable in guiding the interview questions. Although the topics mentioned were only indicative and were not formally coded and categorised in Phase 1, they provided some useful guidance for the interviews. The guidance helped to ensure that interviewees would be invited to discuss aspects that may be important, as well as minimise the risk that an interview could be spent discussing only peripheral matters and provide useful prompts to help clarify and probe during the interviews.

CHAPTER 8

Results and Discussion of Research Phase 2: In-depth Inquiry

8.1 Introduction

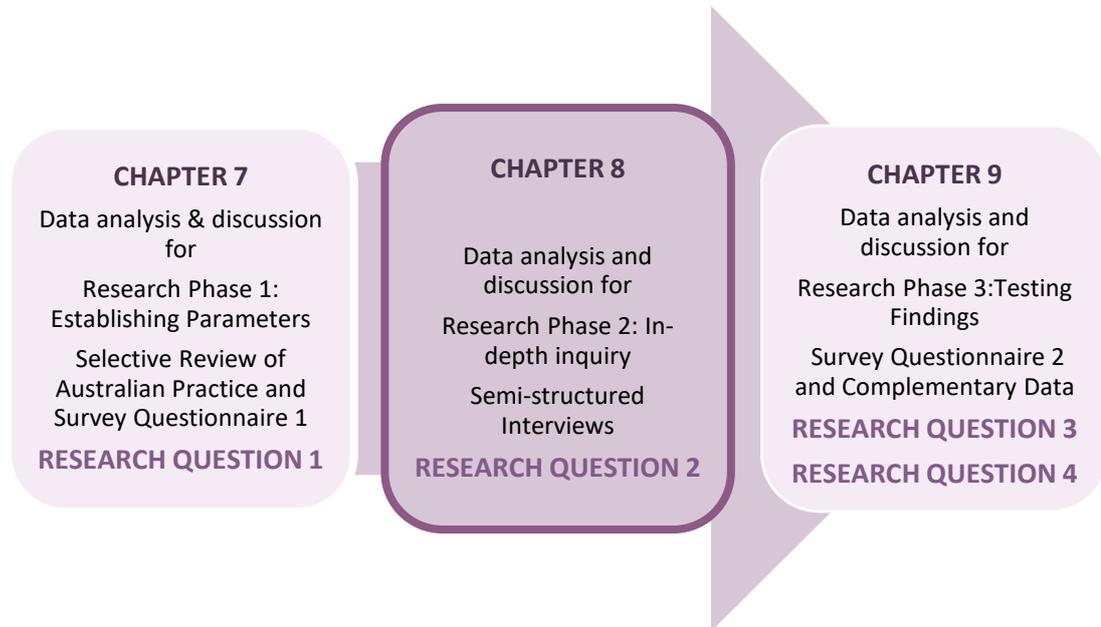
In Chapter 8, a description and analysis is presented of the data that was collected as part of Phase 2 of the research, along with a discussion of relevant findings from Phase 2 which comprised the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Phase 2 was the most extensive phase of the research and considerable data were collected. As explained in the previous chapter, Phase 2 was informed by the findings of Phase 1, and Phase 2 then in turn informed Phase 3. The analysis and discussion in this chapter responds to Research Question 2:

What are the elements of the work experience that impact on motivation and engagement for interviewed participants?

The position and focus of Chapter 8 are shown in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1

Position and Focus of Chapter 8



The analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews in Phase 2 identified a number of elements that were important to the experience of motivation and engagement amongst the casual academic staff interviewed. The account of the data analysis in Phase 2 is presented in this chapter in accordance with the following structure: Section 8.2 contains an overview of the processes and analysis tactics used in Phase 2 and explains their purpose. The approach and tactics used were summarised in Table 6.1 in the research design chapter. Section 8.3 then recounts in detail how each step in the analysis process was undertaken and the results found from each. Section 8.3 is the major part of Chapter 8 and contains three sub-sections. Sub-section 8.3.1 (Creating the Record) describes the three steps involved in creating a complete and reliable record from the interviews. Sub-section 8.3.2 (Coding the Data) recounts in detail the six steps of the coding processes for Research Phase 2, as outlined in Figure 6.5 in the research design chapter, and includes a full account of how the codes, categories, themes and elements were used to build meaning. Sub-section 8.3.3 (Reflecting) concludes the section with a description of the final analysis step which was the reflection and review process undertaken through journaling. The response to

Research Question 3 is presented in Section 8.4. Section 8.5 identifies the implications for Phase 3, the final phase of the research.

Three key insights gained from Phase 2 of the research were taken forward into the final phase. The first insight was an overall high level of satisfaction with and appreciation for the roles that tutors were fulfilling as sessional academics in a fully online program. It emerged very clearly and quickly that participants greatly valued the opportunities provided by the fully online program. The second insight was the acknowledgement of and appreciation for the support which tutors received from various quarters but most predominantly their immediate line managers and the school's co-ordinator of sessional staff. The third insight was that key organisational structures and processes that impacted positively on motivation and engagement emerged early and clearly. Those structures and processes are the unit co-ordinator's leadership and support, the role of the co-ordinator of sessional staff, and the provision of the SETLD professional learning program. This observation about structures that was made early in the interview phase meant that further exploration into the structures could be made through judicious prompting and also suggested that opportunity should be taken to try to broaden the range of actions and processes discussed. Prompting during interview was used to achieve that aim as well, while acknowledging the importance of the dominant factors (See Appendix 8.1; Interview 3).

“Well one of the things that's come up is, and I'd be interested to just hear your view on it, is that the SETLD days for U.Cs shouldn't be all about formal learning and sessions; that there should be some time factored in there for people to just get together and network. So what's your view on that?”

8.2 Overview of Processes and Analysis Tactics Research Phase 2

The initial intention for Phase 2 was to conduct group interviews where it seemed sensible and practicable. However, it proved too challenging to achieve the desired groupings, as finding mutually suitable interview times for the group members was extremely difficult and would have delayed the data collection inordinately. Of the 19 survey respondents invited to interview, 15 were able to take part. Taking into account the results from Phase 1 of the data collection and analysis for the formation of a diverse group, as well as the logistical considerations of participants' availability, a

total of 13 interviews were scheduled. Eleven of the 13 were individual interviews and two interviews had two participants each.

Individual interviews were easier to manage than paired interviews, for two main reasons. Firstly, individual interviews permitted each person to speak freely and at length about their own situation and perspectives. Notwithstanding the easier flow of individual interviews, it was still necessary to reassure participants that they could express their views without concern for any repercussions. The preamble to Interview 3 (see Appendix 8.1) provides an example of the reassurance provided:

Researcher[00:00:25] : *Okay so the first thing that I want to say is that I'm aware and you're aware that I'm going to be asking you questions about your work as a tutor and we all know that I work in the program. So I want to just make very clear that these questions and this research is in no way related to my work. I want you to just know that you can express any views opinions or wishes, concerns and they stay completely within the bounds of the research findings and don't inform any of my work practices or anything like that. So I wouldn't want you to think well I'd better not say that.... you know, whatever. You can say whatever you really think. So please do.*

There were some concerns in the paired interviews that one participant may have dominated and prevented the other from having sufficient opportunity to express their views fully. It is also possible that dominant participants may have led the conversation in a direction that would not otherwise have been explored, and this could have aided as well as limited the data available. More dominant participants may have been more willing to raise certain issues, and others may have been grateful for their lead in voicing a concern or their view on a matter which they themselves may have avoided raising. It was difficult to know what dynamics were at play, although what Erlandson et al. (1993, p. 114) call “intuition” can play a part. For instance, in Interview 7 (see Appendix 8.1) participant ‘John’ spoke candidly and at length about perceived weaknesses and limitations in the program and management. While it was very valuable to be able to explore his views deeply, and the other (female) participant did not seem ill at ease about the discussion, there was some concern that she may not have had adequate opportunity to express her own views. Therefore, a follow-up email was sent to ensure she had sufficient opportunity (see Appendix 8.2). The participant was comfortable with the opportunity and later confirmed the accuracy of the transcript in expressing her views. In this way, the participant checking strategy detailed previously again helped to manage any such effects.

Secondly, it was apparent from the earliest interviews that questioning needed to remain clearly focussed on the impact of organisational activities and processes on tutors' motivation and engagement, rather than the impact of students' behaviours and interactions. After the first interview, a strategy was instigated to manage this focus. A statement was made at the outset of the interview that explicitly acknowledged that the engagement and behaviours of their students must impact on the motivation and engagement of tutors. Further, that some of what the organisation chooses to do to support them in their work does respond to that impact – for instance, providing professional learning modules on how to engage students in their learning, and how to manage challenging students. However, the focus of this research, and the interview, was to explore what it is that the organisation does or does not do that impacts on the motivation and engagement of sessional tutors. On occasion, it was necessary to guide the conversation back to that focus, as shown in the example taken from the transcript of Interview 1 (see Appendix 8.1).

[00:06:02] *“Jane”*: I'm really motivated before a study period begins to ambitiously try to engage as many learners as you can and to cover the content and teach it the best you can and share with other tutors in the bigger groups, ideas and the possibilities of it all and then reaching out to them in the first couple of weeks I guess. Sometimes a bit of disengagement sort of probably about Week 4 or 5 as the e-mails and the posts drop off and the assignments come in and you have a bit of a feeling of they haven't really listened and maybe haven't - yes your efforts and things haven't been as noticed for a percentage. I guess that that was more evident in the bigger groups; not so evident in smaller groups where you're the UC, and therefore then giving back assignments then re-engagement again of igniting; let's try to enthuse everyone again. And I think probably before assignments and the beginning of a study period and then maybe a little bit of a drop off again towards the end as the next study period rolls round and the focus shifts a little bit towards that. If that makes sense.

[00:07:25] *Interviewer*: Yeah sure; thank you. So are you able to think of any specific things that the school of education does that helps, You know helps you to get ready, to get involved, to feel connected, to feel engaged with the units, with the school. So that could be things that are you know around getting the Blackboard sites ready; it could be things around the staffing process, it could be things around information sharing. What helps?

Some participants found it challenging to name specific actions or processes undertaken by the School of Education that they found helpful or a hindrance to motivation and engagement. As the interviews progressed, the decision was taken to provide prompts so that participants could comment on each. This approach enabled

better data to be gathered, and efforts were made not to present each factor as necessarily positive, to encourage varied and open views. After talking with the first few participants and in response to comments made, an insight was gained that organisations would need to know not only what to make sure that they did to support and engage sessional staff, but also what to avoid doing that might alienate them. The key comment that prompted this insight was made by participant ‘Sue’ in Interview 12 (see Appendix 8.1) in relation to how glad she was that the university no longer requires sessional staff to log their hours worked in order to be paid each fortnight.

The data from Phase 2 played a pivotal role in the construction of meaning to explain how motivation and engagement were being experienced and the ways in which motivation and engagement could be impacted for the case study group. While analysis procedures for Phase 1 were comparatively simple, those for Phase 2 were more complex. For each of these reasons, a schema was first devised to ensure that analysis tactics were appropriate, comprehensive and robust. Yin (2018) writes that case study researchers are perhaps the least guided by prescriptive process for data analysis and must rely on their “own style of rigorous empirical thinking” (p. 178), while ensuring that sufficient evidence has been amassed and various interpretations considered. This challenge was faced most acutely in Phase 2 of the research and in order to ensure the required rigour, it was necessary to consult a number of research methodologists and select analysis tactics that best suited the research. Table 8.1 shows that there were ten steps to the analysis of data in Phase 2 of the research. The ten steps are organised into three stages; Stage 1, creating the record; Stage 2, coding; and Stage 3, reflecting. Tables and descriptions are provided below to explain the purpose, methodological guidance and outcome for each step within the three stages. An indication is given of research methodologists who advocate or support the particular tactic, the contribution each makes to the robustness of research in general, and the particular value for this research. A detailed discussion of the processes undertaken for each analysis activity and the findings is presented as a series of steps that explain how the analysis was conducted chronologically as well as structurally. Challenges, limitations and reservations associated with the application of the tactics also are discussed.

Table 8.1***Data Analysis Stages, Steps and Tactics for Phase 2 of the Research***

Analysis Stage	Steps	Analysis Tactics
1 Creating the Record	1	Reflexive Journal of initial impressions, obstacles, issues, questions for the researcher
	2	Transcribing of interviews
	3	Participant Checking
2 Coding and Theming (as per Figure 6.5) See also Figure 8.2	4	Key Word Coding
	5	Grouping of Coded Elements
	6	Categorising Elements for significance
	7	Identification of Themes
	8	Iterative Comparison of codes to themes, sub-themes and elements
	9	Application of JD-R model to elements
3 Reflecting	10	Reflexive Journal with thick description

8.3 Analysis Steps in Detail

There are three sub-sections to the account of the ten analysis steps and tactics for Phase 2 of the research. Sub-section 8.3.1 contains Steps 1, 2 and 3 and gives a description of how the record of interviews was managed to ensure that everything pertinent was properly recorded and organised. Sub-section 8.3.2, the largest sub-section, encompasses Steps 4 to 9 and provides a detailed account of the individual coding steps that were undertaken with the interview data. Sub-section 8.3.3 then describes how the reflection process through the journal provided the final analysis step, Step 10.

8.3.1 Creating the Record (Analysis Steps 1 to 3)

The first analysis activity was undertaken to ensure that the record of interviews was complete and accurate before any coding began. The first stage of the data analysis is described as creating the record and comprises processes through which a complete and reliable record of what was said by interview participants was reached. The first stage involved analysis Steps 1, 2 and 3, which were journalling, interview transcription and member checking. Table 8.2 summarises how these steps were informed by methodologists and the value of each to the research.

Table 8.2

Main Analysis Tactics Used in Steps 1 to 3 in Phase 2 of the Research: Creating the Record

Analysis Step	Tactic	Purpose	Advocates	Research Value
1	Reflexive Journal of initial impressions, obstacles, issues, questions for the researcher	To capture impressions “in situ”; provide signposts for exploration with subsequent interviewees; be alert to factors that might limit effectiveness of the interviews	Lincoln and Guba (1985); Erlandson et al. (1998)	Helped to refine management of interviews to maintain focus on RQs and overall research purpose
2	Transcribing of interviews	To provide an audit trail; reveal meaning of responses	Kvale and Brinkman (2008); Matheson (2007)	Nuances were captured; allowed iterative reflection and analysis
3	Participant Checking	To ensure participants’ views are accurately and appropriately captured	Erlandson et al. (1998); Guba (p. 83-85)	Built confidence in interpretation, found omissions; gave opportunity to redact

The application and results of each of the tactics for Steps 1, 2 and 3 are now recounted.

- **Analysis Steps 1 and 2: Journalling and Interview Transcription**

Journalling began just prior to the first interview and was undertaken in a digital document (see Appendix 8.3). As the first round of journalling occurred concurrently with the production, reading and editing of the interview transcripts, these steps have been combined in the detailed description. The decision to transcribe interviews personally rather than seek assistance was a considered one which contributed to data analysis. Kvale and Brinkman (2008) discuss the value of the researcher's active involvement in interpreting responses, taking into account the emphasis of the speaker, hesitations and pauses and other, non-verbal cues that aid interpretation of meaning.

Matheson (2007) adds that transcription allows the researcher to gain early familiarity with the data and become immersed in it. Retaining control over the editing of the transcripts provided immediate impetus for journal entries, also enabling a richer understanding of the intended meaning being conveyed by participants. Listening to the recordings of interviews while editing the transcript gave insights through attending to volume and tone of voice and other speech patterns that indicate excitement, vehemence, disappointment and other emotions. Engaging with the dual modes of audio and written words also served to trigger memory of facial expressions and body language that provided further such insights. For example, in listening to the recording and editing the transcript for Interview 4 (Appendix 8.1), ‘Casey’s’ sense of resentment and unfair dealing was clearly recalled as her speech patterns became staccato and rapid. This observation was noted in the journal entry (see Appendix 8.3; p. 2), where her body language was also recalled as varying between leaning forward with intense focus and sinking back in her chair in a posture of resignation or frustration:

“Casey” sounded resentful at one point and her speech and body language emphasised her feelings. Casey was becoming quite agitated – leaning forward in her chair, at one point sinking back and throwing her hands up. Her speech became rapid and staccato when talking about a time where she felt her UC had been unfairly critical of her and “taken over” with the students, placing her in a poor light.

All of these cues helped to form an understanding of the power of an incident that was being described. Understanding that power helped explain why her initial UWES questionnaire showed her as having very low motivation and engagement, even though she recounted other aspects of her employment as being satisfactory or excellent. This particular insight heightened an awareness to be mindful of any other instances during the interviews where isolated but powerful incidents might influence overall levels of motivation and engagement, either positively or negatively. The first round of journalling continued until no new questions or observations were being generated and confidence was built that the conduct of the interviews did not need further adjustment. Journalling began again at the end of the analysis process for Phase 2 and is discussed in the account of Analysis Step 10.

As indicated in Table 8.2, the analysis conducted in Steps 1 and 2 helped to refine the management of interviews so that focus could be maintained on Research Question 2 in particular and the overall research purpose. The following observations and responses indicate that that the purpose was achieved. Participants seemed comfortable and ready to talk about their experiences and opinions: the existing relationship held with sessional staff meant that little time was needed to ‘break the ice’ and conversations moved readily past introductory comments and small talk, maximising the value of the time available. In the first interviews, participants were focussing on student behaviour and relating how that impacted on their motivation and engagement. Noting that focus in the reflective journal led to an adjustment in the management of the interviews as it was feared that useable data may otherwise be limited. Transcription and journaling allowed reflection on whether all participants were being candid or whether they felt any discomfort in expressing negative opinions in a face-to-face situation, where they may not have been in the online survey questionnaire. The excerpt from Page 1 of the journal (see Appendix 8.3) illustrates awareness of the need to be alert to the possible need to provide assurances in interview that candour was welcomed:

“I was quite surprised with how readily and freely Elizabeth spoke about her experiences and she seemed quite candid and apparently not concerned about being 'careful what she said' to me. That's encouraging and I hope this continues.”

The research value would be compromised if participants were masking their true opinions or withholding negative experiences. Yin (2018, p. 133) describes this kind of risk as the risk of reflexivity, whereby the interviewee states what they believe the researcher wants to hear.

- **Analysis Step 3: Participant Checking**

Following direct transcription of the interview recordings, text transcripts were edited for readability, removing nothing that was judged to affect the richness of the narrative in representing their experience (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). In some cases, repeated words or false starts were removed, although were retained where they added emphasis or indicated difficulty with expressing a particular view or experience. The edited transcripts were then sent via email to each interviewee participant. For the two interviews conducted with two participants together, the transcript was sent to each

separately (see Appendix 8.2). In order to help contain and manage the data collection, participants were invited to only check the accuracy and meaning of the transcript, rather than add new input. Replies were received from all participants, with only one ('Jane'; Interview 1, Appendix 8.1) making a minor change to the transcript. A number of comments were made concerning aspects such as readability and their own propensity to overuse certain words or phrases. One interviewee commented that she thought there were a few minor inaccuracies but that they did not affect the meaning. Once member checking had been completed, it provided reassurance that the transcripts were all fair and accurate representations of meaning and that the participants were comfortable with all content being used as data for the research.

8.3.2 Coding and Theming (Analysis Steps 4 to 9)

Coding and theming processes comprised six main steps, being Steps 4 to 9 of the ten data analysis steps summarised in Table 8.1. These steps were the most complex part of the meaning-making processes undertaken in Phase 2 of the research and for the research as a whole. Section 6.3 of the research design chapter explained the centrality of coding in the research and Figure 6.5 provided a representation of the coding process for Phase 2 of the research. Thus, the six steps described in detail below correspond to the outline of the coding processes for Phase 2 that was presented in Figure 6.5. Table 8.3 summarises how these steps were informed by methodologists and the value of each to the research.

Table 8.3

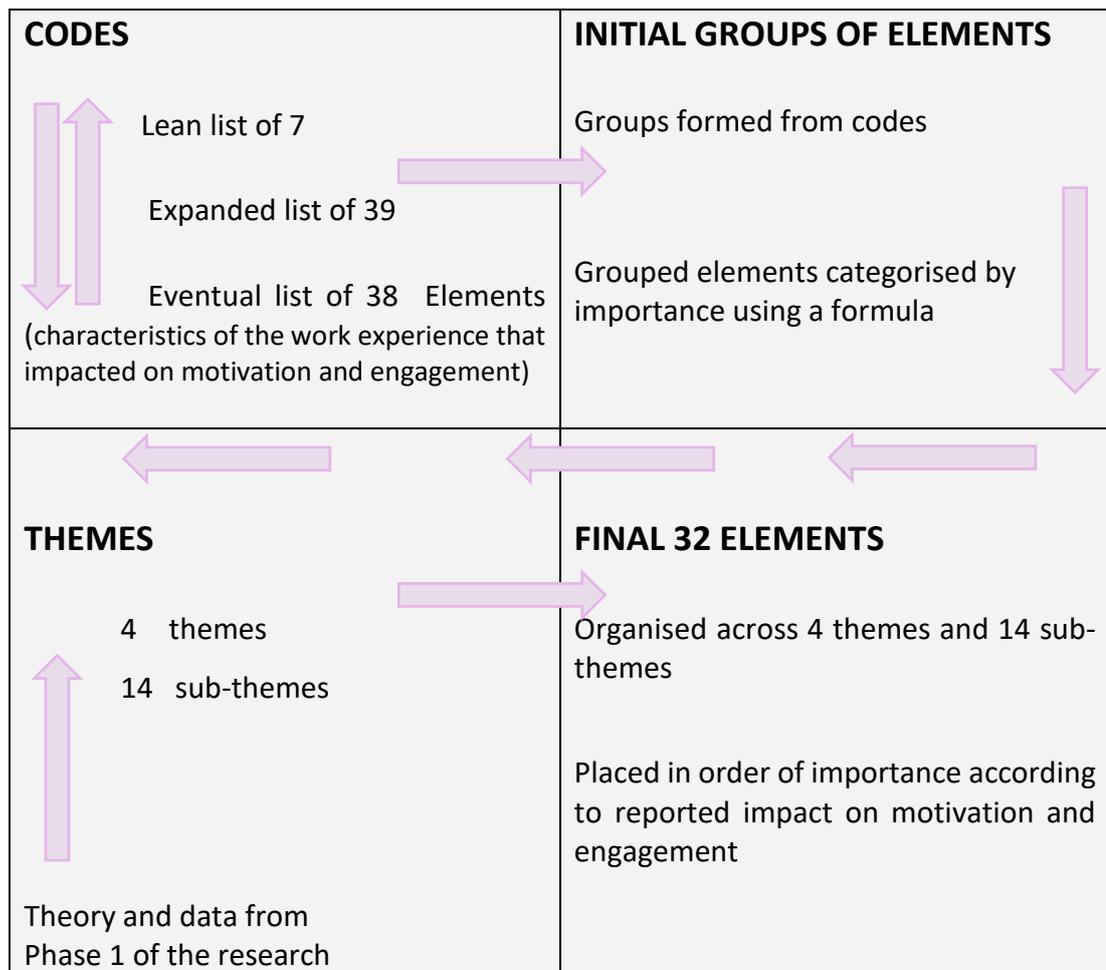
*Main Analysis Tactics Used in Analysis Steps 4 to 9 of Phase 2 of the Research:
Coding and Theming*

Analysis Step	Tactic	Purpose	Advocates	Research Value
4	Key word coding and script annotation	To assign initial meaning to responses & lead to categorising	Creswell (2018)	Enabled elements of the work experience to be identified and labelled
5	Grouping of coded elements	To explore responses within broad groups and test what 'belongs together' and identify what is prominent		Iterative process identified common language then interrogated meaning to re-organise and relabel for meaning and significance
6	Categorising elements for significance	To capture significance beyond simple numerical count of mentions Creswell (2012; 2013) Erlandson et al. (1998);		Nuances of emphasis and extended discussion as revealed in interviews were able to be incorporated
7	Identification of themes	To organise data thematically	Creswell (2012; 2018)	Built strong alignment and confidence in theme identification; ensured nothing was disregarded or mis-labelled
8	Iterative comparison of codes to themes, sub-themes and elements	To test robustness of categories To provide confidence in final Elements	Creswell (2012, 2018)	Themes further analysed to form sub-themes; allowed cross-checking within data base; provided confidence that final elements were significant and measurable
9	Application of JD-R model to elements	To provide links to the theoretical model used and other theory used to inform the research	Yin (2018)	Maintained strong links from findings to the JD-R model and prepared data for measuring using the UWES scale

To clearly represent the overall structure and outcome of the coding and theming that was undertaken in Analysis Stage 2 (Steps 4 to 9), figure 8.2 provides a schematic view of the process.

