

**Owning the thinking:  
Case Studies of how pre-service trainee teachers, training to teach in  
the post-compulsory sector, construct their professional teaching  
identities within a framework of accountability**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree  
of  
Doctor of Education**

**Manchester Metropolitan University  
2013**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors Russell Jones and Cathy Lewin for their guidance and support. I would also like to thank my colleagues at MMU for their interest in this research. Further thanks go to my family for their unbounded patience and encouragement.

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## Glossary of terms

ITT/E	Initial Teacher Training and Education
PCET	Post Compulsory Education and Training
Post-compulsory sector	Term used to refer to a sector other than schools or universities. Other terms used when referring to this sector include Further Education (FE); Lifelong Learning; Learning and Skills sector (LLS).
Pre-service ITT/E programme	A full time route delivered within a university setting involving work-based placements
In-service ITT/E programme	A part time route delivered in colleges as part of a collaborative partnership with a university
Trainee teacher	A term used in place of student teacher. The term trainee evolved as the word <i>student</i> replaced that of <i>pupil</i> in schools.
Learner	With reference to the above comment, the term <i>student</i> also applies to those studying in further education colleges and other post compulsory learning settings. For clarity and in keeping with current usage, the word <i>learner</i> is used
Teacher	Used within the text to include lecturers, trainers and practitioners working within the sector.
Mentor	A term used to describe the role of an individual assigned to support the development of the trainee teacher
Teacher Educators	A term used to refer to those involved in the development of trainee teachers working on pre-service, full time (university-based) and in-service part time (work-based) ITTE programmes

## Abstract

The context for this study is that of educational policy: specifically with reference to initial teacher education in the post-compulsory sector. The research addresses a number of issues which have been relatively neglected in implementing this policy:

- The extent to which the policy has redefined the epistemology underpinning being a teacher to that of ‘knowledge deliverer’
- The ways in which this epistemological shift has impacted on the role and identities of beginning teachers as individual teachers seek to resolve the relationship between the policy agenda and their constructions of their professional selves as compatible, compromising and/or compliant

The methodology adopted is that of the case study within a longitudinal study of those being trained to teach in the post compulsory sector and follows the subjects of the research post-training into employment. Using trainee accounts and other data, the study examines their encounters with and connections to (Wenger, 2000:27) the various ‘learning communities’ contributing to their training. The narratives they provide are used to provide an ‘...insider’s view of the domain’ of a community (Wenger *et al.*, 2002: 31).

The findings are substantial. Analysis of trainees’ accounts reveal the extent to which they seek to adhere to community norms as a consequence of assessment and organisational demands at the expense of their own development as critical, autonomous professionals. The extent to which they suppress aspects of their own emerging identities raises ethical issues about the role of professional communities in brokering and developing new professional knowledge. The ways in which the various ‘learning communities’ manage knowledge leads to discrepancies in trainees’ experiences of ‘communities of practice’. As a consequence they offer fractured accounts of their teaching identities.

The implications of the research are also substantial. The study underlines the importance of giving greater attention to the voice of the trainee teacher in order to understand and assist 'self- understanding' (Kelchtermans, 2005). The voice of trainee teacher has been noticeably marginalised by current policies on teacher education. As new models of partnership and collaborative practice evolve in response to an agenda which prioritises school and employer led ITTE provision, it behoves those working with newly qualified teachers to provide the kind of support which will ensure commitment and the basis for future advance in their teaching careers.



## Introduction

The reform agenda for initial teacher training in the post-compulsory sector brought about by political intervention post-1988 may be viewed as an attempt to bring about a *new* professionalism. The use of the words ‘reform’ and ‘intervention’ provides an interesting starting point, offering as they do both positive and negative connotations. In this research, the term ‘intervention’ is used to reflect a new political *focus* on an existing profession and on those professionals who had previously been ‘...unused to such attention’ (Fisher and Webb, 2006:338). Such a focus was rooted in a continuing market-place view of education.

Whilst the context and motivations underpinning the reform agenda are explored more fully (in Chapter 2), it is important in these early stages of exposition to position this thesis with regard to sector history:

*(a) history which is no longer to be seen in linear terms as the chain of causality which produced the present, but which exists in a kind of eternal present as so much raw material torn from its own context and cobbled together with the contemporary.*

(Eagleton, 1996:2002)

The ‘eternal present’ described by Eagleton is reflected in this research, positioned as it is, within a framework of changing ideology and practice. Although it may be argued that linearity and causality are part of sector history, it can also be said that they are not part of a continuum. There is a sense of the past operating within the present. Whilst located in the past, the reform agenda operates reflexively informing current ideology and practice. To explain this perspective further, this section opens with an overview of the reform agenda. Highlighted within the discussion is a tension between the agenda and the changing concept of teacher identity. Following this exposition, the section concludes with a brief overview of each of the following chapters.

