

PhD blog for CIEA

Hello, my name is Marianne Talbot, and some of you will know me as a CIEA Course Leader. I am also a PhD student at the University of Leeds. I started my doctoral studies, researching the impact of qualifying as a Chartered Educational Assessor, focusing on the way it has affected their own and other's assessment practice, in October 2021, so I am almost half-way through a three-year programme of study. My first year was spent learning (or re-learning!) how to be a researcher, starting by attending induction sessions about how to use the library, literature searching, and data management. I then undertook online training modules addressing how to develop research questions, the pros and cons of using qualitative and quantitative research methods, and the philosophy of educational research. This included careful consideration of the value of my research, its ethics, and how to be a 'good' researcher: being open, honest, transparent, and trustworthy, creating research which is credible, transferrable, confirmable, and dependable, enabling myself and others to have confidence in my data, my methods, analysis, interpretation, and my conclusions.

I am still exploring the ethics of my research, such as, whether and how I might use existing data held by CIEA, whether I should anonymise or pseudonymise my data, and how to select my sample of participants. I am also grappling with the notion of being an "insider researcher", and how best to avoid as much bias as possible, given my role in training CEAs (Fleming, 2018).

All this has been alongside regular meetings and discussions with my supervisors, lots and lots and lots of reading, submitting an application for ethical review, and writing a 10,000-word transfer document, to allow me to progress to the next stage – the fieldwork. My supervision meetings have been taking place about every three weeks and have been fruitful, accompanied by plenty of reading and writing, which I have really enjoyed, and I have had very positive feedback on. I should say that I have found the volume of reading challenging but hugely enjoyable, and that the references at the end of this blog are very selective – I could have included many more sources.

Importantly, I have also attended helpful online wellbeing sessions, addressing issues such as perfectionism, stress, and imposter syndrome, designed specifically to help postgraduate researchers cope with the heavy workload and balancing the demands of their research with the rest of their lives. As I study but also work, have a family and a house and a cat to take care of, and ageing parents, I have found it extremely useful to protect an hour every few weeks to join a webinar and concentrate on how I am feeling and coping, and I've picked up lots of useful tips along the way.

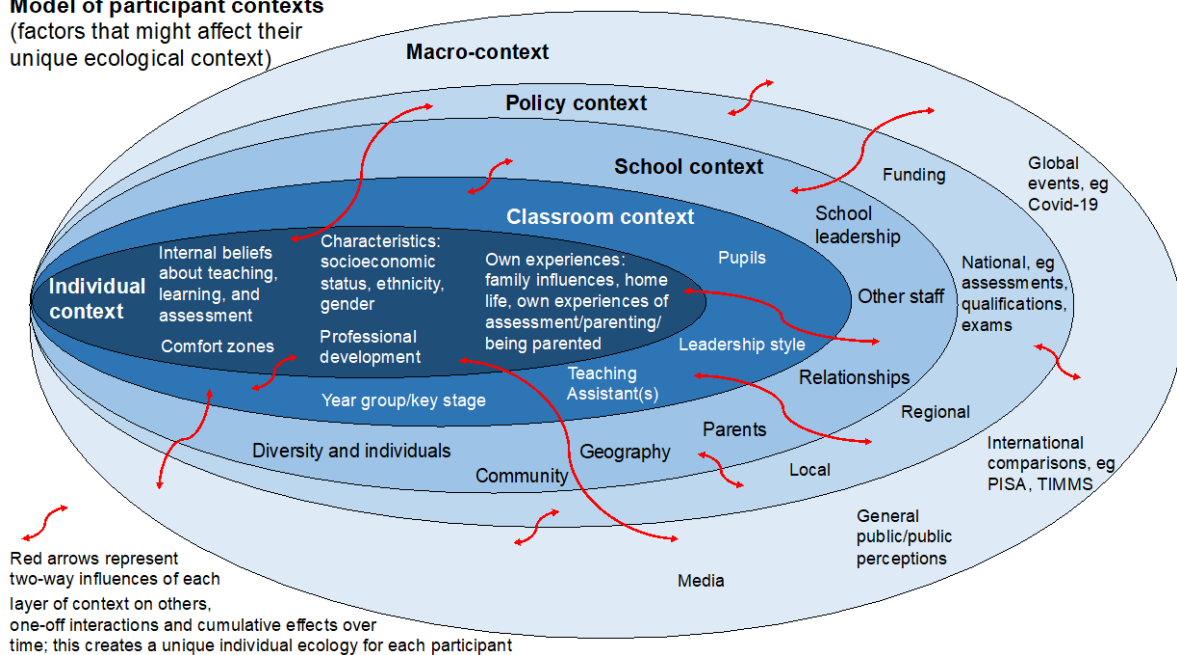
After several iterations and much pondering, my provisional thesis title is: "The impact of training and qualifying as a Chartered Educational Assessor on teachers' assessment practice". My research is likely to be based on a consideration of a literature review of the topic area, previously collected survey data (including pre-course self-assessments and post-course evaluations, privately held by the CIEA), and data which will arise from my original fieldwork including online questionnaires, focus groups, and a series of interviews with CEAs (Seidman, 2006), focusing on their experiences post-qualification and how qualification has affected their assessment practice and literacy (Adie et al, 2020) and the practice of those

around them. I want to know what effect becoming a CEA has, on the individual and those around them, in terms of their assessment practices and the assessment culture of their workplace. I am planning to focus on CEAs working in UK secondary schools, just to make comparisons between individual participants a bit more straightforward.

I plan to do this using some fairly traditional research methods. I am already well into my literature review, although of course there is hardly anything specifically about CEAs, but there is lots about teacher professional development, its impacts and barriers, for example, and about assessment literacy, which is I think part of what we are aiming for when we train CEAs.... I would welcome any suggestions for relevant references – please email me a link or an attachment: edmit@leeds.ac.uk

In order to inform my research, I would like to survey all qualified CEAs working in a UK secondary school, asking if they would be interested in joining a focus group discussion and/or being interviewed individually. From that pool, I will select focus group participants and interviewees. I am likely to hold one or two focus groups of four or five participants each, and interview perhaps four or five CEAs. In the interest of transparency, and hopefully a way of encouraging CEAs to volunteer to take part in the research, I thought it might be of interest to share with you my model of the contexts for my research and my participants...

Model of participant contexts
(factors that might affect their unique ecological context)



This is a model I've developed to show how the various layers of context sit in relation to each other. My supervisors, upon seeing this, directed me to the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994), which considers the effects of an individual's ecological context on their development, attitudes, and behaviours, which has helped me develop my conceptualization of this model – not that it is finished!

More generally, I have been busy joining the University of Leeds Research Culture Community and made a successful bid (jointly with Mick Walker) for a small pot of Research England funding, to investigate how teachers successfully engage in professional

development. I led a discussion about this ongoing research at the [AEA-Europe Annual Conference in Dublin, November 2022](#) (my slides and our working paper are available upon request). I have had a conference report published in *Hillary Place Papers* (Talbot, 2022; see [HPP Issue 7](#)), the in-house journal of the University of Leeds School of Education (and I am a member of the editorial board). I attended the BERA Annual Conference in Liverpool, September 2022, and post about my research and work on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/marianneitalbot/>

I am looking forward to the next phase, as I develop my questionnaire, plan the focus groups and interviews, and refine my research questions, and I look forward to sharing a further update towards the end of 2023!

Please do get in touch if you want to know more about my research, and especially if you would like to volunteer to participate: edmjt@leeds.ac.uk

References

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