Figure 8.2

Schematic of Coding and Theming Process for Research Phase 2



- **Analysis Step 4: Key Word Coding and Script Annotation**

Coding began by identifying short pieces of text in the first four interview transcripts that seemed to be referring to a common idea, thus creating what Creswell names a “tentative list” (2013, p. 184). This was a “lean list” (p. 184) of seven codes indicating broad, readily discernible categories. The seven codes were described in detail in the journal (see Appendix 8.3; p. 4) in order to create a comprehensive picture of the meaning of each, for comparison with ensuing interviews and to provide structure for

refinements within those broad codes, if appropriate. The seven codes in the tentative list were:

1. The Unit Co-ordinator (UC)
2. Formal professional learning program (SETLD)
3. Personal/Professional Growth (PPG)
4. Professional Networks (PN)
5. Workload (WL)
6. Technologies (IT)
7. Staffing (ST)

These seven codes provided the first building block for the construction of the database for Phase 2 data (see Appendix 8.4). The structure supported further refinement and distinctions as first-round coding and analysis continued. The identification of these first tentative codes and accompanying thick description allowed some valuable insights that guided ensuing interviews. As part of building the full data set, information about participants was brought forward from Phase 1 and matched to the pseudonyms chosen for the interview. The interview medium was also noted – whether individual or group, and whether face-to-face or virtually using Face Time. Recording this information helped to create the kind of full database advocated by Yin (2018) which allows for revisiting for further analysis, although the information was not explicitly used as part of the analysis in this instance. One observation was made that eliciting responses from participants interviewed virtually did not prove difficult and there was confidence that the participants were able to communicate their views and experiences effectively. At the conclusion of coding and script annotation of all interviews, 39 codes had been generated, 38 of which represented elements of the work environment that had an impact on motivation and engagement. The 38 codes captured responses to the questions directly asked about interviewees' experience of aspects of the role of sessional academic in the online program. The final code (Code 39) was labelled participants' demeanour and coding was used to capture affective aspects of the way in which participants approached the interview. A full database of initial codes is shown in Appendix 8.4.

In increasing the original lean list of seven codes to 39 codes, some new elements were added (for example, the role of the co-ordinator of sessional staff, coded as CSS). Others expanded on and provided differentiated aspects of the initially broad code label (for example, the early technologies code expanded into elements labelled IT),

Blackboard setup, preparedness for online learning and teaching, and support and guidance. Each separate time a participant mentioned a particular element in the interview, it was recorded as an instance on the database. For example, 'Jane' in Interview 1 (see Appendix 8.1) mentioned the way that the SETLD professional learning program provided opportunities for networking and connections with colleagues in two distinct parts of the interview, and thus two mentions were recorded for that code for that interview.

The 39th code captured general demeanour and assisted reflective analysis in the journal, contributing to iterative analysis of the interview recordings. Coding was approached differently as the code did not capture content mentioned by interview participants but rather the way in which they spoke and their demeanour. Coding was as follows:

- A** halting; hesitant; in need of prompting; uncomfortable
- B** thoughtful; considered; some prompting required; careful but comfortable
- C** talkative, garrulous, extra detail, little or no prompting.
- D** talkative but off-agenda, own focus

Creswell's own approach is not to enumerate incidences of codes. While that approach contrasts with recommendations made by Miles and Huberman in their earlier works (1994), it reflects developments in the field which are more inclusive of a range of approaches that reflect less definite dichotomies and the influence of Saldana on the work of Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2020). Creswell (2012) and Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that enumerating the incidence can mask the relative significance of each mention and can cloud meaning if the same code occurred whether the speaker viewed the code subject positively or negatively. This last point is particularly relevant as it is crucial to the meaning construction in this research to know whether something is experienced by individuals as helpful or detracting from their motivation and engagement. Set against that was the need for the data from Phase 2 to provide a clear indication of the aspects of employee experience that were likely to be important, and so enumerating incidences was helpful to achieve that aim. Consideration of the above aspects led to the decision to enumerate codes and also to return later to the mentions recorded and colour-code them to show whether an element was mentioned as having either a positive (green) or negative (red) impact. The colour-coding and analysis is described in full in Step 9 where the data were analysed in view of the JD-R model.

For analysis in Step 4 it was sufficient to avoid assumptions that elements were experienced uniformly and that any element was positive or negative for everyone. Every mention needed careful coding and a number of annotations were made on the database to capture nuances.

Further, while coding was undertaken and incidence of mentions was recorded, an indication of the intensity of feeling that was being expressed for the item was also noted. A colour-coding system was used to capture whether the discussion of the item was cool or equivocal, held some emotional emphasis, or conveyed strong emotional emphasis. The colour-coding was a useful device that supported later coding steps by providing a clear visual indication of the intensity of feeling associated with various elements. The general demeanour coding (39th code) helped to ascribe appropriate emphasis coding by considering the general demeanour of each participant along with the verbal and non-verbal language used in the interview. For instance, in Interview 2, the participant 'Helen', was coded as thoughtful, considered, and in need of some prompting, and tended not to make statements emphatically or dramatically. However, her emphasis of comments made about the unit co-ordinator were judged to be of equal value to those made by participant 'Casey' in Interview 4, who was coded as generally talkative with little or no prompting needed. Casey's verbal and non-verbal language tended to be more animated. Consequently, it may have been erroneous to look only at the language used to judge emphasis value for all participants. Data from the 39th code was not taken forward for further categorising after serving the purpose described. Future analysis could examine whether there was any correlation between these affective aspects and the impact of various dimensions of their experience on their motivation and engagement. 38 codes, representing elements of the work experience impacting on motivation and engagement, were therefore taken forward to the next analysis step.

Coding to the elements as they emerged was straightforward in most cases, with the key word of the element titles mostly indicating clearly the aspect of the work experience being mentioned. The element that was the most challenging was that of unit co-ordinator. The next analysis step, Step 5, describes how the data for the unit co-ordinator element was dealt with. The record contained other organisational dimensions that helped to ensure all relevant detail was captured and recorded, whether

to assist with theme identification later or to form part of the broader database for further analysis or investigation. It was important to align participants' responses to the demographic information held from the initial questionnaire so that any correlations could be identified between responses and demographic information such as gender, current role and length of time working in the online program, and their current life/work situation. This information was not coded, but was recorded and aligned to each interview participants' coded responses for ease of viewing (see Appendix 8.4).

- **Analysis Step 5: Grouping of Elements**

The first action in Step 5 was to identify that four sub-elements emerged within the main element of unit co-ordinator. Iterative analysis of the recording of mentions of the word *unit co-ordinator* or *UC* as well as of matters associated with unit co-ordinators enabled distribution across the four sub-elements. It was clear from early in the interviews that the code of *unit co-ordinator* had a large number of mentions and so more fine-grained data was considered useful. Categorising what belonged in the element of *unit co-ordinator* and the four associated sub-elements was complex. Participants may have discussed an aspect of unit administration, or of the presence or absence of support and guidance, without explicitly mentioning the unit co-ordinator and thus not generating the code *UC* when initially coding. Re-reading transcripts and then scanning for patterns helped form the view that in many cases, when these aspects were mentioned, participants were in fact discussing the importance of the work of their unit co-ordinators. For example, in Interview 8, 'Louise' mentions:

07.30: "I think they're really going in the right direction but I'm finding that all the units I'm working in at the moment, they're not doing any of that. So I'm feeling a bit unmotivated and I'm not enjoying this year. They're not - we don't have meetings on Collaborate; It's done - like moderation and things are done via e-mail. There's no chat, there's no conversation about it like "Oh okay so why do you think it was that mark, and I didn't think it was that", and I really want to talk that through because sometimes with an e-mail you feel like with moderation it's right or wrong. Whereas if it's a chat it's better, rather than being a check, it can be a judgment process."

Initially, this was coded separately as *collaboration* but eventually, as collaboration is one aspect of the conduct and practice of the unit co-ordinator, it was labelled as the sub-element *UC collaborative* (see Appendix 8.4.2).

One challenge that emanated from organising four sub-elements within the element of *unit co-ordinator*, was to ensure that other instances or applications of such elements as *collaboration, guidance and support*, that were not associated with a unit co-ordinator, were still captured. For instance, the element *innovation and input* captured participants' broader views about the presence or absence of opportunities to contribute ideas or innovate practice. This element captured the extent to which participants considered whether the School of Education had mechanisms for them to innovate and contribute, that that they were comfortable to do so and that their contributions were valued. Likewise, the elements *support and guidance, autonomy* and *respect*, capture views about experiences beyond the conduct of the unit co-ordinator.

The next action for Analysis Step 5 was to group the three initial codes of *School of Education teaching and learning development (SETLD) formal PL; SETLD networking; and SETLD general information*, as sub-elements of the element labelled *SETLD*. The purpose of this grouping arose from mindfulness that the research purpose was to reveal important structures and processes that might impact on motivation and engagement and so this grouping reflected the common structure of the SETLD program. Participants tended to discuss their total experiences of SETLD together, beginning with SETLD as a broad topic and then describing the various aspects of SETLD that they held to be important. Therefore, it was decided that *SETLD* should be an element with the three aspects as sub-elements. The value of organising *SETLD* in this way was that it emphasised the critical importance of the provision of SETLD as an organisational structure that impacts on the motivation and engagement of the sessional academic staff. The research purpose was therefore better served by structuring the element in the way described. The database (see Appendix 8.4.2) shows that *SETLD*, when taken holistically, is a major element along with that of *unit co-ordinator*.

The third action for Step 5 was to reconfigure the two elements *IT* and *BB* set-up as an element labelled *learning technologies*, and two sub-elements of *learning technologies* were then labelled as *LMS* and *IT support*. Participant responses from the two original codes were reviewed and redistributed into the two new sub-elements. This resulted in a more meaningful representation of the views expressed. Reviewing responses

readily revealed that both these elements concerned two aspects of the learning technologies environment: the platforms and tools provided for the learning and teaching and the support provided to academic staff to assist them in problem-solving in that environment.

The fourth action for Step 5 was to amalgamate the two original codes *workload* and *marking* into an element labelled *workload/pay balance*. Reviewing the transcripts revealed that when mentioning workload and marking, each participant was discussing their views about whether their workload was reasonable for the remuneration received.

Some difficulty was experienced in determining how the element *unit team meetings* should be organised. The decision to leave it as a separate element arose from considering that unit team meetings are mandated by the School of Education, with a template provided that needs to be completed and submitted as a record. Although it is the unit co-ordinator who schedules and conducts the unit team meeting, it is an organisational mechanism mandated by the school and required of all UCs. It was more important to identify the unit team meeting as part of school structures and processes rather than an aspect of the UC's practice, again being mindful of the research purpose and its focus on structures and processes.

While it initially seemed likely that other elements might be organised further to create more sub-elements, careful analysis resulted in no more such categorisation. The analysis started to move into thematic organisation rather than the simpler arrangement of elements as coded and so no further groupings were made. Review of the 38 coded elements and the interview transcripts thus led to grouping into 32 elements, with three of those elements containing sub-elements.

The final component of Analysis Step 5 was to re-label some of the elements and to re-number them 1 to 32. Relabelling was undertaken for two purposes: firstly, to achieve consistency in expressing all elements in terms of the presence rather than absence of a characteristic. For example, the element labelled *pedagogical mismatch* from Analysis Step 4 was relabelled as *pedagogical alignment*. Participants' responses were still able to be expressed as either positive or negative. Secondly, relabelling was undertaken to improve clarity of meaning; the element *support and guidance* became

general support and guidance to distinguish it from association with the role of the UC, and the element *changes over time* became *commitment to improvement* because iterative analysis revealed that it was the culture of continuous improvement that participants valued. Renumbering occurred as a consequence of the grouping.

At the conclusion of Analysis Step 5, 32 elements remained, with nine sub-elements across three of the elements. Table 8.4 displays the labelling, numbering and organisation of elements and sub-elements in Analysis Steps 4 and 5. Full records are in the entire database (see Appendices 8.4.1 and 8.4.2).

Table 8.4

Labelling, Numbering and Organisation of Elements and Sub-elements for Analysis Steps 4 and 5.

Analysis Step 4		Analysis Step 5		
No.	Elements	No.	Elements	Sub-elements
1	Unit Co-ordinator	1	Unit Co-ordinator	UC management
2	IT			UC supportive
3	Personal Professional Growth			UC collaborative
4	Co-ordinator of sessional staff			UC content expertise
5	Staffing processes	2	SETLD	SETLD formal PL
6	SETLD Networking and Connections			SETLD networking
7	Innovation and Input			SETLD general information
8	Flexibility	3	Learning Technologies	LMS environment
9	SETLD PL			IT support
10	Contribution to profession	4	Contribution to profession	
11	Team Meetings	5	Staffing processes	
12	SETLD general information	6	Informal networking	
13	Philosophy	7	Opportunities for innovation and input	
14	Sch.of Educ. Resources	8	Tutor reflection framework	
15	Univ. communications	9	Co-ordinator of sessional staff	
16	University mission	10	Sch. of Educ. communications	
17	Blackboard set-up	11	Workload/pay balance	
18	Workload	12	Challenge	
19	Awards	13	Unit expertise	
21	Pay processes	14	Sch. of Education mission	
21	Challenge	15	Commitment to improvement	
22	Support and guidance	16	Pay processes	
23	Breaks	17	Staff Lounge	
24	Sch. of Educ. mission	18	General support and guidance	
25	Unit team continuity	19	Breaks	
26	Expertise in unit	20	Awards	
27	Marking	21	Autonomy	
28	Changes over time	22	Team meetings	
29	Readiness for online teaching	23	Pedagogical alignment	
30	Staff lounge	24	Personal professional growth	
31	Pedagogical mis-match	25	Team continuity	
32	Respect	26	Flexibility	
33	Autonomy	27	Prepared for online teaching	
34	Tutor reflection framework	28	University mission	
35	Sch.of Educ.communications	29	University communications	
36	Informal networking	30	Sch. of Education resources	
37	Board of Examiners	31	Respect	
38	Unique topic	32	Philosophy	

- **Analysis Step 6: Categorising Grouped Elements by Importance: Major, Other Main, Minor, and Very Minor**

The next coding purpose was to determine whether all the elements of the work experience identified and grouped were to be considered important and taken forward, and what their relative importance might be. To enable those decisions, the importance of each element was measured through coding two key aspects: frequency and emphasis (intensity). Frequency data was gained through recording both the total number of times each element was mentioned across all the interviews, and the number of interview participants who mentioned it. Intensity data for each element was derived by firstly revisiting the transcripts and annotations and coding each mention of the element either blue (cool/equivocal), mauve (some emotional emphasis) or purple (strong emotional emphasis). The full database showing the frequency of each mention and its emphasis colour-coding is contained in Appendix 8.4.3. To generate a measurable intensity score for the data, mentions coded blue were given a value of 1, those coded mauve a value of 2, and those coded purple a value of 3. Each mention was then multiplied by either 1, 2 or 3.

An importance score for each element was thus derived by applying an arithmetic formula to each element as follows:

$$\text{No. of mentions} + \text{no. of times mentioned} + \text{intensity score.}$$

Importance was therefore determined from knowing how many people mentioned an element, how many times they mentioned it, and how emphatically they expressed their views on it. Assigning importance scores using the formula described enabled sorting and categorising and informed decisions about what should remain as a finding from the data, as well as seeing whether the most important elements indicated through the interviews remained as the most impactful on motivation and engagement. The scores were used to organise the 32 elements into five initial categories: major elements, other main elements, minor elements, very minor elements, and leftover/unsure.

Sub-elements were also scored and then totalled for an overall element score. Table 8.5 provides an example of the calculation process for the element *contribution to the profession*. The entire database of importance scoring is in Appendix 8.4.3.

Table 8.5

Example Calculation of Importance Score for Element 4: Contribution to the Profession

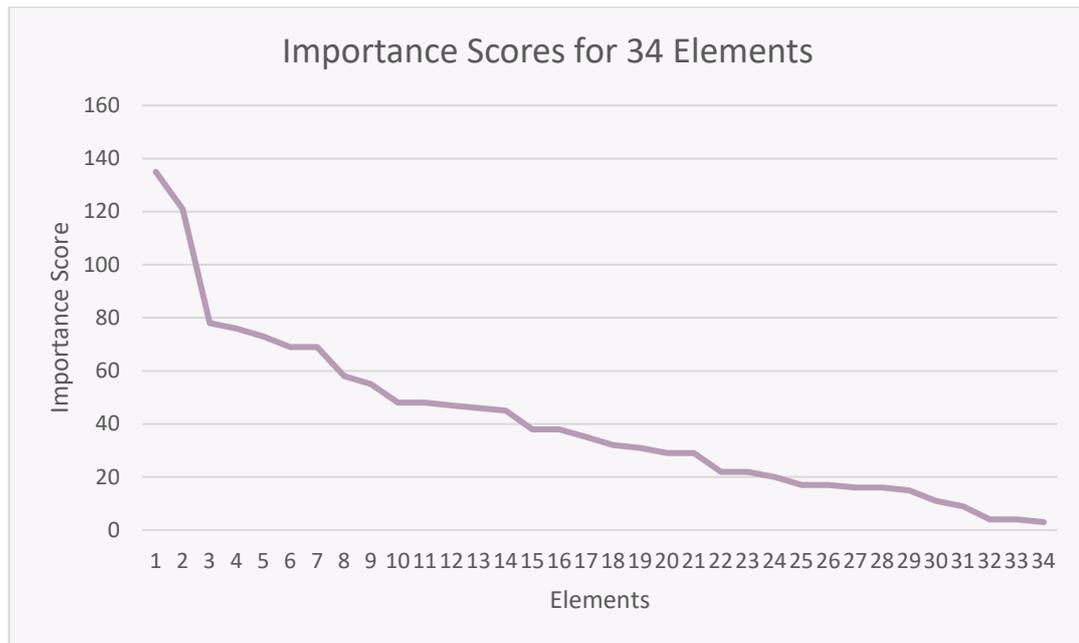
Element 4: Contribution to the Profession	
No. of mentions	20
No. of respondents	11
Intensity Score (1 x 1 + 13 x 2 + 6 x 3)	45
1 + 26 + 18 =	45
Total Importance Score	76

The scores for each element were then tabulated and placed in rank order. Tabulating the data enabled a graph to be generated that provided a visual representation which aided the element categorising. Creswell (2003, p. 192) suggests that it can be useful to designate a place to ‘park’ data that does not seem to fit or be significant, but which the researcher may find a need to return to later. Likewise, Creswell and Creswell (2018), pp.172-3) explain that often, codes will initially be seen as either expected, surprising, or of unusual or conceptual interest. Therefore, it was important not to discount or discard less frequent codes immediately. To account for these considerations, a category labelled *leftover/unsure* was created. Although Analysis Step 5 resulted in 32 elements being taken forward, it was decided to include the two original elements *board of examiners* and *unique topic* that did not go forward into the groups generated in Step 5 and thus tabulate and graph 34 elements. Those two, as well as the element *philosophy*, had initially been coded into the *leftover/unsure* category. The iterative comparisons and checks afforded through tabulating and graphing the data and returning to the transcripts enabled the two original elements to be confidently discarded as unimportant. The element *philosophy* was retained as a very minor element thus resulting in 32 elements as described in the previous step. It

was still not entirely clear whether the element of *philosophy* might be subsumed into an existing element later once deeper themes emerged. Figure 8.3 provides a graphical representation of the tabulated importance scores ranking of the 34 elements.

Figure 8.3

Graphic Representation of Importance Scores for 34 Elements



The graphing helped to reveal where the category divisions could sensibly be made. The eventual decision was to categorise as major the two elements which returned scores above 80, seven as other main elements that scored between 50 and 80, then 12 minor elements scoring between 25 and 50, and 11 labelled as very minor elements, scoring between 5 and 22. The graphical representation helped to confirm the decision to discard the remaining two leftover/unsure possible elements scoring less than 5. Table 8.6 shows the categorisation of the final 32 elements, organised into four importance categories of major, other main, minor and very minor.

Table 8.6*Categorising of 32 Elements into Importance Groupings*

CATEGORY	NO.	ELEMENT
1: MAJOR ELEMENTS	1	Unit Co-ordinator
	2	SETLD
2: OTHER MAIN ELEMENTS	3	Learning Technologies
	4	Contribution to Profession
	5	Staffing processes
	6	Informal networking
	7	Opportunities for innovation/input
	8	Tutor reflection framework and process
	9	Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff (position)
3: MINOR ELEMENTS	10	School of Education communications
	11	Workload/pay balance
	12	Challenge
	13	Expertise in unit
	14	School of Education mission
	15	Commitment to Improvement
	16	Pay process
	17	Staff lounge
	18	Support & guidance
	19	Breaks
	20	Awards
4: VERY MINOR ELEMENTS	21	Autonomy
	22	Team meetings
	23	Pedagogical alignment
	24	Personal Professional Growth
	25	Unit team continuity
	26	Flexibility
	27	Preparedness for online learning & teaching
	28	University's mission
	29	University communications
	30	School of Education resources
	31	Respect
	32	Philosophy

Note: Major = scores above 80; Main = scores 50-80; Minor = scores 25-50; Very Minor = scores below 25.

Each of the processes described in Analysis Step 6 ensured that everything salient was taken into account and that decisions were informed by more than one representation of the data. Analysis was then able to move confidently towards generation of themes emerging from the categories. Having the numeric and visual data also provided a valuable accountability trail through which themes could be mapped back to help with checking codes against themes and vice versa, and helping the themes themselves to be organised in terms of their relative significance. The account of the next step contains an explanation of how themes were conceptualised and organised.

- **Analysis Step 7: Sorting of Elements into Four Themes**

In approaching the first round of theming, the original 38 elements from Analysis Step 4 (see Table 8.4) were considered. This was to ensure that the previous step of organising into 32 elements and sub-elements had not resulted in excluding any items that might be important thematically. The process of identifying and rationalising emergent themes continued to follow guidance given by Creswell (2012, 2018). Identifying some initial themes enabled responses to be explored within broad groups and tested to determine what belonged together thematically. A return was made to the categorising method and to the data captured about frequency, spread and intensity of elements mentioned, as well as to some extent the demeanour of the participant, using the data captured early on and coded as the 39th code (see Appendix 8.4.1). Those actions helped to determine the themes and eventually, their relative importance.

The first theme that was identified and tested was initially named *contracts*, later refined to *conditions of employment*. This was chosen as the first theme to test because it seemed straightforward, concerned with the ‘nuts and bolts’ of aspects such as pay, contracts, obligations and accommodations provided in the work. Having decided on the theme label, five elements were organised within this theme. The elements were *workload/pay balance*, *pay processes*, *breaks*, *staffing processes* and *flexibility*. The interview transcripts were scanned to check for any further mentions of the relevant key words any other words that carried the same meanings and to ensure that when these words were mentioned, the participant was referring to the conditions of their own employment. These checks did not reveal any need for adjustment to the coding, elements, or instances of mention by participants.

However, it became evident that some elements categorised as sub-elements within the three major elements needed to be ascribed to different themes. For example, the major element of *unit co-ordinator* contained four sub-elements: *administration and management*, *unit content expertise*, *support*, and *collaboration*. Reviewing transcripts showed that participants were discussing the professional leadership and expertise of their UC in the first two elements, which were thus organised thematically under the broad theme labelled *leadership and support*, while the element labelled *support* spoke more of personal support, such as the willingness of the UC to accommodate personal circumstances, show empathy and offer help. The element of *support* was therefore organised thematically within the broad theme of *collegiate and social connections*. Finally, *collaboration* was organised within the broad theme of *professional contribution and growth*, as participants who mentioned this were concerned with the extent to which their UC included them in professional conversations and invited or welcomed their suggestions and input.