Post-1988 the sector came to be seen more explicitly as a vehicle to address social and economic inequity; its prominence attributed in part to a wider political need to improve learner attainment. Whilst constructions of learner attainment reflected political and socio-economic aspirations concerned with citizenship and employability, encompassed within the concept was the notion of public accountability - a need to show that progress was being made and public money well spent. Thus, the reform agenda was (and continues to be) a layered, pluralistic agenda.

In order to improve learner attainment, the raising of *academic* standards was linked to the raising of *professional* standards. The conundrum lies however in the coupling of two unequal variables within a pluralistic agenda of reform. Whilst it may be argued that the joining of academic and professional standards could enhance the profile and status of both, it cannot be assumed that achievement of one necessarily renders achievement of the other. It is questionable whether the two sets of variables coalesce, occur in tandem or complement one another. Suffice to say that what is of interest in this research is the impact of such a dualism on a professional workforce.

Attempts to professionalise and ‘upskill’ the post-compulsory workforce began in earnest post-2001 (DfES, 2002; DfES, 2004; Foster, 2005; Leitch, 2006). As technological advancements were taking place, knowledge was seen as central to prosperity and to the development of human and economic capital. The ‘...rhetoric of the learning society’ became shaped within popular discourse (Bathmaker, 2005:85). Two paradigms began to emerge: the skills paradigm and the professional paradigm - the latter overlapping or competing with other paradigms (Light *et al.*, 2009:13). The politically-held view was that the sector was underperforming and that intervention was needed in order to bring about improvement. The political ideology driving the reform agenda rested in a view that a highly skilled workforce was needed to respond to a technologically-advanced, global economy. The Leitch Review (2006) indicated the perceived severity of the situation and the equally perceived need for reform. Statistics included the positioning of the UK in a competitive world market - ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 29 in the ‘league

table' for the number of young people staying on in post-16 education or training. The use of such data within the literature reflects a continuing political preoccupation with international comparisons, often presented without an explanation of the factors influencing them. The answer may lie in the view that:

*(i)t is easier for politicians to build their arguments on a description of a failing service than an improving one,*

(Morris, 2012)

As political ideology became explicit, words such as *audit* and *accountability* permeated the discourse. The discourse indicated that the reform agenda was located within a deficit model and that intervention rather than intercession or negotiation with the teaching profession was required. The choice of an interventionist approach intimated a particular politicised view of the teaching profession: one in which teachers were viewed as receivers of the reform agenda rather than initiators. This view of the teaching profession created a tension between the profession and the agenda.

The tension may be described as that emanating from an uncomfortable 'fit' between policy reform and personally-held beliefs. Explained in terms of teacher vulnerability - a position characterised by feelings of a lack of control, concerns about the judgements of others and of the challenges to the teaching role - it is regarded as 'inescapable' (Kelchtermans, 2005:997). The reason for this rests in the view that teacher vulnerability is a '...structural condition teachers (or educators in general) find themselves in' (*ibid.*: 998). The nature and extent of the coping strategies used by teachers in response to this position is signalled here.

Whilst Kelchtermans' work reflects that of existing teachers in the schools sector the impact on pre-service, trainee teachers in the post-compulsory sector may not be commensurate. How pre-service trainee-teachers experience and understand their role within this sector and how such

experiences enables them to construct their professional teaching identities forms the basis of this research. In describing identity as ‘self-understanding’ Kelchtermans (*ibid.*: 1000) refers to an understanding of the self at a moment in time; to the process of making sense of personal experiences and to the impact of such experiences on the self. Kelchtermans argues that using the concept of self-understanding to replace the notion of identity reduces the ‘static essence’ (*ibid.*: 1000) implied by the latter. Future references in the ensuing text regarding the concept of identity emanate from this perspective.

In exploring the distinctiveness of the training for those intending to teach in the post-compulsory sector, it is recognised that similarities and differences occur with reference to those training to teach in schools. Whilst a one year PGCE programme offers parallels in terms of structures, such as credit awards and value and the inclusion of a work-based placement, differences emerge with reference to subject focus, content and context. Whereas secondary trainees experience a training diet emphasising subject knowledge and pedagogy interspersed with a cross-disciplinary, professional studies element focusing on current educational issues, PCET trainees may experience the reverse. This balance - or imbalance - reflects perceptions of the nature of vocational and educational training and the ways in which vocational learning has been conceptualised (Colley *et al.*, 2003). This thesis considers the learning cultures operating within particular contexts and challenges not only conceptions of vocational learning but also poses wider questions about learning and learners within current discourses.