Four themes emerged through revisiting the transcripts and journaling to explore ideas about what common, higher-level concerns were being discussed. As ideas started to form about how elements could be conceptualised thematically, returns were made to the literature about motivation and engagement to see whether what was emerging aligned with what could be expected from existing knowledge and research. For example, when re-visiting transcripts and recordings and considering what respondents were saying about the *tutor awards* (Element 18, rated 20/32 in importance and categorised as a minor element), it was noted in the reflective journal (see Appendix 8.3, p. 6) that:

“when people mention the awards, they say that is a good thing that the school has this way of recognising the work that the sessional tutors do. Feelings about the way they are managed differ quite widely, but negative feelings are not for the awards themselves but whether they think they are made appropriately – to the right people. They see them as important because of the recognition they represent, and so they are very positive about them if they have been recognised themselves in this way, and negative if they have not – the negativity seems to arise from a lack of that recognition, or that someone else has been given it who did not deserve it. So – recognition seems to be the underlying factor. The importance of professional recognition has been mentioned before in staff surveys and is noted in the literature.”

As well as capturing reflections on the transcripts, the journal was useful in helping to discern the themes through reflections on the literature, as well as through some diagramming. It was noted in Section 3.4 of Chapter 3 that university-level surveys of casual academic staff had identified professional recognition as a factor which influenced job satisfaction as a casual academic employee. The importance of personal professional recognition is also noted by Deci and Ryan in their self-determination theory (1985) and plays a part in the continuance component, in particular, of Meyer and Allen's three-component model of motivation (1991). A key word of *recognition* was thus noted and contributed to a list of thematic key words that was kept in the journal as review of the transcripts and literature continued (see Appendix 8.3; Pages 5 and 6).

The next step towards settling on the four themes was to consider how the thematic key words could be combined, linked or grouped. The journal was used to create a mind map (see Appendix 8.3; Page 8) and to arrive at four broad themes that each contained one or more of the key words from the list. To further assist in the process of testing for belonging, a statement was created that attempted to define the meaning of each theme in the context of the case study group. The definitions express the themes in ways that can be considered in terms of their potential impact on motivation and engagement, in order to provide strong connection back to the motivation and engagement theory, and to point to how the elements might be measured in terms of their impact.

The themes and definitions are as follows:

1. *Leadership and support*, defined as "The extent to which I am provided with what I need to do my work";
2. *Professional contribution and growth*, defined as "The extent to which my work is recognised, satisfies me and enables me to grow professionally;
3. *Collegiate and social connections*, defined as "The extent to which I feel part of a professional community that also sees me as a person"; and
4. *Conditions of employment*, defined as "The extent to which I find the conditions of my work fair and satisfactory".

The four themes link to the ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that are part of Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory (1985), with the first and fourth themes being dependent more on external actions and extrinsic motivators and the second and third being more concerned with internal processes and intrinsic motivators. Further, the concerns encapsulated in the four themes can be seen to echo findings of Stone (2017), reported in Sub-section 7.2.1 of Chapter 7. It was noted in the selective review of Australian practice and summarised in Table 7.1 that it would be likely that the surveyed participants would identify the need for professional learning that was relevant to their work; that their expertise was appropriately recognised and rewarded, that they were consulted on matters that were important to them and that they felt they were adequately and fairly remunerated for their work.

A check of the four themes and their definitions against the list of expected spheres of concern identified in Chapter 7, shows a high degree of alignment and added to confidence that the broad themes labelled and defined for the case study group were consistent with what theory and known practice predict as being important. The original 38 coded elements identified in Analysis Step 4 were once again revisited to ensure that the grouping and sub-grouping undertaken in Analysis Step 5 had not excluded nor hidden anything important thematically. The four themes were then used as organisers for the original 38 codes, thus providing an iterative process that encapsulated the previous analysis steps. Table 8.7 shows the initial organisation of elements into the four themes that was undertaken in Analysis Step 7. The complete record of the organisation of the original 38 codes into the four themes is contained in the full database (see Appendix 8.4.4).

Table 8.7

Initial Organisation into Four Themes: 38 Original Coded Elements

Theme	No. of elements in theme
Leadership and Support	14
Professional Contribution and Growth	14
Community: Collegiate and Social Connections	6
Conditions of Employment	4

The next theming action for Analysis Step 7 entailed deciding that the 32 eventual elements as determined through Analysis Steps 5 and 6 were correct and there was nothing important that had been lost thematically when re-organising the elements and reducing them to 32. The approach to grouping and the formation of sub-elements had ensured that everything salient had been captured; however, the check back directly from themes to original codes provided a useful test of robustness. A further tactic employed to ensure the robustness of the theming was to undertake member checking (refer to Table 6.2). The thesis supervisors met with the researcher and questioned and sought clarification of the processes described above and sought explanation of the links to key literature that supported the thematic findings. Member checking included scrutiny of the full database and coding processes.

Mapping of the final 32 elements to the four newly-formed themes thus proceeded and all 32 eventual elements and sub-elements were able to be confidently aligned to the four themes. As part of the alignment of the 32 elements to the four themes the data that captured the importance factor scores as explained in Analysis Step 6 and the categorisation (e.g. major, other main) were included in the data display in the entire database (see Appendix 8.4.4). That inclusion enabled the relative importance of the four themes to be discerned, and for them to be ordered in terms of importance and not just according to the number of elements in the theme. Table 8.8 shows the final organisation into the ordered themes for the 32 elements and sub-elements. Both major elements of *unit co-ordinator* and one of the sub-elements of the element *SETLD* were themed into *leadership and support*, a key contributing factor to *leadership and support* being ordered as the first theme.

Table 8.8

Eventual Organisation and Ordering of Themes – 32 Final Elements and Sub-elements

Order	Total Importance Scores	Theme	No. of Elements/Sub-elements in theme
1	588	Leadership and Support	12
2	461	Professional Contribution and Growth	12
3	207	Collegiate and Social Connections	5
4	110	Conditions of Employment	3

The individual importance scores that were used for each element and sub-element were used to map each to the categories of major, other main, minor and very minor. Table 8.9 shows how each element and sub-element was categorised within the thematic organisation.

Table 8.9

Elements and Sub-elements Categorised in Four Ordered Themes

Theme	Categorisation of Elements/sub-elements			
	Major	Other Main	Minor	Very Minor
Leadership and Support	2 Unit Co-ordinator SETLD	2 Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff Learning Technologies	3 Support and Guidance Commitment to Improvement Sch. Of Educ. Communications	5 Unit Team Continuity Preparedness for Online L&T Sch. Of Educ. Resources Team Meetings University Communications
Professional Contribution and Growth	0	3 Innovation and Input Contribution to the Profession Tutor Reflection Framework	5 Expertise in Unit Challenge Awards Autonomy Sch. Of Educ. Mission	4 Philosophy Personal Professional Growth Pedagogical Alignment University Mission
Conditions of Employment	0	0	3 Pay Processes Breaks Workload/Pay Balance	2 Staffing Processes Flexibility
Collegiate and Social Connections	0	1 Informal Networking	1 Staff Lounge	1 Respect

Note: Categorisations for Major, Other Main, Minor and Very Minor are as shown in the note under Table 8.6.

The ordering of the themes as shown and the mapping of the final 32 elements and sub-elements to the four broad themes concluded Analysis Step 7.

- **Analysis Step 8: Identification of Sub-Themes**

The second round of theming entailed revisiting codes and elements and undertaking an iterative process to apply themes to coded elements and the elements to the themes. The main purpose of the theming was not to generate themes that would then be directly used to organise and undertake the measurements of motivation and engagement in their terms, but as a thematic organiser for the measurable elements and to provide clear links to known theory and practice. For this reason, the categorisation of the elements into major, other main, minor and very minor had served its purpose by the end of Step 7. The categorisation helped to ensure that the characteristics of the work environment that seemed to be important to the motivation and engagement of casual academic staff were being considered for later measurement. Organising the themes by importance helped to identify their complexity and their components. The theming also ensured that strong links were being maintained to known theories and knowledge about motivation and engagement, as all elements emerging should have some discernible alignment to that theory and knowledge. It has been noted that one of the fundamental characteristics of the JD-R model is that it can be applied to diverse contexts. It would therefore be expected that the specific elements identified in this case study will be different from those found in other cases and contexts. However, it would not be expected that the overall themes to which the elements can be aligned should vary significantly from the factors known to be important generally to motivation and engagement. That alignment has been demonstrated in the discussion of Analysis Step 7. The iterative process of analysing the themes and coded elements further had two results.

Firstly, checks were made to ensure the fit of each element in the themes. Adjustments and refinements were made that resulted in sub-themes being identified for each theme and re-alignment of some sub-elements across different themes. For example, the three sub-elements in the major element of *SETLD* were distributed across the themes *leadership and support*, *professional contribution and growth*, and *collegiate and social connections*. While it was still important to maintain the link to *SETLD* as a structure and as a major element, it was also necessary to know thematically what each

aspect of the *SETLD* structure contributed in terms of how it might impact on motivation and engagement.

The sub-themes were generated through considering how the elements could be grouped to represent a component of practice sited within each theme. For instance, within the theme of *leadership and support*, four components or expressions were identified of how this leadership and support could be provided and experienced. Three of these were readily identified as being: through the unit co-ordinator, through the structures and processes of the school and university, and through the online learning and teaching environment. A fourth component was identified as belonging with this theme but not with the other components. This fourth component was the element *commitment to improvement*, labelled as such from returning to the coding of participants' comments about the way it was evident to tutors who had worked in the online program for some years noticed and felt positive impact from the way structures and processes had changed for the better over time. These were originally coded in the transcripts as *improvements over time*. It was important to capture this commitment to improvement as an element of practice or culture that sits across specific manifestations of leadership and support.

Further, the element *School of Education communications* had been categorised as belonging to the *leadership and support* theme because participants spoke mostly of the way emails and other communications from the School of Education helped them to stay informed about such things as policy changes, software availabilities, key staff changes and so on. However, one item coded as *newsletter* or *online connections* (the newsletter title), that had been included in the element labelled *School of Education communications*, did not, on revision, fit in this theme. When discussing the value of this particular communication, it was evident that participants saw the newsletter as a mechanism that built community and which allowed them to make personal as well as professional connections with fellow online tutors. They appreciated that the *online connections* newsletter was something provided 'just for them' to address their particular needs for connection. Therefore, codes that related to the newsletter were removed from the *School Of Education communications* topic and a new topic labelled *online connections newsletter* was entered within the theme *collegiate and social connections*. The process described for the first part of Analysis Step 8 resulted in 14

sub-themes being identified (see Appendix 8.4.5), distributed amongst the four main themes as shown in Table 8.10.

Table 8.10

Identification and Organisation of Sub-themes and Elements within Themes

Theme		Sub-Themes	No. of Elements in Sub-Theme	
			Totals	
1	Leadership and Support	The Unit Co-Ordinator (UC)	2	
		The Online Learning Environment	2	
		School of Education Structures	7	
		Commitment to Improvement	1	12
2	Professional Contribution & Growth	Personal Professional Competence & Growth	5	
		Contribution to the Profession	3	
		Professional Recognition	1	9
3	Conditions of Employment	Work/Pay Balance	1	
		Pay Processes	1	
		Staffing Processes	1	
		Breaks	1	
		Flexibility	1	5
4	Collegiate & Social Connections	School of Education Structures	3	
		Ways of Working	3	6
		Totals	32	

Having established that all elements belonged in a theme or sub-theme and all themes could be aligned to theoretical foundations, the next part of Step 8 was to refine the element labels. Labels were refined to better represent the meaning of elements. This refinement was undertaken by reviewing the labels to attempt to settle on labels that were clear and specific and which described aspects of the employee experience that could be measured in terms of their presence or absence and the resultant impact on motivation and engagement. Tables 8.11 to 8.14 show each of the four themes in turn, together with their sub-themes and the elements belonging to them. Relevant comments are made for each.

Table 8.11*Elements organised by Theme and Sub-Themes: Theme 1: Leadership and Support*

Sub-Themes for the Theme 1: Leadership and Support				
	The UC	The Online Learning Environment	School of Education Structures	Commitment to Improvement
Elements mapped to Sub-themes	UC Management and Administration	The LMS learning platforms	General School & University Communications	Commitment to Improvement
	UC's unit content knowledge	Support and Troubleshooting	CSS General info at SETLD Team Meetings General support & guidance as needed Unit Team Continuity Online L&T resources for tutors	
No. of Elements per Sub-theme	2	2	7	1

Theme 1, *leadership and support*, was the most important theme and contains four sub-themes and a total of 12 elements. The first sub-theme, *the unit co-ordinator*, captures the elements of practice of the UC as a leader in firstly, providing competent management and administration of their unit and secondly, demonstrating that they possessed sufficient expertise in the content and pedagogies of the unit they were co-ordinating. These two elements maintained the two original element names of *UC management and administration* and *UC unit content knowledge*. The second sub-theme, *the online learning environment*, concerns the way the School of Education

provides leadership and support in firstly, providing a learning management system that is appropriate for online learning and teaching, and secondly, providing the support for those using the systems to be able to use them well. The two elements in this sub-theme were derived from the original elements *LMS* and *IT support*. The sub-theme *School of Education structures and processes* refers to specific and visible practices that the school has in place to lead and support the sessional academic staff working in the fully online programs.

Table 8.12

Elements organised by Theme and Sub-Themes: Theme 2: Professional Contribution and Growth

Sub-Themes for the Theme 2: Professional Contribution and Growth			
	Personal Professional Competence and Growth	Contribution to the Profession	Professional Recognition
Elements mapped to Sub-themes	Being placed in a unit that matches expertise	Sharing School & University Mission	Tutor Awards
	SETLD PL modules	Opportunities for collaboration and input	
	Opportunities to challenge self	Alignment to philosophy and pedagogy in units	
	Working with autonomy Tutor Reflection Framework and feedback		
No. of Elements per Sub-theme	5	3	1

Theme 2, *professional contribution and growth*, contains three sub-themes and a total of nine elements. The first sub-theme, *personal professional competence and growth*, contains five elements drawn from the original elements of: *expertise in unit*, *SETLD*, *challenge*, *autonomy*, and *tutor reflection framework*. The original topic of *expertise in unit* was refined to express more clearly that what was important is that sessional

staff feel competent and can make a strong professional contribution when they are offered work in a unit in which they judge themselves to have sufficient expertise. The sub-element *SETLD PL* was refined to be explicit that it was the professional learning modules that are provided as part of the SETLD program which contributed to the professional growth of the sessional academic staff. The original element *challenge* was refined to the element *opportunities to challenge self*, reflecting the ways that participants spoke about challenge positively as a motivator, rather than as a difficulty or obstacle. The original element *tutor reflection framework* was refined to the element *tutor reflection framework and feedback* to encompass the important component of the feedback received from unit co-ordinators if tutors submitted their reflections to them. The original element labelled *the UC collaborative* was refined to the element *opportunities to work collaboratively*. While much of this opportunity was linked to the unit co-ordinator, revisiting mentions of collaboration in the transcripts revealed that respondents also spoke more generally about such opportunities that were provided or not by the School of Education. The element *pedagogical alignment* was refined to be specific about the importance of sessional academic staff feeling that their teaching philosophies and pedagogical approach were aligned to particular units in which they were teaching, rather than to the program more generally. The final sub-theme, *professional recognition*, contains just one element, unchanged from the original element of *tutor awards*.

Table 8.13

Elements organised by Theme and Sub-Themes: Theme 3: Conditions of Employment

Sub-Themes for the Theme 3: Conditions of Employment					
	Work/Pay Balance	Pay Processes	Staffing processes	Breaks	Flexibility
Elements mapped to Sub-themes	Work/Pay Balance	Pay processes	Staffing processes	Ability to take breaks between study periods	Flexibility of working hours and location
No. of Elements per Sub-theme	1	1	1	1	1

The five sub-themes that comprise Theme 3 were taken directly from the five similarly-named elements and each sub-theme contained just one element. The element descriptions provide further specificity for the sub-theme labels: for instance, the sub-theme *flexibility* was expanded to explain that it was important to sessional staff working fully online that they were able to manage their work hours to suit their circumstances and preferences, and to be able to work from a range of locations.

Table 8.14

Elements organised by Theme and Sub-Themes: Theme 4: Collegiate and Social Connections

Sub-Themes for the Theme 4: Collegiate and Social Connections		
	School of Education Structures	Ways of Working
Elements mapped to Sub-themes	Networking at SETLD	Respectful communications from all staff
	Online Staff Lounge in the LMS	Personal support from the UC when needed
	Online Connections Newsletter	Informal or social networking opportunities
No. of Elements per Sub-theme	3	3

Each of the two sub-themes comprising Theme 4 contains three elements. The first sub-theme, *School of Education structures*, has the same label as a sub-theme of Theme 1: *leadership and support*. However, in Theme 4, it is structures that build collegiate and social connections that are captured. The first element, named *SETLD networking*, is thus where the final of the original sub-elements from the major element *SETLD* is placed. The element *staff lounge* has been specified further to the element *online staff lounge in the LMS*, as it refers specifically to the interactive space provided as part of the preparation of each unit's Blackboard site. The final element for this sub-theme is labelled *online connections newsletter*. Originally, there was a code for this item which was first subsumed into the element *School of Education communications*. However, as explained in the discussion of Theme 1, the second round of theming and cross-checking determined that the newsletter should be mentioned specifically as a

key communication that might have impact on motivation and engagement, unlike other general communications that were joined with the element in Theme 1 labelled *School and university communications*. Those communications referred more to leadership and support aspects because participants mentioned such things as clear directions, useful information and policy advice. The second sub-theme was labelled *ways of working* and captured attempts to incorporate the aspects of organisational culture that were mentioned by participants as impactful. Although some such practices have been included in other themes, they were the practices that impacted on the extent to which the sessional staff felt that they were seen as individuals, worthy of respect, given personal support in times of need and had opportunities to mix informally and socially with their colleagues in the School of Education.

At the completion of Step 8 of the data analysis, the 32 elements had been organised into four themes and 14 sub-themes. Most of the elements bore the same or very similar labels as the original coded elements from which they derived. Theming and sub-theming had rearranged the elements from the original groupings as shown in Step 6 but no elements had been discarded as unimportant. Some minor changes and redistribution of sub-elements occurred to align to the themes and sub-themes. Despite the re-arrangement and the discontinuation of the categories of major, other main, minor and very minor elements, the links between what were the major and other main topics could be seen in the ordering of the themes.

- **Analysis Step 9: Application of the JD-R model**

In order to determine possible impact on motivation and engagement of the elements listed in the terms of the JD-R model, one further data point was needed. That was to ascertain whether the elements of the experience of the sessional academic staff interviewed were being experienced as either job demands or job resources. It should be predicted that in accordance with JD-R theory and the model, experience of the elements would not be uniform as one or the other across all respondents. To gain this data for Analysis Step 9 a return was made to the record of the responses in accordance with the 32 coded elements. Although these elements had since been re-organised into the themes and sub-themes discussed in Steps 7 and 8, the original capture of the mention of the item was returned to as it provided a more convenient structure. There was no risk of compromising the data or findings as all elements had been clearly

subsumed within the thematic structure, as discussed in the account of Steps 7 and 8. The purpose for Analysis Step 9 was only to see the extent to which each element was experienced as either a job demand or resource.

The original coding of participants' responses as either positive or negative enabled a review for Step 9 that identified whether a factor was experienced as a resource or a demand. In keeping with the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), no assumptions were made about whether a particular element was experienced uniformly as one or the other. For example, the element of *unit team continuity*, organised within the sub-theme of *School of Education structures and processes* and the main theme of *leadership and support*, was experienced by most but not all respondents as a resource. These participants spoke of the reduction in stress and the reduced cognitive load associated with being placed in the same unit over successive teaching periods and with the same colleagues with whom they had established work patterns. They expressed that this enabled them to be ready to teach and focussed on supporting students and felt motivated and engaged in the unit content. On the other hand, one respondent noted that she sometimes found it de-motivating to be placed in the same unit and team when she was ready for a change. Another found it to be problematic to retain such continuity if there was a difficult colleague in the team.

The variability of experience meant that the analysis could not categorise the themes into demands and resources, because it was very rare to find that an element was unanimously experienced as either positive or negative. However, the capturing of whether an element was experienced as one or the other by individuals was critical to being able to interpret responses and draw meaning and conclusions from them. Therefore, to enable analysis in terms of resources and demands, the structure of the 32 elements mapped to sub-themes and themes was retained and all responses to the elements within them were coded further as green (a positive impact on motivation and engagement) and thus a job resource, or coded red, (a negative impact) and thus a job demand. The full record of this further coding is in the database for Research Phase 2 (see Appendix 8.4.6). Table 8.15 shows the numbers of themes, sub-themes and elements that were reported as either a job resource or job demand only. Table 8.15 shows that there were no complete themes that were experienced positively, or as a job resource, or negatively, as a job demand, by all participants. Every theme had sub-

themes which had no elements reported as unanimously a resource or a demand. However, when the themes are analysed by the sub-themes, it can be seen that there are two sub-themes that are experienced uniformly, both as a resource. These are Sub-theme 4 of Theme 1 *leadership and support*, which is *commitment to improvement*, and Sub-theme 5 of Theme 3 conditions of employment, which is *flexibility*. Further analysis at the level of individual elements reveals that the reason the two sub-themes were reported as being uniformly experienced as a job resource is because each of them contains only one element, which was being experienced uniformly (refer to Tables 8.11 and 8.13 for mapping of elements and sub-themes to the two themes). Continuing with analysis at the level of the elements, Table 8.15 shows that two elements from Sub-theme 3 of Theme 1 were experienced as a job resource only and one element from Sub-theme 1 of Theme 4 was experienced as a job resource only.

Thus, of the 32 elements, only five were experienced uniformly, and those five were experienced only as a job resource. None was experienced uniformly as only a job demand. Undertaking the analysis shown provided confidence that the interviews had been conducted in such a way as to allow participants to consider and express the nuances and variations of their experiences as sessional academic staff in the online program, in ways that are consistent with JD-R theory and the JD-R model. Despite the elements being common and pervasive parts of the work experience, all except the five identified elements were experienced varyingly across all interview participants. Returning to this data set in future could examine this finding further to determine whether more probing would reveal differences among the elements reported as only being experienced as a job resource. Future research may be able to explain reasons why the elements were experienced similarly or could question why no elements were reported as being experienced only as job demands.

Table 8.15

Number of Themes, Sub-Themes and Elements Reported as a Job Resource or Job Demand Only

Themes and Sub-Themes	Positive (Resource) Only	Negative (Demand) only	Elements Resource Only	Elements Demand Only
Theme 1: Leadership and Support	0	0	3	0
Sub-theme 1 The UC	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 2 The online learning environment	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 3 School of Education Structures	0	0	2	0
Sub-theme 4 Commitment to Improvement	1	0	1	0
Theme 2: Professional Contribution and Growth	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 1 Personal Professional Competence Growth	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 2 Contribution to the Profession	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 3 Professional Recognition	0	0	0	0
Theme 3: Conditions of Employment	0	0	1	0
Sub-theme 1 Work/Pay Balance	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 2 Pay Processes	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 3 Staffing processes	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 4 Breaks	0	0	0	0
Sub-theme 5 Flexibility	1	0	1	0
Theme 4: Collegiate and Social Connections	0	0	1	0
Sub-theme 1 School of Education Structures	0	0	1	0
Sub-theme 2 Ways of Working	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	0	0	5	0

Interestingly, a number of elements showed roughly equivalent positive and negative experiences, indicating that some elements may have more capacity than others to be experienced as either. For instance, the element *staffing processes* from Theme 3: *conditions of employment* prompted a number of positive and negative experiences to

be mentioned, of varying intensity. The volume of responses and their intensity were an indication of the power of the management of staffing processes to impact on motivation and engagement. Those who experienced staffing processes positively mentioned such key words as “*fair, transparent, efficient, professional*”, while those who had had negative experiences cited them as being “*unfair, not transparent, random*”.

The final sub-section of Section 8.3 details the final analysis stage for Phase 2 of the research; the reflection step as shown in the overview in Table 8.1.

8.3.3 Reflecting (Analysis Step 10)

The final analysis tactic (Analysis Step 10) was the use of a reflexive journal to support reflective processes. Journalling for thick description (Erlandson et al., 1993) helped with both meaning-making overall and to make adjustment to process along the way. Reflections from the journalling undertaken in Analysis Step 10 contributed to clarification of the need for a change in the method for Research Phase 3 and of the structure it should follow. Table 8.16 displays the alignment to methodology for Analysis Step 10.

Table 8.16

Main Analysis Tactics Used in Analysis Step 10 of Phase 2 of the Research:

Reflecting

Analysis Step	Tactic	Purpose	Advocates	Research Value
10	Reflexive Journal with thick description	To help formulate a coherent narrative of the meaning-building for later discussion; to contribute to transferability of findings	Lincoln and Guba (1985); Erlandson et al. (1998)	Writing for meaning-making; recording thoughts and observations immediately ensured significant observations not lost

- **Analysis Step 10: Journalling**

Journalling was used at the outset of Phase 2 as Analysis Step 1, as explained in Section 8.3.1, and was employed again as an analysis tactic during and following all of the coding processes that have been described in Steps 4 to 9. The focus for the stage of the journalling in Analysis Step 10 was to use the writing process to explore some of the conversations that had seemed to have impact during the interviews, and to try to ensure that nothing important had been missed. Beyond that, the journal provided a way to record reflections about whether the data was adequate and what else was needed in order to make confident conclusions from findings. Pages 6 and 7 of the journal (see Appendix 8.3) records these reflections which included the following observation:

“I feel as though our conversations have been fruitful, meaningful and significant – it has been clear that certain aspects are so very important to many of the participants, and the ways in which that importance can be manifested for different people is also a clear insight.”

The journalling processes revealed three key insights:

Firstly, conversations which made an intense impression at the time of the interview needed to be revisited and reflected on in order to gain a better perspective of their overall significance to the research purpose. This insight was gained from two distinct interview conversations within Interview 4 (‘Casey’ and ‘Geoff’). Both participants were relating their personal experiences, which had in each case been a negative experience, albeit concerning different aspects of their experience as sessional academic employees in the online program. Emotive language and intensity of delivery, such as these excerpts illustrate, created an initial impression that the experiences must be significant:

Casey: Interview 3:

0037:45: Yeah I don't know if that's a result of me saying Oh my God this all just happened and that was terrible. It made me so upset and this is what I'm being told I had to do. I have done X Y Z but haven't done A.

Geoff: Interview 3:

00:43.15 I pulled out of a study period about four weeks into it once. It was in the early days and I just didn't like the tone and some of the stuff that was coming out from the UC. I thought it was very unreasonable.

00:43:42 Yeah I said don't even bother to pay me; I don't care about being paid, I'm in this for students; I'm here because I'm an educator, but I don't like the tone of what's being said and the way it's been said and I've already raised this with the UC and it's still happening and so it's better for me to say we don't match and I'm pulling out.

The journal record for this interview (see Appendix 8.3; p. 2) shows that this conversation caused considerable concern and indicated a fear that discourteous treatment of sessional academic staff might be a serious issue.

"I was taken aback by some of the things Casey and Geoff shared today. It's a real worry to think that UCs might be dealing with sessional staff in ways that are inappropriately rude or offensive. I really hope this is not something that everyone experiences but might be reluctant to speak about. This will definitely be something to be on the lookout for in the rest of the interviews!"

However, later perspective shows that offence caused by unit co-ordinators was not reported more widely and did not have a broad negative impact on motivation and engagement for the staff surveyed, nor, as was eventually shown for the wider group. At the same time, the impact made by these conversations pointed very clearly to the powerful effect of such experiences on individuals and so while not a widespread issue, it was still flagged as a serious one which should not be ignored. Later discussion links such behaviours to the need for adequate professional learning, guidance and support for staff placed in team leader positions.

The second key insight was that keeping a journal provided valuable opportunities to revisit observations and thoughts, and thus continue and refine meaning-making processes. Early entries focused more on refining interview technique and structure to elicit the most relevant conversations. As the interviews and journaling progressed, the record showed a move towards pattern-building and noting confirmatory or exceptional instances. For example, the entry on Page 3 (see Appendix 8.3) recorded:

"I can see that the relationship between the UC and the team (where there is a team) is crucial. Staff need to feel supported, led, and valued by their team leader. This support and leadership can take different forms and different staff will need different things in order to feel comfortable. It's not one size fits all. I am coming to realise just how important people's feelings of competence and being in their comfort zone of content expertise is to their satisfaction with their situation. This has surprised me a little and I must be more attuned to hearing that when people speak of it."

Finally, the third insight was that re-reading the entire journal helped to clarify what was complete and what was missing, and so to determine the more appropriate direction for the final research phase. As the journal entries were re-read, it was evident

that important aspects, which later became themes, emerged clearly and were repeatedly identified. Further, that the interview conversations allowed adequate opportunity for participants to speak comprehensively about their experience and there was only one incidence (noted in Sub-section 6.6.2) where there was some doubt about whether the participant had been afforded sufficient opportunity. This led to reflection about the possible value of the planned final phase as noted on Page 6 of the journal (see Appendix 8.3):

“Re-reading all these entries makes me wonder what more might be gained from returning to these staff members to explore more about the things they have discussed, or to try and draw out more meaning..... I am now wondering whether what I will need to know is not so much more about what has been mentioned, or whether there is anything else they would wish to add, but whether what these 15 people say is significant is also significant to others in the sessional group. It’s possible that the people who agreed to interview may all have a certain perspective, or just might by chance have similar views. How representative is their experience? I feel that what the research needs now is some kind of mechanism or instrument to “test” the prevalence and significance of the factors mentioned by interview participants. I expect I can do that by returning to the UWES....”

8.4 Response to Research Question 2: What are the Elements of the Work Experience that Impact on Motivation and Engagement for Interviewed Participants?

Thirty-two elements of the work experience were found to impact on the motivation of the 15 interviewed participants drawn from the sessional academic pool working in the online programs. As explained in Analysis Step 9 in Section 8.3, five of those 32 elements were experienced as a positive impact only, none was experienced as a negative impact only, and 27 were experienced as positive for some participants and negative for others, or as positive and negative at various times or situations for the same participant. Through categorisation and importance scoring processes, the 32 elements were able to be arranged into four broad themes and ordered in terms of importance, namely: *leadership and support, professional contribution and growth, conditions of employment, and collegiate and social connections*. The individual elements were highly contextualised to the work environment of the case study group, but the broad themes aligned strongly to what is known about factors which are likely to influence motivation and engagement. For instance, many of the elements are seen to relate to the finding in Section 2.5 of the literature review which identified the

importance of being able to provide a learning environment which responded to the needs of the students and in so doing, ensuring that the teaching staff had the knowledge and skills necessary and the appropriate technological tools and affordances.

8.5 Implications for Research Phase 3: Survey Questionnaire 2 and Complementary Data Sources

At the conclusion of the interviews, a review of the elements and themes and a re-reading of the journal led to the decision to vary the final stage of the original data collection plan. It was initially thought that two rounds of interviews would be required: the first to 'survey the landscape' and identify some themes which were either common or idiosyncratic but significant and the second to delve more deeply in identified areas in order to understand them fully. It was also anticipated that follow-up interviews might be needed on an individual basis if group interview members may not have had sufficient opportunity to express their own views fully. However, the second concern was dismissed as only two interviews were not individual and the one participant judged at risk in this way was provided with an opportunity to add to her contributions.

The analysis of the interviews resulted in achieving a comprehensive view of the important elements impacting on motivation and engagement and how these were being experienced by the interview participants. An important overall insight was that actions, strategies and processes had greatest reported impact on motivation and engagement when they were undertaken by those people with the closest working relationship with the tutor, and least when furthest removed. Thus, the support and leadership of their unit co-ordinator, with whom they work most closely, seemed far more significant than any actions, strategies or processes undertaken at whole-university level. It was therefore judged that what was needed to establish the value and significance of the data produced was not more depth, but breadth: it was important to know whether the clear issues and themes that emerged were important to the broad group of sessional academic staff, rather than just the 15 interviewed. As the initial data from Phase 1 of the research measured current levels of motivation and engagement, it was vital to know how the levels might be impacted by the various

elements identified in Phase 2. The decision was therefore taken to design a Survey Questionnaire 2 and return to the complete sessional academic pool to administer the survey.

8.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 8 has detailed how the data from Research Phase 2, the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, were collected and analysed, and has demonstrated the centrality of Research Phase 2 in identifying and organising significant findings into coherent and complex themes, sub-themes and elements that explain how motivation and engagement is experienced by the interview participant sample group.

The analysis discussed in this chapter made it evident that Phase 2 of the research was successful in gaining a comprehensive view of elements of the experience of the group of sessional academic staff that impacted on their motivation and engagement, and clear themes emerged and were reinforced as interviews proceeded. It was expected that a further round of interviews might be needed to fully clarify or explicate aspects of the experience of the group; however, it was apparent that it would not be necessary. However, the findings did not provide confidence about whether the elements experienced as most significant for the interview participants would be those most significant to others in the broader pool of sessional academic staff members in the case study site. Therefore, Phase 3 was changed from being a second round of interviews and to the administering of a second questionnaire to measure the impact of the identified elements on the wider group of sessional staff. Chapter 9 provides a detailed account of how the data analysis from Phase 2 enabled the finalisation of Survey Questionnaire 2 for administration in Phase 3.

CHAPTER 9

Results and Discussion of Phase 3: Survey Questionnaire 2 and Additional Data Sources

9.1 Introduction

There are seven sections to Chapter 9. Following the introduction in Section 9.1, section 9.2 contains an explanation of the analysis and decision-making undertaken to finalise the Phase 3 survey questionnaire. Section 9.3 contains a detailed discussion of the analysis steps for the Phase 3 survey data. Section 9.4 gives an account of how additional complementary data were used to enhance understandings and to contribute to trustworthiness of the findings. Section 9.5 follows the discussion of results with eight statements made about the most significant elements that impact on motivation and engagement amongst the sessional academic staff working in online programs in the research group, and relates findings to the UWES and the JD-R model. Research Question 3 is then responded to in Section 9.6:

How are the elements of the work experience identified by the interview participants important to motivation and engagement for the whole research group?

Section 9.7 identifies the general and specific aspects of the work experience that will impact most on motivation and engagement for the sessional staff members, responding to Research Question 4:

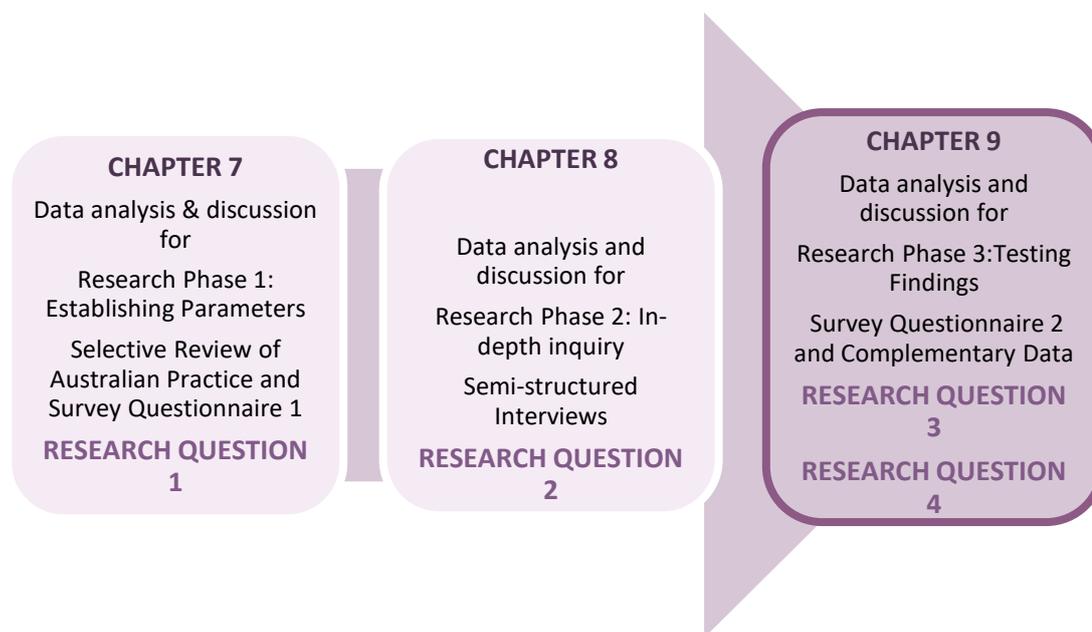
What elements of the work experience are important for the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff members working in an online environment?

Section 9.8 concludes the chapter and frames the findings towards recommendations that are made in Chapter 10, the final chapter of this thesis.

The position and focus of Chapter 9 is shown in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1

Position and focus of Chapter 9



It was critical when addressing Research Question 3 to be confident about which aspects of the employee experience, as recorded in the interviews and their analysis, were the most significant for the sessional academic staff in the context being researched. Beyond knowing what aspects have an impact on motivation and engagement and that the impact of any one aspect will not be uniformly positive or negative, it was important to know how deeply and widely the impact is felt.

Phase 2 of the research provided a rich account of the experiences of 15 sessional academics working in the online programs and good understandings of the ways motivation and engagement could be impacted. However, in returning to Research Question 4 and the overall research aim, there was doubt whether the data was sufficient to draw confident conclusions about the factors that are important for the motivation and engagement of casual academic staff more broadly and to make consequent recommendations for structures and processes that would optimise both.

Further data was needed that measured the extent of the impact across the broader group of the elements identified by the interview participants. That impact needed to measure both how commonly a particular item impacted the employees and how deeply the impact of elements was felt. Gaining that critical data became the focus of the final data collection and analysis phase and prompted the formulation of Survey Questionnaire 2.

9.2 Finalisation of Questionnaire Instrument

At the conclusion to Phase 2 of the research and the analysis of data, 32 elements of the work experience of the sessional academic staff teaching in the online program were identified as impacting on the motivation and engagement of the interview participants. Those final 32 elements are presented in Table 8.8. The eventual organisation of those 32 elements into themes and sub-themes is shown in table 8.9. As signalled in the description of the instrument design in Sub-section 6.7.2 of the methodology chapter, the 32 elements were reduced to 25 in order to facilitate management of Survey Questionnaire 2. The challenge faced was to limit the size of the questionnaire and thus the impost on respondents while still ensuring that the items remained aligned to the important aspects of the work environment that had been identified in Phase 2 as impacting on motivation and engagement. As it was important to be able to measure all 17 aspects of motivation and engagement in the full UWES, limiting the size of the questionnaire was a pressing concern. Subsequently, the 32 elements from the end of Phase 2 were reduced to 25 items for the questionnaire, which was structured around the 17-point UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2010). The full record of the elements excluded, melded and retained can be found in the database for phase 3 of the research at Appendix 9.2.1.

Some items with low importance scores were not included, particularly where it seemed possible that respondents could consider what was contained in that element in their response to an included item. For instance, the element *unit team continuity*, which had an importance ranking of 25/32 and was categorised as a very minor topic initially, was excluded. The item in the questionnaire “How does being placed in a unit in which you feel confident of your subject area expertise impact on (these) indicators of motivation and engagement?” was judged to be able to include considerations of

continuity in a unit. Likewise, the element *team meetings*, with an importance ranking of 22/32 and also categorised as a very minor topic, was excluded. The judgement was made that respondents could consider team meetings when answering the item “How does the nature and extent of leadership and support provided by your UC impact on (these) indicators of motivation and engagement?”

The elements were revisited to consider that the purpose of Phase 3 and the survey questionnaire was to help move the focus of the data to addressing the final research question and the overall aim of the research which was to identify the structures and processes that organisational leadership could manage in order to optimise motivation and engagement. Therefore, some of the 32 elements were excluded if they were not as clearly aligned to an action, process of structure from managers as other elements were. For instance, the element *autonomy* (categorised as a minor topic and ranked 21/32 in importance) was excluded as it does not point to clearly-defined action on the part of managers. As well as this, the guideline adopted previously was also salient, as respondents might consider autonomy when responding to the items about opportunities for professional growth and challenge, opportunities to contribute ideas, and even when responding to the item about the level of support and guidance provided by their UC. A respondent might believe the level to be excessive and to stifle autonomy.

As well as some elements being excluded, other elements were expanded to two items, where it was judged that the original element was important, might need separating to invite response on different processes or structures, and that responses might be different for the different structure or process. For example, the element *breaks*, which was categorised as a minor topic with a ranking of 19/32, was revisited in the transcripts. The familiarity with the transcripts prompted a review of the way this topic had been coded in Phase 2 and it was determined that its full implications or importance may not have been properly captured. Revisiting the transcripts showed that interview respondents mentioned both that they enjoyed the opportunity to take a break and were not obliged to work in every study period. However, what had been coded as staffing processes in a few instances might have been better coded under the topic of breaks, where the respondent was talking about how their motivation and engagement were negatively impacted when they were forced to have a break when

they did not invite it. Therefore, it was decided that the element of *breaks* should be separated in the questionnaire to two items, one of which asked about the ability to choose to take a break, and the other about the impact of not being offered work when they had indicated they wanted it. It was predicted that the impact of the latter could be significant for the way in which organisational leaders managed such a situation in order to lessen negative impact.

One key component of the questionnaire was to ask explicitly about 'deal-breakers'; the elements that would cause motivation and engagement to be so low as to prompt a decision to cease working in the role. Interview 12, 'Sue' (see Appendix 8.1) contains an example of how this insight and decision was prompted:

[00:06:12]SUE: I have to say I got over the filling out of time sheets and the arguing with admin staff over whether I spent an extra half an hour here or not, knowing I'd doubled the amount of time anyway. And the way XXX University does it is just straight forward. In fact, you don't have to do a thing. And a couple of friends were actually were also recently retired and working for University.

[00:07:22]Interviewer: Oh gosh yes. I should probably add that there was a time when we did have that, but that time will live on in myth and legend forever and known as that nightmare time when we had to do it. Fortunately it was short lived. It made its way in very quickly and out pretty quickly as well. So we're very pleased about that. It's interesting to hear that that was a significant factor.

[00:08:09]SUE: Very significant. I wouldn't have been bothered if I'd had to do time sheets.

'Sue' was speaking about her experience in a similar role in a different institution. In discussing why she prefers her current employment arrangements, she revealed that if the research university reintroduced timesheets for sessional staff, her motivation and engagement would be seriously threatened. Therefore, there was a further safeguard built into the structure of the questionnaire in allowing respondents to add comments at the end of each section. The questionnaire was organised into four sections in accordance with the four themes that emerged in Phase 2 and as described in Sub-section 6.7.2 of Chapter 6 where the instrument design section for Phase 3 is detailed. The questionnaire included an open-text response item at the end of each section, asking what circumstances would cause the respondent to consider withdrawing from the sessional academic work in the online program. This was an opportunity for anything important to be mentioned that may not have been explicitly asked as a questionnaire item and allowed the pertinent 'deal-breakers' to be identified.

9.3 Coding and Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

There were five steps in the analysis of the Phase 3 questionnaire data (n=32). The raw data is at Appendix 9.1. The first four steps, described in Sub-Section 9.3.1, organise and quantify the responses to the 25 multiple-choice survey items, to demonstrate the breadth and intensity of impact on respondents deriving from the 25 elements of the work experience on the 17 aspects of motivation measured by the UWES. The data is cross-checked against the themed data gathered and analysed in Phase 2. Step 5, described in Sub-section 9.3.2, then considers the qualitative comments for the open-text items made by survey respondents in order to provide validation or explanation of findings, including the possible significance of individual variances or outlying responses. The qualitative comments guide interpretations which contribute to the conclusions that are made at the end of this chapter.

9.3.1 Multiple Choice Item Data Analysis

There were four steps associated with the data analysis for the multiple-choice items, explained in this sub-section.

- **Analysis Step 1: Extent of impact on the 25 Elements of the Work Experience**

The first analysis step presented some challenges. Although the questionnaire was constructed in a way to make it as user-friendly as possible, the data was not organised in the optimum way for analysis. Respondents were presented with each of the 25 aspects of their employment experience in turn, and asked how each impacted on the 17 items of the UWES scale. However, for the purposes of analysis, it was more useful to begin with the items of the UWES scale and discern clearly which aspects of the employment experience impacted most on each of those. Therefore, the raw data exported from the Qualtrics survey (Appendix 9.1) was re-organised as a first analysis task. This first analysis phase is recorded in the entire database for Research Phase 3 (see Appendix 9.1.2).

To begin to explain results, analysis was undertaken to ascertain the ubiquity of impact on motivation and engagement of the 25 measured elements of the experience of

sessional staff members. Table 9.1 shows how many of the 25 elements of their work various respondents reported as helping, hindering, or having no impact on their motivation and engagement. Thus, each element could be reported as either a job resource (positive impact), job demand (negative impact), or neither (nil impact) by different respondents. The reporting of each element differently across respondents is consistent with a key characteristic of the JD-R model, which allows for differential experience of the same circumstance.

Table 9.1

Positive, Negative or Nil Impact on Each Aspect of Motivation and Engagement for Some Staff of the 25 Elements of the Work Experience

Aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the 17-point UWES	Elements that positively impact on some staff	Elements that negatively impact on some staff	Elements with no reported impact for some staff
I have energy for my work	25	15	21
My work has meaning and purpose	25	15	22
Time flies when I'm working	25	22	25
I feel strong and vigorous while I'm working	25	14	23
I feel enthusiastic towards my work	25	16	20
I forget about other things while I'm working	25	20	25
My work inspires me	25	16	23
I look forward to starting work	25	14	21
I feel happy when I'm working intensely	25	15	24
I feel proud of my work	25	13	23
I immerse myself in my work	25	15	24
I can work intensely for long periods	25	16	23
I enjoy challenge in my work	25	16	21
I get carried away in my work	25	17	25
I feel mentally strong and resilient	25	15	21
I find it difficult to detach from my work	25	23	25
I persevere even if things are not going smoothly	25	16	22

The results show that elements were most likely to have a positive impact, followed by a nil impact, and least likely to have a negative impact. All 25 elements had a positive impact on at least one respondent across each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement. The 25 elements measured in Survey Questionnaire 2 were drawn from the four themes: *leadership and support* (8 elements), *professional contribution and growth* (8 elements), *conditions of employment* (6 elements) and *collegiate and social connections* (3 elements). Tables 9.2 to 9.5 show how the positive, negative and nil impacts of the 25 elements were distributed between the four themes in turn.

Table 9.2

Positive, Negative and Nil impact of the 8 elements belonging to Theme 1: Leadership and Support

Aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the 17-point UWES	Elements with positive impact	Elements with negative impact	Elements with no reported impact
I have energy for my work	8	5	6
My work has meaning and purpose	8	4	7
Time flies when I'm working	8	8	8
I feel strong and vigorous while I'm working	8	5	8
I feel enthusiastic towards my work	8	5	6
I forget about other things while I'm working	8	8	8
My work inspires me	8	5	8
I look forward to starting work	8	4	6
I feel happy when I'm working intensely	8	4	8
I feel proud of my work	8	4	8
I immerse myself in my work	8	4	7
I can work intensely for long periods	8	4	7
I enjoy challenge in my work	8	5	7
I get carried away in my work	8	5	8
I feel mentally strong and resilient	8	5	7
I find it difficult to detach from my work	8	8	8
I persevere even if things are not going smoothly	8	6	7

For Theme 1, *leadership and support*, the pattern was the same as for the overall impact with positive impact being the most likely, followed by nil impact and negative impact least likely. However, there were three aspects of motivation and engagement for which all eight elements were experienced as either positive, negative or nil impact for at least one respondent.

Table 9.3

Positive, Negative and Nil Impact of the 8 Elements Belonging to Theme 2: Professional Contribution and Growth

Aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the 17-point UWES	Elements with positive impact	Elements with negative impact	Elements with no reported impact
I have energy for my work	8	2	7
My work has meaning and purpose	8	4	6
Time flies when I'm working	8	6	8
I feel strong and vigorous while I'm working	8	2	6
I feel enthusiastic towards my work	8	4	5
I forget about other things while I'm working	8	4	8
My work inspires me	8	4	6
I look forward to starting work	8	3	6
I feel happy when I'm working intensely	8	3	7
I feel proud of my work	8	3	6
I immerse myself in my work	8	3	8
I can work intensely for long periods	8	3	7
I enjoy challenge in my work	8	4	5
I get carried away in my work	8	4	8
I feel mentally strong and resilient	8	4	5
I find it difficult to detach from my work	8	6	8
I persevere even if things are not going smoothly	8	3	6

For Theme 2, *professional contribution and growth*, the same order as previously noted also applied. In the case of Theme 2, all aspects of motivation and engagement had fewer elements with negative impact than with nil impact. Five aspects had an equal number of elements with nil impact as had positive impact.