Whilst the similarities and differences highlighted above reflect current versions of training teachers, such versions are temporary. This thesis serves to highlight the implications arising from new and impending initiatives such as School Direct, the changes to teacher training post-Lingfield (2012) and wider deregulation. Ironically, at the time when QTLS (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills) became recognised by schools following the Wolf Review (2011) sector deregulation began to take place.

The challenges initially faced by the post-compulsory sector are now being met by schools. The opening of free schools and academies sees the offering of teaching positions to those without formal teaching qualifications. Post-School Direct, the 'new' SCITTs (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) can offer QTS routes only - with the PGCE award becoming an optional 'extra'. The ITT/E links between schools and universities therefore are becoming increasingly fractured. In addition, the move to a school-led system of initial teacher training is taking place with little reference to post-compulsory education. At a time when the school leaving age has been raised, discussions have yet to take place regarding how this model does or does not fit with the training of teachers in the post-compulsory sector. The question of sector distinctiveness or separation may become important terms if such discussions take place.

Thus, in exploring the nature of early teacher identity, this research adds to a continuing narrative concerning the progress of the reform agenda post-2001. In doing so, it considers the impact of reform processes on the role and identity of the practitioner and on working practices (Avis, 1999; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; 2006; Avis *et al.*, 2012; Ball, 2003; 2010; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Butcher, 2006; Coffield *et al.*, 2005; Edward *et al.*, 2005; Coffield, 2008; Coffield and Edward, 2009; Keeley-Brown, 2007; Smith and Butcher, 2008). The research also contributes to an on-going political debate concerning wider educational reform and in particular, the reform of teacher education. The research extends the existing knowledge base because it tells of policy in practice; it provides evidence of the impact of local interpretations of national agenda on the practice and professional identities of trainee teachers. In order to explore how this claim is made, an overview of each chapter is now provided.

Chapter 1 opens with a presentation of the reasons for undertaking the research - leading ultimately to an explanation of the two research questions. A contextual outline is provided in order to frame the discussion. The narrative locates the research within a political and historical framework in order to show how past interventions inform the current

debate. The sense of ‘going backwards and forwards’ in order to contextualise and contemporise the debate is reflective of a socio-centred approach where history and culture inform ‘self-understanding’ (Kelchtermans, 2005). The aim is not to revisit the past in order to reclaim some lost territory or to seek restorative justice; more, to explain how interpretations of practices have developed and in certain instances, impinge upon the work of future teachers. Eagleton’s (1996:2002) comment regarding the concept of an ‘eternal present’ serves to highlight the perspective here. Central to the argument is a view that continuous intervention in the sector has led to an increase in external regulation and a decrease in professional autonomy.

This argument is developed further as part of the literature review (in Chapter 2). Evidence showing the impact of particular agendas on professional teaching identities and practice is presented. The literature review is presented in four parts: the section opens with a discussion concerning the nature of knowledge. Current discourses reflect tensions surrounding the concepts of professional knowledge, vocational and disciplinary knowledge; secondly, there is a consideration of the complexities surrounding teacher professionalism and the shifts associated with it. As the concept of the traditional teacher alters, so too does the relationship between the teacher and the learner thus the third part of the review considers the power shifts in this relationship as part of a focus on personalised approaches to learning. Fourthly, the concept of teacher autonomy as an aspect of professionalism is explored with respect to the concept of communities of practice. Collectively, the chapter emphasises the interconnectedness between shifts in teacher identity and professionalism and ongoing political ideology.

The research methodology is presented in Chapter 3. My presence in the dual role of teacher educator and researcher is explained using Denscombe’s (2007) framework. The appropriateness of the methodology in revealing hidden working practices and ethical constraints is signalled within this section. Case study data is presented in Chapter 4. The use of trainee

narratives constructed within a particular context and timeframe provide the main source of data. Two key themes are identified as those arising from the data: these are discussed in Chapter 5. It is at this point that a response to the two research questions is made. Conclusions drawn from the findings are articulated in Chapter 6 and considered with regard to future implications. The discussion is timely because the current educational landscape is in a state of flux. A review of the National Curriculum has taken place and changes to the current examination process are anticipated. The continuing development of the Technical Baccalaureate (DfE, 2013) is set to bring about further change for those employed in the post-compulsory sector. The University Technical College (UTC) agenda continues to be developed. As political intervention continues, it serves not only to change the professional role and identity of the teacher but to relocate it in a seemingly collaborative yet explicitly competitive agenda.