Table 9.4

Positive, Negative and Nil impact of the 6 elements belonging to Theme 3: Conditions of Employment

Aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the 17-point UWES	Elements with positive impact	Elements with negative impact	Elements with no reported impact
I have energy for my work	6	5	5
My work has meaning and purpose	6	5	6
Time flies when I'm working	6	5	6
I feel strong and vigorous while I'm working	6	5	6
I feel enthusiastic towards my work	6	5	6
I forget about other things while I'm working	6	6	6
My work inspires me	6	5	6
I look forward to starting work	6	5	6
I feel happy when I'm working intensely	6	5	6
I feel proud of my work	6	5	6
I immerse myself in my work	6	5	6
I can work intensely for long periods	6	6	6
I enjoy challenge in my work	6	5	6
I get carried away in my work	6	5	6
I feel mentally strong and resilient	6	5	6
I find it difficult to detach from my work	6	6	6
I persevere even if things are not going smoothly	6	5	6

For Theme 3, *conditions of employment*, all but one of the aspects of motivation and engagement had as many elements having nil impact as having positive impact. Once

again, negative impact held the fewest elements across the aspects of motivation and engagement.

Table 9.5

Positive, Negative and Nil impact of the 3 elements belonging to Theme 4: Collegiate and Social Connections

Aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the 17-point UWES	Elements with positive impact	Elements with negative impact	Elements with no reported impact
I have energy for my work	3	3	3
My work has meaning and purpose	3	2	3
Time flies when I'm working	3	3	3
I feel strong and vigorous while I'm working	3	2	3
I feel enthusiastic towards my work	3	2	3
I forget about other things while I'm working	3	2	3
My work inspires me	3	2	3
I look forward to starting work	3	2	3
I feel happy when I'm working intensely	3	3	3
I feel proud of my work	3	1	3
I immerse myself in my work	3	3	3
I can work intensely for long periods	3	3	3
I enjoy challenge in my work	3	2	3
I get carried away in my work	3	3	3
I feel mentally strong and resilient	3	1	3
I find it difficult to detach from my work	3	3	3
I persevere even if things are not going smoothly	3	2	3

For Theme 4, *collegiate and social connections*, the pattern was once again consistent with the overall findings and for Theme 4, all aspects of motivation and engagement showed the same number of elements with nil impact as positive impact, and seven

aspects showed the same number of elements with negative impact as nil or positive impact.

Several key conclusions can be made from these results: firstly, that no element, in any of the themes, was uniformly experienced as either a job demand, job resource, or neither. Every questionnaire item drew at least one response for each of the three possible options. There are no zero scores in Table 9.1. Secondly, that every aspect of motivation and engagement measured by the UWES instrument had at least one respondent who reported a positive impact on motivation and engagement for the aspect; and thirdly, that a number of aspects of motivation and engagement measured by the UWES drew no reports of elements having a negative impact on motivation and engagement. Every aspect of motivation and engagement measured had more than one item not reported by any respondents as having negative impact. Finally, there were only four aspects of motivation and engagement which showed as many elements with nil impact as positive impact for some respondents, as shown by the scores of 25 in the *nil impact* column in Table 9.2. That means that the elements of the work experience selected to be measured appear to be far more likely to have an impact of some kind for more people. Further to that claim, nine of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement were reported as being impacted for all 25 elements.

The findings from the data indicate that in the main, the elements of the work experience surveyed do have an impact on motivation and engagement, and that positive impact was more prevalent than negative impact. These findings provide some reassurance that the design of the instrument was sound in being based on the analysis undertaken in Phase 2 of the research, in which the relevant elements were identified and categorised. They also confirm the theoretical viewpoint for the JD-R model, which holds that it can be expected that no work experience element is likely to be experienced uniformly as either a job demand or a job resource by all employees at all times. However, the conclusions drawn in Step 1 of the data analysis in this section provide explanation only about frequency of responses across the options for each aspect of motivation and engagement measured and the elements of the work experience that could have an impact on them. In order to complete an explanation of the findings, further analysis is required to determine the number and proportions of respondents experiencing positive, negative or no impact for each item, and the

intensity of that experience for each. In this way, the specific elements within each theme, and the themes themselves, could be understood in terms of their relative significance as job demands or resources. The next steps in the data analysis reveal those findings.

- **Analysis Step 2: Extent of Impact By Respondent**

Table 9.6 shows the total number of times, for all respondents, that each of the 25 items returned a response across all 17 aspects of motivation and engagement measured, whether significant positive impact, some positive impact, some negative impact, significant negative impact, or no impact.. Scores for no impact were derived where respondents did not report any positive nor negative impact for the item. The total possible responses for each item was 544, comprised from 32 respondents' answers to prompts for the 17 measured aspects of motivation and engagement ($32 \times 17 = 544$). Impact across the elements and respondents was marked: 11 of the 25 elements were reported as impacting on at least 90% of respondents (see the database at Appendix 9.2.2 for the complete record of percentages of respondents reporting impact for each element of the work experience).

The 25 measured items (elements) are shown in Table 9.6 as organised within the four major themes previously identified, being:

L&S – Leadership and Support (8 elements)

PC&G – Professional Contribution and Growth (8 elements)

COE – Conditions of Employment (6 elements)

C&SC – Collegiate and Social Connections (3 elements)

Table 9.6

Impact of 25 Elements of Themed Employment Experience on 17 Aspects of Motivation and Engagement

Theme	Element of Employment Experience	Strong+ impact	Some+ impact	Some- impact	Strong- impact	No impact
L&S (8 elements)	UC	286	219	7	4	28
	SETLD – Gen Info	200	290	4	5	45
	CSS	210	299	8	1	26
	BB setup	276	202	31	8	27
	LTS team	208	311	2	3	20
	T&L Resources on BB	131	367	15	1	30
	SoE Communications	144	345	27	3	25
	University Communications	100	324	85	2	33
	TOTALS	1555	2357	179	27	234
PC&G (8 elements)	Unit Expertise	478	56	2	1	7
	SETLD – PL	219	302	2	1	20
	Awards	164	270	66	17	27
	Learning & growth	342	184	1	0	17
	Innovate/ contribute	332	165	0	0	47
	TRT	94	343	77	4	26
	SoE Mission	229	260	9	1	45
	University Mission	234	247	13	2	48
	TOTALS	2092	1827	170	26	237
COE (6 elements)	EOI process	166	236	81	3	58
	Work/pay balance	119	228	121	24	52
	Pays processes	271	184	18	3	68
	Work flexibility	435	60	10	1	38
	Ability to take breaks	201	145	118	30	50
	Not being offered work	20	0	246	196	82
		TOTALS	1212	853	594	257
C&SC (3 elements)	Staff Lounges	200	275	10	5	54
	SETLD – networking	223	248	8	0	65
	Other informal/flexible	192	245	30	0	77
		TOTALS	615	768	48	5

The information tabulated in Table 9.6 provides an indication of the themed elements which hold the widest impact on motivation and engagement, whether positive or negative. More positive impact than negative impact was reported across the 25 elements, and overall the themes leadership and support and collegiate and social connections contained elements more likely to engender some positive than strong positive impact, and the themes professional contribution and growth and conditions of employment containing elements more likely to engender strong positive than some positive impact. One element, part of the theme *professional contribution and growth*, has by far the greatest positive impact across all 17 aspects of motivation and engagement, with 478 instances reported of strong positive impact of this factor on an aspect of motivation. That element is the expertise that respondents hold in the teaching unit in which they are placed. This finding was somewhat surprising as while it was expected that the element would have some impact, it was categorised in Phase 2 as a minor topic. Thus, the value of returning to the whole research group and asking specifically about this element, drew out responses that gave a better indication of its importance relative to other elements of the work experience. A further 56 instances were reported for this same element as having some positive impact. Only three instances of negative impact were reported for this element, which also recorded the lowest incidence of any element of having nil impact. Table 9.6 shows that there were only seven reported instances of nil impact for this element.

One element, part of the theme *conditions of employment*, stood out as having the highest incidence of negative impact across all aspects of motivation and engagement. This was the impact felt from not being offered a place in a staffing round. The number of instances of a strong negative impact (196) was not as high as the highest reported strong positive impact found in the unit expertise element described in the preceding paragraph. However, Table 9.6 shows that there were also 246 reports of some negative impact for the item of not being placed in a staffing round. Therefore, the combined instances of strong and some reported negative impact for this element was 442. That total was still behind the total of reported positive impact for the unit expertise element, which was 534 (478+56). It is important to note that the high incidence of reports of no impact for the element of not being offered work (82, the highest of any factor) could arise from respondents not having experienced the

circumstance of not being offered work when wanted. Interestingly, 20 responses indicated a significant positive impact from not being offered work, but it is possible that these respondents may have missed the item explanation of meaning not being offered work when they had expressed an interest in working for the upcoming period. Therefore, those responses could possibly be conflated with the positive responses for the previous item, which was the ability to take breaks if desired. These findings provided reassurance that the decision to separate the original element of breaks into two separate questionnaire items, as explained in Section 9.2 was a sound decision which allowed respondents to respond differently to the circumstance of a forced break as opposed to a chosen one.

Only one item had no reported negative impact for any respondents for any of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement. This was the opportunity in their work to be able to innovate and contribute to practice. No respondents reported any negative impact associated with these opportunities. All items had some reported impact for at least one aspect of motivation of engagement for one or more respondents.

- **Analysis Step 3: Relative Impact of Elements on Respondents**

Analysis Step 3 comprised the analysis of the data in order to rank the impact on respondents. To facilitate the analysis, a spreadsheet was created that recorded and then ranked the number of incidences of a response for each item indicating a strong positive, some positive, some negative, strong negative, or nil impact for each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement as per the UWES (see Appendix 9.1.3). As each of the 25 elements had a total number of 544 responses, the total number of responses across the entire survey was 13,600 as each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement were measured. ($25 \times 32 \times 17 = 13600$). Thus, those 13600 responses were distributed in accordance with the nature and extent of the impact being experienced (see Appendix 9.2.4 for the full record of this distribution). Results for overall positive, overall negative and nil impact respectively were totalled and recorded on separate tables in the spreadsheet. Table 9.7 displays the impact of elements in rank order from highest to lowest, for (in turn) positive impact, negative impact, and nil reported impact. The rank order for the nil impact column is organised from the element most likely to have no impact, to least likely to have no impact. The table shows elements organised into categories of high reports of impact (scores of

more than 400 out of a possible 544 or 75% of responses), medium reports of impact (scores between 200 and 400 or between 40% and 75%) and low reports of impact (scores under 200, or less than 40%).

Table 9.7

Rank Order of Positive, Negative and Nil Impact of 25 Elements-All Respondents

Positive Impact Rank Order	Negative Impact Rank Order	Nil Impact Rank Order
High Impact	High Impact	Low Impact
Unit Expertise	Not being offered work	Not being offered work
Learning & Growth		Other informal/ flexible
SETLD – PL	Low Impact	Pays processes
LTS Team	Ability to Take Breaks	SETLD – networking
Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff	Work/Pay Balance	EOI process
Unit Co-ordinator	University Communications	Staff Lounges
T&L Resources on BB	Tutor Reflection Template	Work/pay balance
Innovate & Contribute	EOI Process	Ability to take breaks
Work Flexibility	Awards	University Mission
SETLD – general info.	BB set-up	Innovate & Contribute
SoE Communications =	SoE Communications =	SETLD – Gen Info= SoE
SoE Mission	Other informal/flexible	Mission
	Networking	
University Mission	Pays Process	Work flexibility
BB Set-up	T&L Resources on BB	University Communications
Staff Lounges	University Mission =	T&L Resources on BB
	Staff Lounges	
SETLD - networking	Work Flexibility	UC
Pays process	UC	BB setup = Awards
Tutor Reflection Template =	SoE Mission	Coordinator of Sessional
Other informal/flexible		Staff = Tutor Reflection
networking		Template
Awards	SETLD General Info = CSS	SoE Communications
University Communications	SETLD Networking	LTS team = SETLD PL
EOI Process for staffing	LTS Team	Learning & Growth
	Unit Expertise	Unit Expertise
Medium Impact	SETLD - PL	
Work/Pay Balance	Learning & Growth	
Ability to take Breaks	Innovate & Contribute	
Low Impact		
Not being offered work		

Table 9.7 shows that far more elements (22) showed high levels of reports of impact where the impact was positive, only one element showed a high level of reports of impact where that impact was negative, and no elements showed high levels of reports of nil impact.

The item with lowest reported nil impact was that of unit expertise, with only seven reports of aspects of motivation and engagement that were not impacted by this element. A close look at the survey responses revealed that all seven were reported by the same respondent. The item of not being offered work when work was wanted, which was first-ranked of the elements having a negative impact, was also the item first-ranked for having no impact. Thus, not being offered work when wanted was the most likely element to have either no impact or a negative impact on motivation and engagement, and least likely to have a positive impact. The impact on motivation and engagement of being denied work is not surprising given the emphasis found in the discourse about the problematisation of casual academic status, as reported in Section 3.3 of the literature review. These results, particularly the low scores for absence of impact, provide further confidence that the elements identified through the earlier phases of the research and included in the Survey Questionnaire 2, were the important elements of the work experience that impact on motivation and engagement. Analysis Steps 1 to 3 show that all aspects of motivation and engagement are impacted by the elements, and all respondents were impacted by them.

Overall, Analysis Step 3 revealed that:

- positive impacts were reported as being experienced more often and more strongly than negative impacts;
- patterns emerged very distinctly about how elements of the work environment were being experienced;
- there was some individual variation of experience for all elements across all aspects of motivation and engagement except one; and that
- all elements had an impact of some kind, with the incidence of no reported impact on each individual significantly lower than for positive or negative impact.

The raw scores of incidences reported for all elements across all aspects of motivation and engagement analysed above is useful in providing an indication of their relative importance. The next analysis step looks more closely at the aspects of motivation and engagement impacted, and the clustering of impacts in terms of the four identified themes.

- **Analysis Step 4: Relative Impact of Themes and Elements**

The next analysis step returns to the 17-point UWES to show which particular aspects of motivation and engagement are most impacted for the greatest number of respondents. Therefore, the next step considers the specific elements reported most often as a job resource or job demand, represented by the percentage of respondents who reported that factor as helping greatly, helping somewhat, hindering somewhat or hindering greatly. The average percentage score for each of the aspects of motivation and engagement was recorded for the 25 elements in turn. Averages were found for percentage of respondents reporting a positive impact, a negative impact, or nil impact for each element and then were totalled for the elements for each sub-theme and theme. For instance, for the element *teaching and learning resources* on Blackboard, which belongs to the sub-theme *The online learning environment* and the theme *leadership and support* (refer to Table 8.10), the percentages of respondents reporting a positive impact on each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement, was 92%, the average for negative impact was 3% and the average across the 17 aspects of motivation for nil impact was 5% of respondents (see Appendix 9.2.4). Overall, the analysis shows that respondents reported that elements from all four themes impacted on one or more of the 17 aspects of their motivation and engagement as measured by the UWES. Table 9.8 displays the percentage of respondents who reported positive impact (resources), negative impact (demands) and nil reported impact respectively averaged for the elements in each of the four main themes.

Table 9.8

Theme Averages of Proportions of Respondents Reporting Positive, Negative or Nil Impact for 25 Elements of Experience and 17 Aspects of Motivation and Engagement

Themes	Average positive impact across Elements and Aspects	Average Negative Impact across Elements and Aspects	Average Nil Impact across Elements and Aspects
Leadership & Support	90%	5%	5%
Professional Contribution & Growth	90%	5%	6%
Conditions of Employment	63%	26%	11%
Collegiate and Social Interactions	84%	3%	13%

Note: refer to the explanation preceding Table 9.8: averages derived from numbers of respondents reporting impact of each of the elements in a theme on any of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement.

Thus, it can be stated that elements relating to leadership and support and to professional contribution and growth are most likely to have a positive impact on motivation and engagement, elements relating to conditions of employment are most likely to have a negative impact on motivation and engagement, and elements related to collegiate and social interactions are most likely to have no impact. Some of these findings are consistent with those of the institution-wide survey reported in Section 3.4 of the review of literature: for instance, that casual academic staff were most happy when the leadership was provided by their Unit Co-ordinator and they had adequate access to resources. However, there were also some variations from those findings, which bear out another key finding from the literature review (Section 3.4) that the localised context has a major influence on exactly what elements of the work experience make the most difference. A more finely-grained analysis of the 25 individual elements which are contained within the themes shows that particular elements have a disproportionate influence on the overall impact of the theme. This

disproportionate impact is shown through two effects: firstly, because some individual elements were reported as impactful by more respondents across aspects of motivation and engagement, and secondly, because some individual elements scored particularly high measures of impact.

The percentage of respondents who reported impact on each of the 17 aspects of motivation and engagement for each of the individual elements in each theme has been measured (see Appendix 9.2.4). The average for motivation and engagement overall has then been found for each element. Table 9.9 summarises the average scores, showing the averages for the elements belonging in each theme. Average scores for positive impact, negative impact, and nil impact are shown.

Table 9.9

Average Scores for Positive, Negative and Nil Impact on Motivation and Engagement of 25 Elements of Employment Surveyed, Organised by Themes.

Numbers of Elements by Average Percentages of Respondents Reporting Impact on Motivation and Engagement													
Theme	No. of Elements in Theme	90% or above			75-90%			50 – 74%			0 – 50%		
		+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0
Leadership and Support	8	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Professional Contribution and Growth	8	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Conditions of Employment	6	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	1	5	6
Collegiate and Social Connections	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3

Table 9.9 shows that there were six elements reported by 90% or more of respondents as having a positive impact on motivation and engagement, as measured by the 17-point UWES, which affected the average scores. Likewise, that there was only one

individual element which had a large negative impact on motivation and engagement, and that the breadth of the negative impact of that element (75-90% of respondents) was not as wide as the positive impact of any elements. Further, no individual element was reported by more than 50% of respondents as having no impact. No score for elements with nil impact was greater than 15%. The focus of Analysis Step 4 was to determine the relative impacts of the four themes and the 25 elements within them that were measured. The analysis provides some useful indicators of the most important elements which impacted on motivation and engagement to complement the findings in the previous analysis steps about which were the most impacted aspects of motivation and engagement.

The final table for this section of the data analysis and discussion, Table 9.10 shows the rank order of impact for each of the 25 individual elements of employment surveyed, indicating whether that impact was positive, negative, or had nil reported impact. Rank is determined by the highest score, whether that is derived from a positive, negative, or nil impact score. The number of aspects of motivation and engagement that were reported as being impacted is also shown. The theme to which the factors belong is also indicated.

Table 9.10*Rank Order of Impact of 25 Elements of Work Experience*

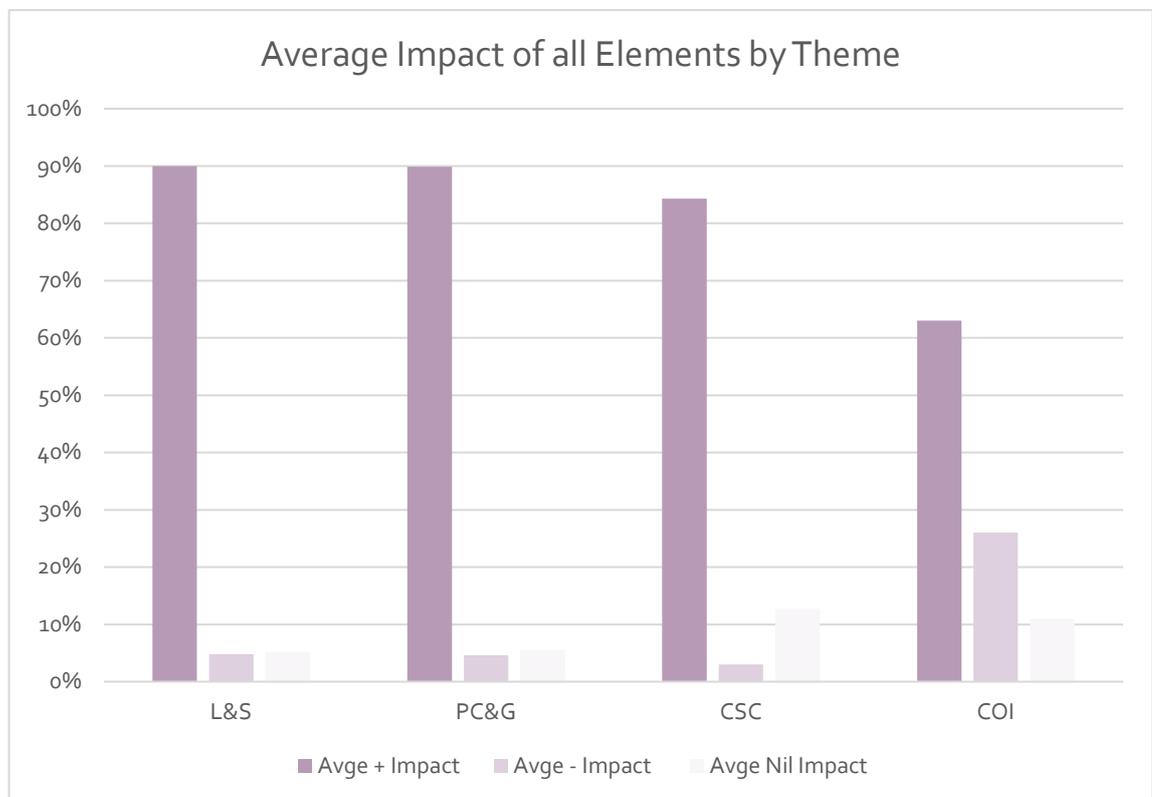
Rank	Element/s	Theme	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Nil Impact
1	Unit Expertise	PC&G	98%	1%	1%
2	Opportunities for learning & growth	PC&G	97%	0%	3%
3	SETLD – Professional learning program	PC&G	96%	1%	3%
4	LTS Team support	L&S	95%	1%	4%
5	Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff	L&S	94%	2%	4%
6	Unit Co-ordinator	L&S	93%	2%	5%
= 7	T & L Resources on Blackboard; Work Flexibility	L&S	92%	3%	5%
		COE		1%	7%
8	Opportunities to Innovate & Contribute	PC&G	91%	0%	9%
= 9	SETLD (General Information) School of Education Communications	L&S	90%	2%	8%
				5%	5%
10	School of Education’s Mission	PC&G	89%	2%	9%
= 11	Blackboard Preparation set-up; Being a part of University Mission	L&S	88%	7%	5%
		PC&G		3%	9%
12	Staff Lounges on Blackboard	C&SC	87%	3%	10%
13	SETLD – networking opportunities	C&SC	86%	1%	13%
14	Administration of Pays	COE	83%	4%	13%
15	Not being offered work	COE	4%	81%	15%
= 16	Awards; Tutor Reflection Template; Other Informal Flexible networking	PC&G	80%	15%	5%
		C&SC		5%	15%
17	University Communications	L&S	78%	16%	6%
18	Staffing Process	COE	73%	16%	11%
= 19	Ability to take breaks; Work/Pay Balance	COE	63%	27%	10%

Table 9.10 and the ranking of elements helps to clarify which elements are most important to take into account because the processes and structures in place by the organisation must respond to what is important. That importance could be to ensure that element which have a strong positive impact are maintained and managed well, that those which have a strong negative impact can be avoided or improved, and those which have little impact do not attract unnecessary attention or resourcing. The table also reiterates that clear conclusions can be drawn about the impact of elements of the work experience, with clear and substantial differentials between positive, negative and nil importance elements reported. This is valuable data when considering conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 9.2 represents the findings in terms of the relative impact of elements when organised into the themes. The data in Figure 9.2 has been derived from averaging the impact percentages for all elements within the theme (see. Appendix 9.2.4).