The research focus reflects the involvement of those concerned with the professional development of trainee teachers in the post-compulsory sector who, in turn, will shape the learning of those with whom they are working. The findings from the research will be shared amongst trainee teachers, teacher educators, learners, mentors, curriculum and quality managers, employers, lobbyists and the significant others involved in the education and training of teachers in order to create a dynamic, critical mass. The view that new knowledge ‘...influences the direction in which an academic field or a community moves’ is open to debate (Conti, 1997). Educational research may not always influence policy (Hammersley, 2007). In disseminating the findings, there is a recognition that the ‘...impact of research’:

*(t)ends to happen indirectly, over time, and often through third parties. An individual study is rarely taken up directly and turned into practice. Rather, knowledge about an issue builds slowly and is communicated by various parties through many social and political dynamics.*

(Levin, 2005: 22)

Thus, for this research to be of value, its findings needs to be located with those who can use them to enhance the learning of others.



## Chapter 1: Background and Context

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the reasons for undertaking the research and considers the issues surrounding the selected area of study. The explanation provided leads to the presentation of the two research questions. Reference is made in this chapter to the theoretical framework in order to show connections between it, the focus of the study and the construction of the two questions.

The comment that ‘being troubled’ leads to research (Brown, 2008) opens the discussion. From a professional perspective, the ‘trouble’ began nine years ago, gathering momentum during the latter three. A need to understand or resolve certain issues affecting trainees’ professional development prompted action. Having worked as a teacher educator within the post-compulsory sector for five of the nine years, I began to form the view that many work-based, in-service trainee teachers were becoming more cautious and risk-averse as part of their practice. Risk-taking is defined here as willingness to experiment within one’s own practice: to be innovative rather than compliant and to make decisions rooted in tacit knowledge and professional practice. Underpinning this perspective is the notion of trust: a word used to accompany risk-taking and ethics as part of a complementary triangle. In a discussion regarding the complex nature of teacher identities, Stronach *et al.* (2002:126) argue for ‘...the development of professional forms of trust’ stating that this type of trust implies risk. In presenting their argument, the authors warn of danger as the ‘...language of indicators takes over the language of service’ (*ibid.*: 126).

The danger articulated by Stronach *et al.* (2002) became evident when I moved into higher education. Also employed in the role of teacher educator, I began working with groups of university-based, pre-service trainees, training to be teachers in the post-compulsory sector. As novices, I had assumed that pre-service trainees would approach the PGCE PCET

programme with the naïve enthusiasm and possible idealism of any new entrant about to join both the programme and the sector. Unlike their peers following the *in-service* route, whose guarded approaches to pedagogy and practice I theorised as possibly institutional or sector-driven, I assumed that pre-service trainees would not be contextually bound and therefore able to freely explore philosophical perspectives surrounding their professional and teaching identities. My view changed however as I became more familiar with the practice and orientation of the pre-service trainees. This comment is explained with reference to Guido's Story (*Appendix 1*). The anecdote, showing how a trainee duplicated his lesson plans during his work-based experience, serves to highlight the view that the time-saving, tick box approach to teaching and learning exhibited in the practice of in-service trainee teachers was being repeated in the practice of one year, pre-service trainees - those new to the programme, the sector and the teaching profession.

Whilst the anecdote is illustrative, it serves to foreground certain working practices. In the year preceding the research, end of year cohort feedback served to reinforce the notion of restrictive practice. Tensions regarding the university-based and work-based provision were highlighted and articulated primarily as those existing between theory and practice. Trainees stated that whilst in the university they had been encouraged to try new ways of working yet encountered difficulties in implementing their ideas when placed within work-based contexts. The trainees also commented upon the variation in mentor support received as part of the work-based experience.

Whilst the issues concerning theory and practice reflected those cited in previous research (Maxwell, 2010), the trainees' feedback was particularly significant because this particular cohort had experienced a newly-written PGCE PCET programme, devised as part of a university-based, quinquennial review process and developed to address *previous* cohort concerns regarding the synergy between theory and practice and interpretations of theory within practice. Whereas data is not usually

included in the early stages of a thesis, the example below serves to explain the perspective and to position the discussion:

*Unfortunately, teaching as a profession is becoming ever more bureaucratic and prescriptive and, if allowed, this state of affairs can be detrimental to teaching as an art and the satisfaction it can bring to a practitioner as it impinges on their right to teach in their own unique way.*

Nick (pre-service trainee)

Written mid-year, Nick's comment reflects the distance travelled post-enrolment. The significance lies in the reference to prescription; to its influence on the 'art' of teaching and to a distinctiveness brought about by the individual in the teaching role. Importantly, his comments and those of his peers reflected those of the in-service trainees collected as part of programme feedback processes some *three years* earlier. Nick's comment regarding the teachers' '...right to teach in their own unique way' reflects the 'danger' of a discourse centred on performativity' (Ball, 2003:216) and the '...language of indicators' (Stronach *et al.*, 2002:126). The comment also raises a question concerning the social emptiness of identities constructed within the realms of performativity and to how the self is recognised within it (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004).