Figure 9.2

Relative Impact of Factors by Theme



When considered together, Table 9.10 and Figure 9. 2 allow the following conclusions for Analysis Step 4:

- All elements have impact and all but one have a large positive impact on motivation and engagement.
- When averaged and themes are considered, leadership and support elements (90%) and professional contribution and growth elements (90%) have an equally important positive impact on the motivation and engagement aspects measured by the UWES for the survey respondents
- More individual elements from the theme of professional contribution and growth are ranked more highly than those from the leadership and support theme, although the differences are not great.
- Elements of conditions of employment are most likely to impact negatively (26%), although this impact is due to the influence of one individual element (not being offered work when wanted). While the individual element has a negative impact which is as important as other individual elements which have a positive impact, the averaged scores for the theme result in a negative impact considerably less marked.
- Elements of collegiate and social connections are most likely to have nil impact (13%) although this likelihood is considerably less than the positive impact for this theme (84%).

All of the data from the Survey Questionnaire 2 presented and analysed so far provide indications of the elements of the employment experience and the aspects of motivation and engagement that are important. It shows which elements are likely to have the greatest impact, and which aspects are most likely to be impacted. The clarity gained through revealing consistent findings from each analysis tactic in Phase 3 provides high levels of confidence that the significant components of the experience have been identified. Further, the consistency with the findings from Phase 2, as discussed in Chapter 8, confirms that the issues indicated by interview participants as being important are reflected in the findings from the survey with the broader group. It is not known how many of the 32 survey respondents were also interview

participants but no more than 15 could have been as there were only 15 interview participants. As signalled previously, the risk of a learned response skewing the data does not seem to have been realised, as results were so unequivocal.

9.3.2 Open-Text Items

After each of the four themed sets of items requesting respondents to rate the impact of identified elements, respondents were asked:

“Taking into consideration the elements of (in turn: Leadership and Support, Professional Contribution and Growth, Collegiate and Social Connections, Conditions of Employment) identified in these questions, please describe any circumstances which, should they occur, would cause you to discontinue your role in the online program”.

Despite the confirmatory data achieved in analysis Steps 1 to 4, it is important to undertake a further step to be sure that meaning has been properly constructed by considering qualitative comments. Although the survey data provides some indication of how strongly the sessional academic staff feel about the positive or negative impact of elements presented, it does not reveal the nuances of these feelings nor show whether there are any other factors which might significantly affect their motivation and engagement. Importantly, neither does it show which elements might impact them significantly enough so that they would choose not to remain working in the program. It was vital to have an indication of the potential impact of possible changes: for instance, if an element reported by the survey respondents as having a large positive impact on their motivation and engagement was changed or discontinued, whether that would then impact on them significantly. It is possible that elements could be rated as having a large positive impact, but the removal or change to the mechanism might not be as significant. There could be elements of the employment experience that are appreciated and enjoyed but which would not impact significantly if removed. On the other hand it was possible that elements perhaps not rated as highly in the survey responses could have a greater impact if changed or removed. For these reasons, the responses to the ‘deal-breaker’ questions, asked after each set of questions relating to the four themes, are now analysed.

- **Analysis Step 5: Qualitative Comments**

The responses to the open-ended questions were firstly analysed to see how many of the 32 survey respondents (n=32) provided qualitative comments and how many responses were solicited by each of the four themed areas. In total, 25 respondents provided comment for one or more of the themes. Twenty respondents commented about conditions of employment, 17 about leadership and support, 14 about collegiate and social connections, and 13 about professional contribution and growth. Included in these figures were responses which specifically stated that there were no circumstances that they could think of that would lead to discontinuation. This response rate meant the information gained from the comments was sufficient to add to understandings and conclusions. Responses were firstly coded and then aligned to the theme within which they belong. In some cases, respondents made comments in one themed section of the survey, but their response was coded against a different theme where it was deemed to more appropriately belong. For example, where workload may have been commented on in response to the items about leadership and support, it was coded to conditions of employment in the data analysis (see the database at Appendix 9.2.5 for the full record of open-text responses and codes).

Mostly, it was found that comments did align with the 25 individual factors of the employment experience that were being measured, but not in all cases. As the comment item invited a summary response to all of the factors within each theme, some comments were general to the broad theme rather than aligned to one individual element. Further, in many instances, the comments did not necessarily indicate factors that would cause discontinuation but reflected something of concern or dissatisfaction. These comments were valuable to help form a more complete understanding of significant factors. No comments were made that contradicted the ratings of impact that were made in the surveys. This simplifies the consideration of the comments as providing valuable complementary data. The most significant insights gained from analysing the qualitative comments are summarised in Table 9.11 which shows the number of comments made relating to the elements contained in each theme. Instances of mention by respondents were recorded in accordance with key words used in their responses which clearly indicated the element of the work experience being discussed

and thence the theme to which it belonged. For instance, where the element *conflict* was mentioned, it was in the context of relationships with the unit co-ordinator or the capacity of the unit co-ordinator to manage conflict within the team.

Table 9.11

Frequency of Comments Categorised by Element and Theme

	THEMES			
	L & S	PC & G	COE	C & SC
Element of the Work Experience:				
UC and Support	15			
Work/pay balance			10	
Work security			10	
Connections with Colleagues				5
Professional Recognition		4		
Professional Learning		4		
Blackboard	3			
Workload			3	
Conflict	3			
Staffing processes			2	
Unit Expertise		2		
Communications		1		
Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff			1	

While there was nothing in the qualitative comments which contradicted the way the various elements of the employment experience were viewed in accordance with the ratings in the survey, the comments did provide additional perspective or dimensions to these elements, which is valuable. The comments also raised some new dimensions, clearly related to the identified themes and surveyed elements, which enriched understandings about what the themes encompassed for the sessional staff. The comments which are summarised in Table 9.12 complement understandings about the elements in the ways explained in the remainder of section 9.3. Each of the coded comments is related to the existing elements and themes as identified in Phase 2 and which formed the basis of the Survey Questionnaire 2.

- **UC and Support**

Data from Phases 1 and 2 indicate the positive impact on sessional academic staff deriving from the provision of support and guidance, particularly from the unit coordinator (UC). Qualitative comments in the survey on this element illuminated some key characteristics of this support. A number of respondents mentioned the critical nature of the UC's support in dealing with challenging students or situations requiring conflict resolution. In some cases, the extent and nature of support provided to sessional staff encompassed the broader school leadership, and respondents expressed that if they no longer had access to timely and helpful advice from all quarters, that would impact on the likelihood of them continuing in their role. For example, Respondent 1 (see Appendix 9.2.5) stated:

“If the support provided by SoE sessional coordinator, UCs or IT services were to be substantially reduced or if we were not encouraged to make use of these people and their expertise, I would discontinue my role in the online program. Being able to contact any of these people when difficulties or uncertainties arise is crucial in me feeling positive, supported and valued in this role”.

Respondent 3 noted the critical role of feedback being provided by their UC, indicating that:

“If there is no supportive feedback, that would make me consider quitting”.

Three comments mentioned the de-motivating impact of management from their UC that was felt to be too rigid or invasive – or ‘micro-management’ as one respondent stated. These and a number of other comments related to ideas of professional autonomy and respect, with one respondent explicitly stating that if they were treated rudely by managers, they would discontinue in their role. Also mentioned was the importance of leaders being willing to listen to feedback from sessional staff and make changes based on their ideas and suggestions.

Respondent 5 referred to the more general feelings of support and guidance received from the School leadership and indicated they would consider discontinuing if:

“Feeling the support is no longer there. At times in the online environment it can be difficult to assess the tone of emails from students and knowing the support from the leadership is there is invaluable”.

The comments provided depth of insight into the ways the impact of the UC could be felt as either positive or negative.

- **Work/Pay Balance**

There were 10 cases of respondents commenting on the work/pay balance. In all cases, the view expressed was that the work/pay balance was fine: they felt that remuneration for work expended was only just acceptable and that their tolerance for any shift in the balance towards more work or less pay was minimal or non-existent. This was an important insight because work/pay balance did not score particularly highly as a negative impact on the questionnaire item. However, the qualitative comments provide a useful indication of the precarious positioning of this element of the work experience. The information from Respondent 22 was that:

“Conditions of employment, apart from remuneration, are basically good, and would not cause me to discontinue”.

Respondent 19 commented that:

“Also, if work load increased even a little the balance with remuneration would discourage me greatly”.

Respondent 26 stated that they were no current considerations causing them to consider discontinuing but commented:

“None except if asked to work for free”.

Respondent 18 made the precariousness of the work/pay balance clear and provided some specificity in saying:

“I find the marking pay/time allocation not relevant to the time that I take to mark an assignment - I have never yet marked an assignment in the time that is allocated. To do so would be to short sell the student with feedback and attention to detail. It is something that makes me feel less valued as an employee”.

The important link between the functioning of the leadership and support and being prepared to exert effort to fulfill the workload was illustrated in a comment from Respondent 10 that:

“If my contributions were not recognised and valued by the team leader, or of the team leader were ill organised, I would be less enthusiastic about taking on this workload”.

The comments made apparent the intensity of feelings associated with the element of work/pay balance and the precariousness of the balance.

- **Work Security**

The qualitative comments have been coded as work security, as responses encompassed more than just the element of the impact on a forced break on motivation

and engagement. Respondents commented more broadly about the lack of work security and a few expressed their desire to have more certainty about being offered work for more than one study period at a time. As well as this, the comments also provided some insight as to the extent to which not being offered work would impact negatively on their motivation and engagement and the point at which they would decide to discontinue in the role. Respondent 16 indicated that one incident would be sufficient, if no explanation was given:

“Not being offered work is a horrible feeling and does feel personal no matter what.....Many times people find out they are not being given things by finding out someone else has and this could feel like a rejection for them”.

Others commented that repeated incidents would prompt the decision. For instance, Respondent 31 commented that the circumstance that would cause them to consider discontinuing would be:

“Missing being offered work after requesting sessional work for many SPs continuously - this would lead to low motivation and little hope leading to discontinuation”.

Respondent 21 stipulated that it would be:

“If I were not to be offered a role in a Study Period on two consecutive occasions”.

The comments gave an insight into the affective elements of the impact, indicating that emotional responses might be a factor along with pragmatic and financial reasons for making such a choice.

- **Collegiate and Social Connections**

Five comments were made that related to the impact of having collegiate and social connections with others in the sessional academic work force. Some of these comments emphasised the importance of maintaining these connections to mitigate the isolation of working remotely, with Respondent 1 specifically stating that they would discontinue in the role:

“If being an online tutor meant that there were no opportunities for face-to-face interaction with other staff”.

The precise form of the connectedness was not stipulated in that comment, but two others mentioned the face to face opportunities for networking provided by the SETLD program. Respondent 16 commented on the value of social connectedness and suggested that more planned social events should be offered:

*“Never meeting would mean I find it harder to connect to the people we work with”
Perhaps more social events at night?”*

Two of the comments alluded to the importance of positive relationships with colleagues, and the negative impact that would result from situations where they did not feel they were working with like-minded or pleasant colleagues. For instance, as well as adding opinion about the SETLD program, Respondent 26 commented that they would consider discontinuing if:

“SETLD sessions became compulsory f2f (face to face); collegial meetings become time wasting especially if asked to meet with others' who have differing values and work ethics; if asked to attend too many PD's or SETLD that do not present new, challenging and contemporary information/skills, such that they become very boring presentations”.

The comments illustrated the importance of remaining responsive to the needs of the group in the ways the professional learning should be provided.

- **Professional Recognition**

Comments coded as professional recognition aligned strongly to the findings about professional contribution and growth as a theme. The survey findings indicated that no respondents reported that having opportunities to make a professional contribution was experienced as a negative impact. This was the only item with no respondents reporting any negative impact. The qualitative comments provided some additional richness to that data, with several respondents stating that it was essential to them that they feel valued professionally, and that they must continue to be given opportunities to contribute. For example, Respondent 12 remarked that while there was not currently a circumstance that would cause them to discontinue, they felt that as well as offering the SETLD program for sessional staff:

“Opportunities to attend relevant Professional Learning and or Conferences being extended to sessional staff would be welcomed. Perhaps there could be a merit system or length of service system established”.

Respondent 19 provided an overview comment that indicated both the value of the opportunities provided for professional contribution and growth, and the limitations of what was on offer:

“All of these areas have a great impact on my motivation to teach in the online program. Whilst current initiatives are on the right track for boosting my motivation a lot more opportunities for learning and developing a sense of team is required to say that I felt 100% fulfilled in my employment”.

The comments indicated that expanding opportunities for professional recognition could impact positively on motivation and engagement.

- **Professional Learning**

Allied to the previous code was that of professional learning. Comments against this code confirmed that the SETLD program was appreciated and valued, and three respondents mentioned that it was critical to them that the program remain accessible to those unable to attend in person. Two commented that if attendance in person was mandated, they would not continue in the role: for example, Respondent stated they may not continue working in the program:

“If we were forced to attend (SETLD) in person – if it was not available online”.

Two respondents commented that they would like to see the remote program enhanced, with Respondent 19 commenting that:

“The current SETLD format for off campus tutors does not afford much collegiality or more than minimal professional development. If the SETLD afforded more engagement for off campus tutors greater motivation would result”.

The comments complemented those made in relation to the item *collegiate and social connections* above in highlighting the need to be inclusive and responsive in the way provision for professional learning is made.

- **Blackboard**

Two of the comments confirmed the helpful nature of the way their unit Blackboard sites were prepared for them, with comments such as the following from Respondent 10:

“I enjoy working when I am on a team that has a sensitive, well-organised, informed, innovative, and cooperative team leader, who has set up a good program of work that is well resourced and well supported by Blackboard”.

The comment from the third respondent gave an indication of why this item may have been rated by a minority as having a negative impact. The comment related to the nature and limitations of the Blackboard environment generally, rather than to dissatisfaction about the work done to prepare the unit site for the teaching period. Respondent 7 provided comprehensive insights in saying that:

Significantly, the quality of the Blackboard Platform is very DE-motivating, as I am required to spend many, many hours dealing with a range of problems associated with technical elements of Blackboard. I note here that in order to present work of an acceptable standard to students (to model best practice), I need to work well beyond the hours for which I am paid. Significantly, the level of support provided by the LTS team is exceptional and helps me cope with the technical problems found on Blackboard (and other elements of technology)..... I am very computer literate and confident using a range of technologies, however If the problems with Blackboard (and other technology related work) continue to be a concern... and if that is not noted by leadership - and remuneration is one aspect of that, then it could be a factor in influencing me to stop working at (the university) ”.

The comments drew out useful distinctions between the platform itself and its affordances, and the management of its preparation and presentation to students.

- **Workload**

This code was listed separately to that of work/pay balance, as the comments referred to aspects of workload that seemed not to be related to remuneration received. The comments mentioned the negative impact of being asked to undertake administrative tasks that the respondents felt were not connected to their academic roles. For instance, Respondent 6 maintained that they would consider discontinuing if there was

“excessive workload unrelated to student engagement and learning”.

While there was not a great deal of data addressing the question of whether respondents saw all components of their workload as appropriate, the comments indicated that further inquiry on that matter could be fruitful.

- **Conflict**

Three respondents mentioned conflict specifically as something which had a negative impact on them to the extent to which they would consider ceasing in their roles.

The potential of conflict to impact decisions about continuing employment was flagged by Respondent 24:

“I guess if there was negative interaction between colleagues in a unit it would make it uncomfortable to work with certain colleagues”.

The construction of the survey items and the codes which informed them, did not overtly provide opportunity to rate the impact of conflict. The comments made by respondents specifically related to conflict between staff members, and had implications for leadership and support and for staffing processes. The importance of harmonious approaches and relationships was identified by Respondent 10 who commented:

“I would be reluctant to continue working if I did not have a good relationships with other staff whose ideas and opinions and methods I did not respect or who did not respect mine”.

Other comments made point to the possibility that the respondents had experienced conflict with colleagues which may not have been satisfactorily dealt with or resolved. For instance, Respondent 16 commented:

“Being emailed rudely.....would discourage me. Seeing people not supported by leadership would make me question my work at the Uni”.

The comments made it apparent that where conflict occurs, it must be managed in order to limit the impact on motivation and engagement.

- **Staffing processes**

Both comments made about staffing processes referred to the perceived lack of fairness and transparency. Although the comments were linked to the item coded as work security, they also gave a particular insight into the reasons respondents may experience the staffing processes as unfair. The basis of this perception was that staff members thought to be less skilled or experienced were offered work opportunities in place of those perceived to be more skilled or with longer service, as evidenced by the

comments made by Respondent 4 about what might prompt them to discontinue work in the programs:

“Not being offered any work without an explanation as to why and yet seeing new people being continuously employed (some of whom have not been effective)”.

The comments were helpful in identifying that it was perceived unfairness of process which seemed to have the most impact on motivation and engagement, rather than issues with timeliness or efficiency.

- **Unit Expertise**

Only two comments were made about the significance of having expertise in a unit and its impact on motivation and engagement. However, as the importance was clear from the ratings in the survey, the comments did not detract from that importance and served to give a little more colour to the findings. Both comments stated that if the staff member was asked to undertake a role for which they felt they did not have sufficient expertise, that they would expect to be provided with the time and support (and in one case, remuneration) through which to develop the required expertise. If that was not forthcoming then they would withdraw. Respondent 7 expressed the following:

“None of these factors would cause me to discontinue my role, unless I was given roles which I believed I was not capable of performing effectively. I would have the ability to become knowledgeable and capable... and therefore would teach effectively, however this would take substantial time and effort and to be honest... I would not be paid for that, so again... remuneration does play a role”.

The comments made in relation to unit expertise link to the comments and ratings made for the general themes of professional learning and growth, and leadership and support, whereby sessional staff members appreciate and rely on the formal and informal professional learning opportunities as well as the leadership and support which they are offered.

- **Communications**

Only one comment was made which related explicitly to communications received from the school or university, with Respondent 12 stating that while there were no

circumstances within the theme of Collegiate and Social Connections that might cause them to discontinue their employment, they offered a suggestion for improvement:

“Extending invitations to School of Education events to sessional staff and including them in internal general emails would add to the sense of cohesion and social connection. Online tutoring can be quite isolating”.

It was not made clear whether the comment referred to communications received from particular sources. It is not really possible to link this comment with any of the existing codes or themes, as the comment was not detailed enough to know whether the respondent had experienced a missed opportunity, a lack of professional courtesy or inclusivity, or was not privy to essential information, through what they perceived as insufficient communications.

- **Co-ordinator of Sessional Staff**

One respondent explicitly stated that if the co-ordinator of sessional staff no longer managed the staffing processes each round, that they would discontinue in their role as a sessional academic staff member. Respondent 19 stated that they would consider discontinuing if:

“UC support were insufficient or payment as organised by (Co-ordinator of Sessional staff), I would be less inclined to continue working with this employer”.

The comment highlighted the importance of trust in knowing that processes were being properly managed. Further inquiry would reveal whether it was the personal professional relationship with a specified person and role which was critical, or the general reassurance due resourcing was allocated to managing the sessional staff’s interests.

- **Nil Responses**

It is also useful to note that two respondents expressly commented that for each of the themed areas surveyed, they could not think of any circumstances that would cause them to discontinue their roles. Respondent 30 stated for each of the four themes in turn:

Leadership and support:

“I can't imagine any unreasonable circumstances arising which would cause me to want to discontinue my role in the online program”.

Professional contribution and growth:

“Once again I can't imagine any unreasonable circumstances arising which would cause me to want to discontinue my role in the online program”.

Collegiate and social connections:

“I can't imagine the elements of collegiate and social connections altering in such a way that I would wish to discontinue my role”.

Conditions of employment:

“I can only add that if I was not being offered employment despite seeking it, for an extended time, I would question my own ability and contribution to the online program. It would not, however, cause me to want to discontinue my role”.

While no robust conclusions can be drawn from this, it is an indication that there may always be staff members whose decisions to remain engaged in work may not be impacted by the surrounding conditions. It may be that their personal choices derive more from financial necessity or from a commitment that is unassailable by environmental conditions. However, this is a valuable reminder that management structures and processes to optimise motivation and engagement must not be reductive and consider only what would cause staff to discontinue in their roles. While considering the “deal-breakers” is illuminating to understandings about the relative importance of identified factors which then help manage risk, rationales that drive decision-making need to go beyond avoiding certain conditions and must include ensuring inclusion of certain conditions.

9.4 Discussion of Complementary Data

A record of the sources of complementary data collected to support the research was presented in Table 6.4 in Chapter 6. While some of the artifacts listed in the table were included to provide documentary evidence and an accountability trail that contributed to the robustness of the method, other items also complement the meaning-making process for the research and so need to be analysed and discussed here. Section 9.4 examines how some of the additional data sources complement the findings of the interviews in Phase 2 and the Survey Questionnaire 2 in Phase 3 of the research. The

discussion is framed within the four identified themes of *leadership and support*, *professional contribution and growth*, *conditions of employment*, and *collegiate and social connections*. In discussing the complementary data sources related to each of the themes, connections are made to the factors identified and discussed in section 9.2 of this chapter. In common with the findings from free-text comments made in the Survey Questionnaire 2, the complementary data sources examined did not contradict earlier findings, but did provide further confirmation and illustration of how identified elements within the four themes achieve the impact on motivation and engagement reported (see Appendix 6.5).

9.4.1 Theme 1: Leadership and Support

The leadership and support of the unit co-ordinator is a dominant element that impacts on the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff. This aspect was mentioned extensively in the interviews, rated in the Survey Questionnaire 2 as having a strong positive impact on motivation and engagement, and commented on a number of times by survey respondents. Two key items of complementary data provide some illustration and evidence of the nature of support and advice received from unit co-ordinators: these are the unit team meeting record template (see Appendix 6.5.1) and the moderation plan template (see Appendix 6.5.2). Both of these templates reveal how aspects of leadership and support are provided to tutors. Many of these aspects relate clearly to factors of leadership and support that the previous data analysis has established as impacting on motivation and engagement. The unit team meeting template provides a framework for unit co-ordinators that helps ensure that they address and explain key aspects of the responsibilities of tutors and so demonstrates that the UC is there to guide and support their work. All UCs are required to conduct a meeting and record that they covered the topics on the template – the record is then submitted as evidence for a pay claim for themselves and their tutors. Likewise, the moderation plan template sets out a structure for the UCs to discuss with their tutor teams how the assessment moderation strategies will be undertaken in the unit to ensure marking consistency and compliance with university requirements and local school expectations for quality assessment processes. Once again, the provision of the template allows UCs to exercise leadership and support with their tutor teams.

9.4.2. Theme 2: Professional Contribution and Growth

The previous data analysis showed that the role played by the School of Education teaching and learning development (SETLD) program plays a key role in providing valuable opportunities for professional learning and growth and that these opportunities are critical to optimising motivation and engagement for sessional academic staff. The complementary data source which best illustrates the multiple and complex ways in which this program provides valued opportunities is a sample program (Appendix 6.5.4) showing the structure of the program and the range of modules available, with some as plenary sessions and some as optional sessions from which to choose according to needs.

Along with the sample program showing the range of professional learning sessions offered, a further document shows the numbers of sessional staff registering (see Appendices 6.5.5). The latter indicates that of the ten modules offered, six were fully subscribed and a total of 82 staff had registered.

9.4.3 Theme 3: Conditions of Employment

Questions of remuneration and the balance of expectations and the rate of remuneration were raised and addressed in the interviews in Phase 2 and then the follow-up questionnaire in Phase 3 and were found to be important and finely-tuned. The complementary data source of the work engagement agreement (see Appendix 6.5) is thus a significant document that illustrates a mechanism for achieving clarity, with clarity being a key component in sessional academic staff being able to exercise informed choice about accepting and continuing in their role. The agreement is organised into sections headed as shown in Table 9.12.

Table 9.12*Components of the Work Engagement Agreement*

Component	Contents
Key information	information about teaching period dates and student group sizes
Online teaching duties	a list of eight key responsibilities for facilitating the learning and teaching with their student group
Marking duties	information about managing processes and the basis of remuneration for marking.
Moderation duties	a statement about the expectation to be involved and how the assessment moderation process is managed
Unit review	the need to participate in the review of the unit on completion
Payments	reference to an attached copy of the current pay guide and pay dates as well as a link to the university area to contact if any questions
Support and guidance	information about who to contact if tutors have any questions or need guidance

9.4.4 Theme 4: Collegiate and Social Connections

Virtual tutor lounges were identified in Phases 2 and 3 as part of the provision of leadership and support afforded in the Blackboard sites and thus relate to Theme 1: *leadership and support*. However, the tutor lounges also contribute to providing collegiate and social connections with many of the interchanges having an informal and/or personal basis.

In addition, a sample copy of the online connections newsletter (see Appendix 6.5) demonstrates the way communications from the School of Education are managed in order to build community, add a personal dimension to information sharing, include sessional staff in opportunities and ensure key information, updates and reminders are shared. Communicating through this publication presents as more inclusive and tailored than relying only on official and broadcast emails and announcements from the school. The discussion in section 9.4 concludes the data analysis for Phase 3 of the research. The remainder of Chapter 9 addresses Research Questions 3 and 4, makes

some concluding statements about findings and relates those statements to the JD-R model.

9.5 Response to Research Question 3

The purpose of Phase 3 of the research was to ascertain the extent to which the aspects identified in Phase 2 and summarised in response to Research Question 2 were significant for the wider group of sessional academic staff in the research group. Their significance for the whole group would determine the value of implications for the management of the sessional academic staff and the confidence in recommendations made. Research Question 3 asks:

How are the elements of the work experience identified by the interview participants important to motivation and engagement for the whole research group?

Table 9.8 displays in rank order those elements of the work experience which were reported by the Survey Questionnaire 2 respondents (n=32) as impacting or potentially impacting on their motivation and engagement. High alignment was found between this list and rank order of elements, and the elements emerging from the interview and analysis process in Phase 2 of the research. Once again it must be noted that the impact could be positive or negative, thus representing either a job demand or a job resource. Direct comparisons between the elements identified and ranked as important in Phase 2, and those in Phase 3, are not possible because of the different data collection and analysis methods used in the Phases. The 25 items surveyed in Phase 3 questionnaire were honed from 32 elements thought to be important after the analysis of Phase 2 data. However, it can be stated that all of the 25 elements of the work experience that were chosen to be part of the final questionnaire, were found to have considerable impact on respondents' motivation and engagement. The lowest-impact element reported by the respondents still recorded an impact for 85% of respondents, that is, no element was reported as impacting on less than two thirds of the respondents. Almost half the elements (11 of 25) were reported as impacting 90% or more of respondents. Further, all of the elements measured and the qualitative comments made can be encompassed in the themes and sub-themes identified in Phase 2 of the research. Nuances and contextual interpretations were discovered which add to the richness of

the data, and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of important considerations. Thus, while Phase 3 provided some useful further explication of factors and their significance, it did not present any challenge to the relevance of findings in Phase 2 and it provided valuable confidence in the conclusions made. It can be concluded that the elements of the work experience identified by the interview participants were very important to the motivation and engagement for the whole research group.

9.6 Concluding Statements and Links to the JD-R Model

In this section, eight statements are made about the findings, and some further detail is provided about each. All statements refer specifically to the group of sessional academic staff working in the fully online programs administered in the research case study site. Statements 1 – 4 concern the elements of the work experience that are most likely to have an impact on motivation and engagement. Statements 5 – 7 relate the findings to the JD-R model and concern the aspects of motivation and engagement as measured by the 17-point UWES that are likely to be the most impacted. The final statement encompasses the insights expressed in the preceding seven and makes a final claim.

9.6.1 Elements of the Work Experience Most Likely to Impact on Motivation and Engagement:

Key findings are that:

- Five elements of the work experience that are managed by the organisation in their structures and processes are most likely to have positive impact on the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff.

Three of these elements are located within the theme of *professional learning and growth*. These are: being placed as a tutor or unit co-ordinator in a unit in which the staff member feels confident of their expertise; having access to opportunities for professional learning and growth in ways that are organised and resourced by the organisation, and having opportunities to provide input or innovation in practice. This includes formal learning programs as well as ad hoc or informal opportunities; and being included in the broad mission of the school and having genuine opportunities to contribute ideas and innovate practice in ways which are recognised and valued.

One of the five elements identified as having the greatest impact is located within the theme *conditions of employment*. This is having flexible working conditions which take account of sessional academic staff members' various situations and work/life demands.

The final element having greatest impact on motivation and engagement is located within the theme *leadership and support*. This is being well-supported to undertake their work through key leadership structures that provide professional guidance, advice, support, structures and communications that encompass the technologies, information, content expertise and student management demands of their roles.

- Four elements of the work experience that are managed by the organisation in their structures and processes are most likely to have negative impact on the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff.

Three of these elements are located within the theme of *conditions of employment*. These are: employment opportunities and processes that result in work not being offered when wanted or which preclude longer-term assurance of work, especially if staffing decisions are not perceived as fair and transparent; work expectations that are viewed as unreasonable in terms of their nature or when compared with remuneration received; and communications and administrative processes that are experienced as an imposition, unnecessary or unwieldy.

The final element most likely to have negative impact on motivation and engagement is located within the theme *professional contribution and growth*. This is staff recognition and reward mechanisms that are perceived as unfair or contrived.

- One element of the work experience that is managed by the organisation in their structures and processes is most likely to have no impact on the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff. It is located within the theme *collegiate and social connections* and is the provision of informal networking opportunities, both through organised programs or events or ad hoc or staff-managed spaces.

This final finding must be qualified in three ways. Firstly, although the element identified is the most likely of those surveyed to have little or no impact, it still had a sizeable positive or negative impact on not less than 63% of staff surveyed. Secondly,

the impact of this element was often not as clear as others. For instance, although the ratings in the survey indicated that respondents did not find opportunities for informal networking to be especially valuable for motivation and engagement, free text comments included respondents expressing the desire for more extensive opportunities and that removing such opportunities would threaten their motivation and engagement. Finally, although the specific structures and opportunities existing in the program may have elicited a lesser impact, it is possible that different networking opportunities might be viewed as more important or impactful. Therefore, the characteristic of the provision of informal networking opportunities should not be discounted as insignificant but flagged for further exploration in the future.

- Overall, elements of the work experience managed by the organisation in their structures and processes that are likely to have the greatest positive impact on motivation and engagement are linked to transformative concepts of professional identity and self-realisation, represented by the theme label *professional contribution and growth*.
- Conversely, those most likely to have negative impact on motivation and engagement tend to be transactional factors linked to remuneration and work security. However, it is important to note that some of the negative impact arises from elements that could be seen as linked to professional identity and self-realisation. For instance, when work is not offered when wanted, sessional staff can experience this as personally and professionally devaluing, not only as disappointing from the point of view of a lack of income.
- Elements of the work experience most likely to have the least impact can be either transformational or transactional in nature.

9.6.2 Aspects of Motivation and Engagement Likely to be Most Impacted (Links to JD-R Model)

The previous six findings concern the elements of the work experience that will affect motivation and engagement. That perspective informed the data analysis undertaken in Steps 3 and 4 of the analysis of Phase 3 data as recounted in Sub-section 9.3.1. The following three statements are linked to the first six but they change the perspective to the aspects of motivation and engagement which were impacted most significantly.

That perspective informed the data analysis in Step 2 of Phase 3 data analysis and used the data from the measurement of motivation and engagement through the 17 – point UWES. Chapter 3 contained an explanation of the UWES as a key component of the JD-R model. The following three findings therefore demonstrate more precisely how the important elements of the work experience impact on motivation and engagement.

- All aspects of motivation and engagement will be positively impacted by all elements of the employment experience surveyed to some extent: that is, at least some staff surveyed report positive impact on all aspects of motivation and engagement for each of the elements.

This result illustrates the significance of structures and processes in place as experienced. It may also indicate a ‘halo effect’ whereby respondents who are overall highly motivated and engaged will rate each aspect of motivation and engagement highly. Even so, such an effect would confirm the significance of the structures and processes that contribute to sessional academic staff feeling overall high levels of motivation and engagement.

- The aspects of motivation and engagement most likely to be negatively impacted are those linked to the engaged state rather than to motivation to undertake the work.
- No aspect of motivation and engagement was negatively impacted by all elements of the employment experience. At the same time, every aspect of motivation and experience was negatively impacted by at least one element for at least one respondent. The four aspects from the UWES most likely to be negatively impacted were:

Item 16: I find it difficult to detach from my work

Item 3: Time flies when I'm working

Item 6: I forget about other things while I'm working

Item 14: I get carried away in my work

Reference to the full UWES and the mapping of each item to either motivation or engagement is at Figure 4.3. All four of the items above are seen to link to engagement rather than motivation. The significance of this finding is to show that when sessional academic staff do experience a negative impact on their motivation and engagement, it seems likely that their engagement will be diminished more, or perhaps before, their

broader motivation towards the work. This finding has implications for the extent to which the staff might be willing to engage with, guide and support the learners in their care.

- The motivation and engagement of some sessional academic staff will be unaffected by all or some of the elements of the work experience surveyed.

Some respondents reported that some or all aspects of motivation and engagement were unaffected by any of the 25 employment factors in the survey. There was narrow distribution among the elements, with a range from 20 to 25 elements being reported as having no effect on motivation and engagement for at least one respondent. It is also possible that respondents reporting nil impact across all aspects of motivation and engagement may not have engaged authentically with the survey. These two considerations mean that no meaningful conclusion can be drawn about whether aspects relating to engagement or to motivation are more likely to see nil impact. However, this finding serves as a salient point that tempers other findings and which must be considered when examining and managing structures and processes for optimising motivation and engagement.

9.6.3 Final Statement

Insights have been gained from both the perspective of the work experience elements that impact motivation and engagement, and of the aspects of motivation and engagement that are impacted. Consideration of both the degree and the nature of impact can thus serve to inform management decisions about structures and processes that are most likely to optimise motivation and engagement, in ways that are important to the achievement of organisational aims and mission. The final statement encompasses the insights expressed in the preceding findings and makes a final claim:

- The interrelationships between the elements of the work experience which impact on motivation and engagement, the aspects of motivation and engagement that are impacted, and the proportions of staff impacted, must all be taken into account when planning strategies to optimise motivation and engagement.

For instance, if a particular element was found to have a negative impact on particular aspects of motivation for a certain number of staff, but that same element was shown to have no impact on motivation and engagement for a greater number of staff, that information will guide appropriate action. Similarly, if a particular element was found to have a positive impact on more staff than either a negative or nil impact, and that impact was to most aspects of motivation and engagement, that likewise provides clear indicators for meaningful organisational response. This interrelationship and the need to take it into account when planning organisational strategies are discussed further in the final chapter where recommendations are made.

9.7: Response to Research Question 4

The confidence in the findings from the Survey Questionnaire 2 and complementary data and the resulting conclusions lead to the response to Research Question 4:

What factors are important for the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff members working in an online environment?

Important elements of the work experience are able to be organised within four broad themes: elements concerned with the leadership and support provided by the organisation and the structures and processes it resources and manages, the opportunities provided within those structures and processes for the staff to contribute and develop professionally, the ways in which the more transactional aspects of the work experience are managed through employment conditions, and the opportunities that are provided for collegiate and personal networks and connections to be developed and sustained. The specific elements of the work experience that were identified and measured throughout the research phases generated some variance in labels or specifics, but all remained aligned to one of the four themes. It is likely that over time and as the organisation and work environment evolve, new elements may arise, but also likely that new elements would likewise be able to be mapped to one of the four themes. Within each theme and their sub-themes, some elements of the work experience proved to have more impact on motivation and engagement than others, although all elements had sufficient impact for them not to be discounted. For the most

part, that impact was positive, although both positive and negative impact are important to an informed approach to optimising motivation and engagement. The elements of the work environment that are most important to optimising motivation and engagement amongst sessional academic staff working in the online environment are:

- Staffing processes which provide work when wanted, place sessional academic staff in units in which they have content expertise, and which are fair, transparent and timely, and which enable team building.
- Provision of an effective, efficient online learning management system which enables online learning and teaching, and technical support and guidance in its use.
- Leadership and support of a unit co-ordinator who is knowledgeable, responsive, supportive, values team contributions and allows some autonomy amongst team members.
- Leadership, support and communications from the wider organisation which are timely, knowledgeable, respectful and inclusive.
- Mechanisms through which sessional academic staff are able to contribute expertise, ideas and innovations in their work.
- Provision of planned, relevant and accessible professional learning and development opportunities.
- Pay structures which are fair, which recognise professional commitment and which are administratively efficient.
- Mechanisms for the recognition and celebration of the work undertaken by sessional academic staff and their professional contributions.
- Opportunities for collegiate interactions
- Work practices which allow flexibility of hours and location and which accommodate breaks between teaching periods.

9.8 Conclusion to the Chapter

Chapter 9 has presented an analysis and discussion of the data collected from Phase 3 of the research, wherein the broad group of sessional academic staff in the case study

research context was surveyed for the second time, in order to determine whether the themes, sub-themes and elements that explained how motivation and engagement was experienced by sessional academic staff in the case study context were consistent between the interview participants and the broader group. The data presented and analysed in Chapter 9 demonstrated that the significant features were consistent and so Phase 3 contributed to confidence about the trustworthiness of the findings. This confidence is claimed despite some disappointment with the response rate for the Survey Questionnaire (22%). This low response rate may have been a limitation if the results had been equivocal. Some of the Survey Questionnaire 2 respondents (n=32) may have also completed the first survey questionnaire and may have been interview participants. Although the risk of learned response was flagged in the methodology discussion, the conclusion is that the data was not compromised. Findings across the group of 32 showed strong and similar patterns, with minimal outliers in specific instances. The data and analysis revealed the most significant elements of the work experience that impacted on motivation and engagement, and the aspects of motivation and engagement that were impacted upon. Key conclusions can be made from the data that link to the UWES and the JD-R model and which can inform recommendations for organisational structures and processes.

Detailed analysis of the three phases of the research has been provided in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. The statements made in Section 9.7 inform the conclusions made about the particular context in which the case study group is situated. The three phases of data collection and analysis and the research questions that were addressed in them, enabled a response to the final research question, Research Question 4. The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 10, makes some conclusive statements about the significance of the findings in terms of motivation and engagement theory in general and JD-R theory in particular. Chapter 10 also contains some recommendations for organisational structures and processes that will optimise motivation and engagement amongst sessional academic staff in the research context environment and casual academic staff in similar environments.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

The final chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis and has seven sections. Section 10.2 contains a summary of the background process that informed the research approach and instrument design. In Section 10.3 is a summary of the responses to the research questions. In Section 10.4, the research and method is evaluated and research challenges and constraints are discussed. Section 10.5 presents implications and recommendations for practice for managers to provide structures and processes that will optimise motivation and engagement amongst casual academic staff members. Section 10.6 identifies opportunities for future research both with and beyond the research database. Section 10.7 concludes the chapter and the thesis.

10.2 Summary of Background Process

The research began with a survey of the literature about learning and teaching relevant to the research context, being fully online higher education programs and those in which casual academic staff work. The purpose of the review was to ascertain what factors could be expected to have bearing on the work experience of sessional academic staff working in the program under research, in order to provide a theoretical foundation for the research and guidance for the questioning of participants.

Chapters 2 and 3 provided evidence of general circumstances that are relevant to the experience of casual academic staff working in online programs. The evidence led to some key conclusions as presented in those chapters:

- As both online programs and the practice of employing casual academic staff are growing rapidly and broadly, informed practice may not be keeping up with these developments and attention is thus required to protect both the employees and program quality.
- Casual academic staff as a group have been marginalised and problematised globally as well as locally, and this creates challenges for their management and support. Casual academic staff who work fully online may experience a heightened sense of marginalisation.
- Wide variation can be expected in the experience of casual academic staff dependent on the context within which they work. This differentiation of experience may be more marked for casual academic staff than for permanent faculty staff.

The data collected from the selective review of Australian practice in Research Phase 1 and reported in Chapter 7 revealed that:

- Specific aspects of the work experience are likely to be important and therefore they guided questioning of participants. These aspects were the recruitment, placement and induction processes followed, role clarity and expectations, the leadership and support provided, access to relevant, good quality professional learning, recognition of contribution and opportunities to contribute professionally, and generally, the ways in which communications are managed and community is built.

The pertinent knowledge fore-fronted about the expected importance of identified characteristics of the work context has been joined with theory about the nature of motivation and engagement. That theory was closely examined in Chapter 4. The evidence concerning the nature of online learning and teaching and of casual academic employment was brought to theory and models which explicate and measure motivation and engagement. In seeking to measure motivation and engagement in order to eventually identify structures and processes which optimise both, a model was required that is suitable to the context. One critical component of suitability was its capacity for flexible application and a perspective that allows for differential experience. Chapter 4 contained a comprehensive examination of the history and

development of motivation and engagement theory and made statements about the relevance of various theory and models for the research. The most relevant theory and models arose from within the relationships/networks theoretical perspective, and that of theory within this perspective, the JD-R theory and model was selected as the most useful. As detailed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5, the key characteristics of the JD-R model which contribute to its suitability were that it is well-established and robust, it calls for a perspective that takes in the interplay between organisation and employee, rather than taking a purely personal/psychological view, and that it is flexible and can be applied in varied contexts. Chapter 4 showed how the JD-R model could inform the design of the case study data collection and analysis.

The JD-R theory and model provided an overall frame for designing questions for the case study participants, the formulation of conclusions about the particular organisational context and ways in which engaged behaviour might be enabled and enhanced. Analysing and measuring both motivation and engagement by using the UWES (Figure 6.2) embedded in the model provided a clear and useful framework against which the aspects of the experience of casual academics working in the online programs were examined and understood, and their impact ascertained.

10.3 Main Findings of the Thesis

Sub-sections 10.3.1 to 10.3.4 contain a summary of the findings for each of the research questions and an explanation of how the findings from earlier questions informed the design of the subsequent phases of the research.

10.3.1 Research Question 1: How is motivation and engagement being experienced by sessional academic staff working in one fully online program?

Research Question 1 was addressed in Chapter 7, which provided results and discussion for Phase 1 of the research. There were two parts to Phase 1; the selective review of Australian practice and Survey Questionnaire 1. Data from both parts showed that motivation and engagement are being experienced by the sessional staff members in the research group in ways that are broadly consistent with expectations

when the contextual characteristics of online delivery and casual status are taken into account, and that levels of motivation and engagement are high overall.

As reported in Section 7.4, motivation and engagement for the sessional staff were influenced by such factors as: their proficiency with the learning technologies and online learning and teaching pedagogies that support learning and teaching online; subject area expertise; their capacity to manage student relationships online, as well as deliver content; the ability to balance work/life commitments; the extent to which they feel included in the organisational network and consulted; the extent to which they feel that they are adequately remunerated for their efforts; and the extent and nature of support and professional learning accessible to them.

While Phase 1 was instrumental in informing the design of the following phases, it also collected baseline data about the current reported levels of motivation and engagement for the survey respondents (n=41) drawn from the pool of sessional academics working in the online programs. That data was collected in Survey Questionnaire 1. Table 7.2 summarised the measurements of motivation and engagement levels being experienced by the 41 surveyed staff members and Section 7.3.1 explains how the levels were derived. Table 7.3 shows the numbers of respondents in each of five category levels from low to very high motivation and engagement. Those numbers translate to 51 % of respondents (21/41) who reported levels of motivation and engagement categorised as high, 46% (19/41) as medium and 3% (1/41) as low. The information about how motivation and engagement was being experienced was central to informing the design and conduct of Phase 2 of the research, the in-depth interviews. Once it had been established what the expected parameters and nature of the experience of motivation and engagement were and what the sessional academic staff in the specific context were experiencing, the inquiry could continue to develop accurate and deep knowledge from the case study.

10.3.2 Research Question 2: What are the elements of the work experience that impact on motivation and engagement for interviewed participants?

Research Question 2 was addressed from the data collected and analysed in Phase 2 of the research, in which 15 sessional staff members from the sessional pool engaged in

in-depth interviews. Chapter 8 contains a full explanation of the data collection and analysis for Research Phase 2. In analysing the interview transcripts, a full data base was created from the transcripts of the interview participants' responses to the semi-structured interview questions. Individual topics as they were discussed in the interviews were identified and coded and the topics were labelled as elements.

These elements were the aspects of the work experience which participants identified as having impact on their motivation and engagement, providing either a Job Resource or a Job Demand for participants. Four groups were made that reflected the relative importance of the 32 elements, categorised as major, other main, minor and very minor. Further coding and categorising processes enabled themes to emerge and then the elements were organised into four prevalent themes and 14 sub-themes containing the elements, as shown in Table 8.9. Impact could occur either through the presence or the absence of a particular element. All 32 elements of the work experience were found to impact on the motivation of the 15 interviewed participants drawn from the sessional academic pool working in the online programs. Five of the 32 elements were experienced as a positive impact only, none was experienced as a negative impact only, and 27 were experienced as positive for some participants and negative for others, or as positive and negative at various times or situations for the same participant. The importance scoring of individual elements that had been undertaken as part of the coding process contributed to being able to order the themes by importance, namely: *Leadership and Support*, *Professional Contribution and Growth*, *Conditions of Employment*, and *Collegiate and Social Connections*. The individual elements were highly contextualised to the work environment of the case study group. Nevertheless, the broad themes aligned strongly to what is known about factors which are likely to influence motivation and engagement, as reported in the literature review in Chapter 3 and summarised in Sub-section 3.7.

10.3.3 Research Question 3: How are the elements of the work experience identified by the interview participants important to motivation and engagement for the whole research group?

Research Question 3 was addressed from the data collected and analysed in Phase 3 of the research, in which a second survey questionnaire was administered to the whole

pool of sessional academic staff working in the online program. Thirty-two responses were received and analysed. The purpose of Phase 3 of the research was to ascertain the extent to which the elements of the work experience identified in Phase 2 and summarised in response to Research Question 2, were important for the whole pool of sessional academic staff in the research group. Their importance for impact on motivation and engagement for the whole group informed implications for structures and processes to optimise motivation and engagement of the sessional academic staff. The additional data from Phase 3 provided confidence in the recommendations made.

Chapter 9 contains a full account of the data analysis for Phase 3 of the research. Table 9.6 in Sub-section 9.3.1 displays in rank order those elements of the work experience which were reported by the Survey Questionnaire 2 respondents (n=32) as impacting or potentially impacting on their motivation and engagement. A strong connection was found between this list and its rank order, and the elements and themes that emerged from the interview and analysis process in Phase 2 of the research. Once again it must be noted that the impact could be positive or negative, thus representing either a job demand or a job resource.

Two key findings emerged. Firstly, as reported in Step 2 of the data analysis in Section 9.3.1, it was found that almost half the elements (11 of 25) were reported as impacting 90% or more of respondents. Secondly, as explained in Step 3 of the data analysis reported in Section 9.3.1, was the finding that the lowest-ranking element reported by the survey respondents still recorded an impact for 68% of respondents: that is, no element was reported as impacting less than two thirds of the respondents. All of the elements reported and tabulated are encompassed in the themes and categories identified in Phase 2 of the research. Thus, while Phase 3 provided some useful further explication of elements and their importance, it did not present any challenge to the relevance of findings in Phase 2 and the data enabled conclusions to be safely generalised from the interview group to the whole group in order to address the final research question.

10.3.4 Research Question 4: What factors are important for the motivation and engagement of sessional academic staff members working in an online environment?

Important elements could be mapped to four broad themes and that as new elements emerged over time, that they could likewise be mapped to the themes. Further, that casual academic staff in different contexts would be likely to experience different elements as important, but that they would also be expected to map to the same four themes. Ten elements of the work environment were found to be most important to the sustaining of high levels of motivation and engagement, as listed in Section 9.7.

10.4 Research Evaluation

10.4.1 Overall Methodology

In Section 4.3.2 of Chapter 4, some criteria were identified for the evaluation of successful case studies and ethnographies, drawn from the work of Stake (1995, p. 131) and Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 267-269). Taking a holistic view, the case study should have: a clear overall conceptual structure with cohesive parts, a strong definition of ‘the case’, an engaging sense of story, sufficient data, sound assertions and good attention to representing voice, including that of the researcher.

The organisation of the research into three discernible phases contributed to the conceptual structure and the cohesion of the parts. The purpose of each phase was identified and the foundation for the approaches taken was based on recognised and robust theoretical standpoints. The case was well-defined as the group of sessional academic staff working in the fully online initial teacher education program at the university in which the case was situated. The exact membership of the group was not identified but the boundaries of the group were set and there was no opportunity for any research participants to enter the group unless they met the criteria for membership. Therefore, there was assurance that all data came from bona fide case group members. The extent to which the account of the case provides an engaging sense of story is one best answered by the reader, but an attempt has been made to provide a strong narrative thread that describes and explains how this group of casual academic staff experience their work and how the organisation’s structures and processes impact on their motivation and engagement in various ways. The voices of the participants are represented through accounts of experience related in interviews and their opinions and perspectives reported in the survey questionnaires. Providing direct excerpts from their interview transcripts adds strength to their voices. The

researcher's voice is likewise represented through references to the reflective journal and reflections and evaluations made throughout the thesis, as well as through the central argument that it is important that the interests of casual academic staff can and should be protected and that mutually beneficial practices can and should be found. The research has achieved what Creswell (203, p. 92) claims is one of the ultimate questions an ethnography must answer, being "What do people in this setting have to know and do to make this system work?".

The categories, themes and eventual elements that emerge from the data, the discussion of findings in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 and the recommendations in this chapter all show strong connection to the findings in the studies and projects described in the review of practice, as well as to the theory presented in the literature review and conceptual framework. This connection provides reassurance that the basis for the content of the data collection instruments is sound and based on relevant research.

10.4.2 Challenges needing consideration

To effectively conduct this research, the researcher needed to be cognisant of her role as an investigator, recognise that there may be constraints to participants providing honest responses, ensure that the risks to achieve open and honest reporting were addressed during the research, and appreciate how to manage these risks.

Role of the researcher: As the researcher is an integral part of constructivist-based research, he or she can be considered part of the particular research context. Therefore, there will be potential areas of difficulty or risk, (as well as strengths) associated with ethnographic research, that are more personal to the researcher as well as being specific to the context. Even the most trusted researcher, conducting fully overt research as a participant observer, must expect that at some point in their interactions with the group, the presence of the researcher may change behaviour or conversation, even if subtly. These changes might be positive, in that the self-analysis or public consciousness that the research affords may lead to more fruitful behaviours, or they may be negative. Trust may be lost if participants become suspicious of the researcher's motive or anxious about their reputations or changes that may ensue from research findings. Information may be deliberately withheld or participants may engage in deliberate misinformation. (Bryman, 2012, p. 439). The ethnographic researcher who depends on

full and honest conversations must work hard to establish a protocol of collaboration and shared commitment to a valued purpose and, while doing so, recognise that perfection is a myth and not the ultimate aim.

Constraints of responses: There was some concern that participants might be constrained in the responses through fear that their employment prospects might be harmed by expressing negative or critical views of their experience. However, these concerns proved unfounded, with several participants being forthright in their recounts of negative experiences. There was also some concern when the data from Phase 1 was analysed and showed that the majority of survey respondents were experiencing high levels of motivation and engagement. While that may not have compromised findings, as knowing what contributed to those levels was valuable information, there was some concern that only those sessional staff whose experiences were positive would be likely to participate. However, as the research proceeded, it was apparent that diverse experiences and views across a spectrum from very positive to overtly negative, were included. This diversity added richness to the story and to the data.

Risk to open and honest reporting: The phase of data collection that posed the greatest risk to gaining open and honest responses was Phase 2, the in-depth interviews. Great care was taken to reassure participants that the interview data would be used strictly for the research purposes, that their individual responses would be de-identified, and in many instances aggregated with the group, and that their views as expressed would have no influence on any future staffing decisions. Section 8.2 contained an example of how reassurance was provided. Later in that same interview (Interview 3, Appendix 8.1), the conversation began to address matters that were being experienced as demotivating. In order to encourage the participants to be forthright, the following comment was made:

[00:18:22] Researcher: Yes - but this is exactly why we're having these conversations because you know for me personally, in terms of my research, this is what I need to understand - how the things that are happening are being perceived by the people that they're happening to.

[00:18:40] Geoff: Yeah, well let me give a couple of examples of things that I've been involved with.

Participant 'Geoff' then proceeded to cite examples of staffing processes that he found de-motivating, and this also seemed to enable 'Casey' to contribute more candidly with some similar experiences, as the following excerpts illustrate:

[00:18:40] Geoff: I remember once it was like a study period the one over Christmas. Yes and I think that there was a feeling that there was a drop in the student enrolments and therefore it needed less tutors and not these members. And then I knew some people missed out altogether. Now I think at that stage I think I wrote it actually to (name) and said look I'm happy to pull out of this because if other people if this is their income then I would gladly step aside and let them come in. I think I've got a comment back to say no, we actually need you in that you know. So I want you to stay. Forget what you just said to me and stay. But now I feel like sometimes it's not quite that sort of thought - I don't think that sometimes you are chosen because of your expertise, it's just because oh okay. And I would have thought maybe if they felt like they had to rotate you so to speak then maybe you should have a system for that. I wouldn't have a problem with that - just say, okay maybe you can only be sure of working three out of four study periods a year or something like that.

[00:20:02] Casey: It's because we don't know. We fill out the form but we don't know how you get from that, to the offers.

Generally, it was reassuring to find that participants spoke openly and included unfavourable or critical comments in their conversations, and there were no significant concerns that responses were censored in any way. Even those participants whose motivation and engagement were measured in Survey Questionnaire 1 as being very high included criticisms, or suggestions for improvements to the management and support of them as sessional academic staff. For example, in Interview 5 (see Appendix 8.1) "Elly" stated:

[00:11:41] Elly: I think as a large organisation... when I first started, there seemed to be a bit more flexibility on what we could do online. And I'm not saying it's not - change is good in that it's needed in order to keep that consistency and also standards within an organization, but that can restrict where, what you can do. So it's got tighter - which is a good thing and a bad thing. I like some aspects of that, because I see more consistency and the standard similar across, but I also feel it does restrict a little bit of creativity with individuals and what they have to offer. It's like students in a classroom really; everyone has something different to offer. I know you have to work within a realm if I had something to help here, and not have to work - I know you have to work in with standard processes. But it's nice to have a little bit of flexibility.

Managing the risks: The possibility that constraints to candidness might represent a research limitation contributed to the decision to modify the originally planned approach for Phase 3. The principal reason for the modification to Phase 3 was to

address possible constraints arising from limited representativeness of the group (as mentioned in section 4.2.4). Additionally, returning to the broader group allowed others to express their views about factors identified through the interviews, in anonymity. Therefore, if interviewees felt restrained or were under-reporting any negative perceptions for reasons of discomfort or anxiety, they or others could express such views more readily in that subsequent broader, anonymous environment. The conclusion was thus that research findings were not significantly limited by aspects of group access, as sufficient attention was paid to managing the risk.

Another recognised area of risk that can arise from any research involving the researcher 'going native' (Erlandson et.al., 1993) is that the researcher's high level of identification with the group may lead them to a position of entitlement to speak for the group. This high level of identification was especially relevant because group membership by the researcher has been well established for some time. It was important not to assume certain knowledge as already established and to set aside any notions that what the researcher thinks the group thinks, really is what the group thinks. The research tactics of member checking, journalling and triangulation through evidential adequacy were invaluable in contributing to research trustworthiness. (Erlandson, et al., 1998; Guba, 1981; Yin, 2018). Overall, it is considered that the findings of the research as reported in section 8.3 above, were not materially impacted upon by any difficulties or limitations.

The length and format of the Survey Questionnaire 2 in Phase 3 may have limited the number of respondents (31). It was difficult to design a survey which measured all of the elements considered important and despite the rationalisation from 32 to 25 elements, the survey was still long and complex. While this contributed to gaining good data, a shorter survey may have attracted more responses. While only one respondent commented on the imposition caused by the survey length, others may have decided simply not to respond. Because the data was unequivocal and did not contradict expectations formed through the findings in Phase 2, the lower numbers were probably not significant to the findings. However, it was a useful lesson learned for the design of future research instruments.

10.5 Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Section 10.5 summarises the implications of the research findings and makes specific recommendations for approaches and actions by managers of casual academic staff in seeking to optimise motivation and engagement in their local contexts. Overriding all consequent considerations is the critical nature of recognising that if risk to staff members and higher education programs is to be managed and potential maximised, close attention must be paid to providing productive and supportive environments. The needs of this group of academic staff must not be neglected and any perceived or actual marginalisation of casual academic staff must be redressed. All recommendations arise from this fundamental standpoint.

The taxonomy of themes, sub-themes and to some extent, the elements specific to the research context generated from the data in research Phases 2 and 3 and summarised in Table 8.10 (full database in Appendices 8.4 and 9.1, respectively) provides a framework for recommendations for management structures and processes that will sustain high levels of motivation and engagement for casual academic staff working in online higher education programs.

10.5.1 Appropriate Contextualisation of Practice

Organisational responses to the needs of casual academic staff must be context-specific and must address the composition and diversity of their student cohorts and of the casual academic staff. The expectations formed from the review of literature (Section 3.4) were that conditions in the localised context are likely to impact more on the experience of casual academic employees than on permanent faculty staff. The data from the research revealed the significant and specific impact of local, contextualised elements on the casual academic staff members studied.

Findings from the survey of practices in the research university (as reported in Section 3.4 and displayed in Table 3.4) found greater variation in experience for sessional academic staff arising from the absence of some of the formal structures legislated through enterprise bargaining agreement clauses that apply to ongoing staff. This study did not purposefully seek to identify and measure differences in employment experience for sessional staff compared to permanent staff. Nonetheless, the

consistency of findings in Phases 2 and 3 of the research identified that localised, close relationships and processes were the most important to sustaining motivation and engagement.

The review in Section 3.5 of Chapter 3 showed that casual staff are less likely to enjoy the protections of institution-wide process and practice, but that they (and ultimately their students) can also potentially benefit from the flexibility that can be found within structures and processes that could be managed more locally. Data collected through the selective review of Australian practice (sub-section 7.2.2) showed that the professional development of casual academic staff working in online environments, in particular, must be contextualised (Ellis & Phelps, 2000; Harvey, 2017; Smith & Bath, 2003). Again, the importance of contextualised and responsive provision of professional learning was highlighted in participants' responses in the interviews and in their responses to the open-text items in Survey Questionnaire 2 in Research Phase 3. The example given in section 9.3 emphasises the value of providing appropriate forms of engagement in professional learning for all sessional staff that is responsive to their circumstances.

In order to optimise motivation and engagement amongst casual academic staff, it is vital that the elements which impact on their motivation and engagement, the aspects of motivation and engagement that are impacted, and the extent of impact, are all well understood. Research Phase 3 and Survey Questionnaire 2 provided additional and more nuanced insights to the elements identified in the in-depth interviews in Research Phase 2 (see Section 9.3.1 and Section 9.3.2), which themselves built on from the indicative data collected and analysed in Phase 1. The characteristics, skills, aspirations and needs of the casual staff must be known, and the complex interrelationships that impact on their motivation and engagement must be understood. Obtaining a measure of the impact of various elements on the wider sessional academic staff group helped to explicate the interrelationships between the extent of impact of various elements and the aspects of motivation and engagement they will impact upon. It is expected that the interrelationships will be different in different contexts and will not remain static.

Recommendation 1: **Managers must know what characteristics of their particular context are likely to help or hinder motivation and engagement.** For example, insufficient resourcing of technologies needed may be a challenge to motivation or highly skilled unit leaders may be a valuable boon to motivation and engagement levels.

10.5.2 Importance of Informed, Systematic and Collaborative Approaches

Approaches to management and support should be informed, systematic and collaborative and staff development, in particular, must be planned, purposeful and accessible. Factors impacting on motivation and engagement need managing purposefully and carefully. The experience of the case study group described in this thesis makes it apparent that the conditions of employment which have led to their generally good levels of motivation and engagement are not ad hoc nor for the most part, naturalistic. Survey Questionnaire 2 in Phase 3 of the research provided data (see Tables 9.6 and 9.7) which demonstrated that it was the planned structures and processes such as how units are led and managed, how the learning environment is organised and supported, and how professional learning and support structures are provided which impact most significantly on motivation and engagement. Those structures and processes had been planned and had evolved from a developing understanding of their importance.

The importance of systematising management and support of casual academic staff was identified in Section 3.6 of the literature review. Managers and leaders of casual academic staff can be guided to good effect by theories, frameworks and approaches drawn from management and leadership literature and applied to educational settings. Teams can be comprised of leaders with expertise in human resource and project management as well as educational leadership. Phelps et al. (2000) suggest applying project management methodology to frame and manage the development and provision of online programs, including staff development within them. Using such frameworks is not the same as applying ready-made professional learning packages such as Harvey (2017) warns against, as noted in section 3.6 of the review of literature. The importance of relevant and timely professional learning for the sessional academic staff was identified in the research findings: Sessional staff expressed their

appreciation for the SETLD program and the formal professional learning it provided, as well as noting that that professional learning and guidance could be more closely tailored to the specific needs of them as a group, and their students (see Section 7.6). The implication of this insight is that achieving optimal tailoring of professional learning for any group of casual academic staff will be contingent on managers having the knowledge and skill drawn from relevant literature and theory to inform them in their practice and guide them towards effective provision. A key finding of the reviewed literature in Section 3.6 was the value of tailored, project-based approaches to professional learning and development that allowed for purposeful collaboration with the casual academic staff members, to ensure that requisite skills were being accessed and capitalised upon. Learning and development in the use of learning technologies is especially important for those working in digital learning environments.

Whatever approach is chosen, an all-important planned, relevant and purposeful approach to the professional development of the academic staff in a program should include casual academic staff if critical mission aims are to be achieved. Findings of each phase of the research demonstrated the importance of providing opportunities for casual academic staff to contribute ideas, feedback and share practice and expertise in order to feel professionally valued and for that sense of value to contribute to high levels of motivation and engagement. Sections 7.2.3, 7.4 and table 7.7 reported findings from Research Phase 1, while Steps 7 and 8 of Section 8.3.2 and Tables 8.6 and 8.12 revealed the importance of opportunities to contribute as reported by interview participants in Phase 2. Finally, Section 9.5 and Table 9.11 demonstrate their importance to the wider group of sessional staff who responded to Survey Questionnaire 2.

Recommendation 2: Time and energy must be invested into building teams with broad expertise that can devise effective approaches to purposeful planning. Planning should encompass resources needed to address identified, contextualised needs and should pay careful attention to structures and processes for the recruitment, development and support of the casual academic staff.

Recommendation 3: **Managers may look to frameworks that can provide guidance for a systematic approach**, into which they can embed the particular strategies known to be relevant to their context.

Recommendation 4: **Managers must manage structures and processes in ways that seek and respond to feedback and suggestions from the casual staff**. Mechanisms and processes must be built in through which managers and the casual academic staff communicate, collaborate and celebrate. As well as knowing the key structures and processes that can be provided which will respond to their needs best, knowing what the risk points or deal-breakers might be, and managing them, will also be critical.

10.5.3 Links from Practice to Organisational Mission and Aims

Planning and structures must remain clearly linked to the mission of ultimately serving the needs of learners. Motivation and engagement theory, as reviewed in Section 4.4, shows that professionals will develop positive self-views and achieve self-actualisation goals if they can do their jobs well, and their levels of motivation and engagement will be an indication of this development and goal achievement. For those working in an educational context, part of the goal achievement will be student engagement and success. The importance of contextualisation, purpose and robust foundation for structures that support staff were all emphasised in the work of Gaskell (2013), Taylor (2003) and Harvey (2017), as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6. Therefore, the approach to managing pay structures, workloads, role dimensions, leadership and support and professional learning and development for casual academic staff working online should respond to the higher-order need of role fulfilment through enabling student success. The thesis has shown through the elements found to be important to motivation and engagement (see Table 9.6), as well as through their conversations in the interviews that the sessional staff were concerned with how they could be supported and enabled to act with agency as effective educators, and thus support and guide their students well. A significant element of the support and professional learning provided for casual academic staff who are educators will need to be closely aligned to enabling them to serve their students well.

Recommendation 5: **Managers must develop support and development strategies which align to the fundamental purpose of the organisation and that purpose must be made explicit.** Approaches should be systematic and well-informed, and must be appropriately contextualised.

10.5.4 Maintaining Currency and Relevance

Examination and review of structures and processes must be undertaken to ascertain whether they continue to meet the needs of groups and remain aligned to the mission and aims of the organisation. As learning and teaching programs change, as organisational goals, technologies and even resourcing change, as the composition of the casual academic staff group changes, so must the structures and processes which support them.

Recommendation 6: **Managers should plan and conduct regular reviews** to ensure that changes to the contextual factors are being accommodated by the structures and processes in place.

10.6 Recommendations for Further Research

In this section, recommendations are made for further research activity, both for analysis using the database created in the research and more broadly for research into casual academic staff and for the further application of the JD-R model.

10.6.1 Recommendations for Further Data Analysis

- **Further analysis of participant demographic variables**

The original database formed after the initial survey questionnaire captured demographic information about respondents that included age, gender, role, length of time in the program and current situation, as well as recording reported levels of motivation and engagement. It could be fruitful to return to the database to analyse whether any relationships could be ascertained between any of the demographic factors and the reported levels of motivation and engagement. That analysis could then inform a more in-depth examination of interview responses to see whether

particular elements of the employment experience were more important to certain groups: for example, for newly-appointed sessional staff or for those who have other work or family responsibilities.

- **Further analysis of participant transcripts**

As all interview recordings transcripts were kept and all transcripts were corrected and coded, the interview record could be revisited to either follow specific lines of inquiry or to see whether further codes could be generated. For instance, all mentions of SETLD could be interrogated further to look at which aspects of the program were mentioned most, viewed most or least favourably, and whether there were other indications of why the participants valued the program or what they would like from it in the future.

- **Follow-up studies of open-text comments**

Survey Questionnaire 2 also provided data that could be further analysed and which could provide foundation for follow-up studies. In particular, the open-text comments about the deal-breakers, or circumstances that might prompt the sessional employee to cease their employment in the program, could provide grounds for valuable further inquiry. Returning to the sessional pool again could provide further valuable data about whether those elements identified as critical in the four free-text response items were shared widely, especially as both the composition of the sessional staff pool and circumstances more generally have changed since the data was collected. Further investigation could be conducted to determine whether those sessional staff who have left, did so for the kinds of reasons identified in the research as being critical. The last suggestion, in particular, could help towards a wider inquiry into sessional staff whose motivation and engagement levels are reported as low. A study to ascertain how long staff members might remain in a position when their motivation and engagement is low, or how low their levels must be before they discontinue, could be valuable. The risk to program quality could be managed with this knowledge, considering the finding that in general, engagement with the work is negatively impacted more, or before, overall motivation towards the work. It could be expected that the effect on employment continuance may not be significant but that there could be behaviours

such as corner-cutting, lack of attention to detail or instructions, missed deadlines, or non-compliance with expected task completion.

10.6.2 Recommendations for Research with Casual Academic Staff

The literature has served well to expose potential risks to the well-being of casual academic staff and the quality of higher education programs, as well as the possible unfairness of widespread reliance on casual academic staff. This study has revealed some valuable ways in which risks can be managed and the interests of the casual staff protected.

- **Building on previous research and structures**

Recognising that the practice is here to stay has meant attention can be turned to how institutions can minimise risk and maximise mutual benefit and satisfaction. The research undertaken here will contribute to the movement towards good management rather than containment and builds particularly on work undertaken in Australia by the BLASST organisation, particularly Harvey (2013; 2017), and Harvey and Luzia (2013), as well as by Klopper and Power (2014) and Wood and Mate (2012). That work was outlined in Sub-section 5.2.2 of the discussion of Phase 1A of the research.

- **Broadening the knowledge base of the impact of various elements of the work experience**

In order to contribute to broadening the knowledge about motivation and engagement amongst casual academic staff, similar research could be conducted in varying contexts to measure the impact of the various elements of the work experience found in this research to impact on motivation and engagement. Comparisons could be made between varying contexts. A comparative study could ascertain whether the factors relating to community building and to professional learning opportunities are as significant for casual staff not working in fully online situations, where the need for professional development and support in use of digital learning and teaching tools and the need for collegiate connection may be more strongly felt. Further research could also be conducted to measure the impact of specific initiatives or programs that

respond to the recommendations made for management structures and processes: for example, a study that trialled and evaluated a particular model or process for the regular monitoring of the structures and processes in place as suggested in Recommendation 4.

10.6.3 Further Applications of the JD-R Model

- **Elaboration of the model when applied to digital learning and teaching environments and to casual academic staff**

The research has contributed to the elaboration of the application of the JD-R model, showing how the model can be applied to a new context, the principal characteristics of which are that the work is undertaken through fully digital interfaces and by staff who belong to a discrete group of employees, being casual academic staff. However, the main contribution to theory is to suggest elaboration of the applicability of the JD-R model to emphasise the job demands created by the need to work in fully online mode and learn and manage new technologies and applications, all in the service of effective pedagogy. This demand can be set against the resources of expertise, capacity and temperament of staff, and the capacity of the organisation to provide guidance, support and professional learning in digital learning technologies. Continued work in this sphere will be necessary and valuable in the light of the global pandemic which has increased reliance on digital learning modes and in light of the expected continued growth in the casualised academic workforce.

- **Application of the model using ethnographic and organisational perspectives**

Providing further variation to the application of the model is the ethnographic method with which the research was conducted and the ethnographic perspective through which the meaning was made of the application of the model. Further research which employs ethnographic methodologies and which takes similar organisational perspectives rather than the personal and psychological will contribute to the wider application of the JD-R model, as encouraged by Parker et al. (2001) and Albrecht (2010) and noted in Section 4.5 of this thesis.

- **Application of the model with student-focussed measures**

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) describe a corporate application of the JD-R model and suggest evaluation measures that list key outcomes that emphasise financial gain. However, it should not be problematic to substitute student outcomes as a meaningful measure of the impact of high engagement. While measures of student outcomes are not a part of this research, future studies could reasonably continue with this model as the theoretical base to judge whether those casual academic staff members found to be highly engaged in terms of the parameters of the JDR model, were effecting stronger student outcomes. Parker (2001), advocates an expansion of the JD-R model to be conceptualised as an organisation demands-resources (OD-R) model. This research could contribute towards such a reconceptualising, particularly with the connections that have been made between motivation and engagement levels and the capacity of the organisation to achieve its mission and aims as linked to student outcomes.

10.7 Conclusion to the Thesis

If risks are managed well, programs properly resourced and staff supported and protected, casual academic employment can be a mutually satisfactory practice. It is timely and necessary to question the inevitability of the problems that have been associated with casual academic staffing practices and work towards not just mitigating them, but creating a new culture of what it means to be a casual academic staff member. It should be possible to create and sustain a working environment in which casual academics can work with high levels of motivation and engagement. With a growing acceptance that casual academic staff will remain a significant proportion of the staffing profile – and particularly, shoulder a large proportion of the teaching load - research needs to focus on maximising benefits, and move on from only warning against it or seeking to constrain the practice in all circumstances. While quantified measures of impact on programs were not a part of this study, the findings clarify which factors and which organisational actions have significant impact on motivation and engagement and thus inform future studies that do seek to quantify impact.

This thesis brings implications for the positioning of casual academic employment, and offers a useful perspective on the point made in the Grattan report (Norton, 2013)

concerning the over-representation of casual academic staff in teaching-only roles. It may be possible to view the levels of representation not as inevitably problematic, but also as an opportunity for mutually beneficial practices. Rather than viewing the casual academic workforce as necessarily second-tier, exploited or full-time academic staff-in-waiting, engagement practices can focus on attracting highly-skilled, committed teachers to undertake this important work and support and development of these staff members can be structured and managed in contextually appropriate ways. It has been recognised that casual academic staff are more likely to be working part-time in the university and maintaining employment in their industry, thus providing industry currency for the benefit of students. In order to achieve such a beneficial outcome though, this aspect along with others identified, requires skilled and careful management. Structures and processes must be informed and systematic, planned and purposeful, and context-specific. Higher education institutions must respond to their responsibility to care and provide properly for this growing academic employee sector. The themes, sub-themes and elements of the work experience impacting on the motivation and engagement of the group of sessional academic staff in the research university are particular to that context and so cannot be taken to apply in the same ways in different contexts. However, it is expected that the themes will be broadly applicable and to some extent, the sub-themes and perhaps a number of the elements. The intention of the recommendations in the thesis is therefore to provide broad practice recommendations that will inform a localised response; they do not provide a handbook. Further work by the researcher and others could develop the broad recommendations further to design a more procedural guide.

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