The feedback from the pre-service cohort was doubly important because although the content of the new PGCE PCET programme had changed, the philosophy underpinning it had remained constant. At the core was a commitment to the development of the individual as an innovative, critically-reflective, reflexive practitioner; one identified as an agent of change (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Torrance and Maclure, 2010) with the potential to be transformative for the benefit of the learner and the wider community. The philosophy underpinning the programme informed the domain of the communities developed as part of a collaborative delivery model involving a university and its partner colleges. Central to the domain was a somewhat idealised view that those choosing to join the teaching profession did so because they had an affinity with or were attracted by the

opportunities inherent within it, namely to be creative, intuitive individuals operating within a professional role. Underpinning this premise was a view that individuals undertaking ITT/E programmes would be encouraged to be independent thinkers: to engage critically with both the immediate and wider educational context in order to bring about change as members of a learning community. The citing of restrictive practice by the trainees was therefore at odds with programme philosophy and principles. The challenge for teacher educators in providing ‘...constructive ways for teacher candidates to engage in reflective practice’ remained (Bruster and Peterson, 2013:170).

In reflecting on the issues raised by trainees, I identified three areas for further consideration: firstly, that the pre-service trainees perceived their practice to be limiting. Trainees felt that they could not freely implement their ideas concerning pedagogy and practice. Secondly, that the trainees had yet to establish their professional teaching identities and develop a confidence in their personal philosophy of learning in order to mediate perceived restrictions; thirdly, there was possibly a variation in programme philosophy as part of the cross-over between one context and another. What remained unclear, however, was what prompted such variation. In reviewing the three areas, I began to view trainees’ repeated criticism concerning differences between theory and practice across university and work-based contexts as that masking other concerns.

When considering the trainees’ feedback with that of existing research focusing on teacher professionalism in the post-compulsory sector (Avis *et al.*, 2003; Coffield, 2008; Coffield *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Butcher, 2008), the proposition arose that the social contexts and communities in which trainees were placed generated differing experiences. In placing trainee teachers within post-compulsory contexts as part of their training programme, trainees experience the living ‘history’ of the sector as part of everyday practice. They also encounter the formal and informal organisational structures of the work-based context in which they are placed. Theoretically, communities of practice develop via informal

structures hence, once placed, trainees become part of a complementary or parallel organisational structure.

In attempting to ‘connect’ (Wenger, 2000: 27) with the practice of an existing community, trainees are influenced by the ways in which a community constructs and values knowledge. There is the potential for conflict therefore as trainees face the challenge of understanding how a community’s construction of knowledge ‘fits’ with that of the organisation in which it is located. If an organisation constructs knowledge within *another* agenda and dedicates its systems and processes to it, the role of the community of practice and its members (including the trainee teachers) becomes compromised. It could be argued, for example, that the ‘quality’ agenda, operating as part of the wider improvement and reform agenda, is *not* linked to the quality of knowledge but to the quality of learner ‘outcomes’ as assessed and measured by those within and external to an organisation. To explain this comment further, a brief reference is made to personal research.

In reporting research findings arising from a DfES Standards pilot (Butcher, 2006) reference was made to the use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) by in-service trainees. Trainees were completing their ILPs as they were ‘told’ to do by their mentors and colleagues. Such ‘telling’ was not entirely prescriptive; it reflected a passivity and a reliance on others by trainees. The responses highlighted the existing practices of a body of staff in collaborating institutions. Such responses reflected an adherence to internal, procedural ‘quality’ systems and measures made visible via the use of in-house proforma such as the ILP. Homogeneity regarding the use of the ILPs seemed to offer a protective response to any internal or external auditor wishing to ‘measure’ quality. Use of the ILPs however did not appear to provide a vehicle for exploring the quality of knowledge or the use of professional knowledge by an organisation.

The relevance of these findings to this thesis is explained as follows: in using tools such as ILPs as organisational devices rather than those to

capture reflective or conceptual processes, the domain and practice of a community is altered. The artefact no longer represents the shared ethos of that community and becomes instead, part of a broader framework concerning teacher accountability. Such usage is reflective of ‘documentism’ (Wenger, *et al.*, 2002:148). The term is used to describe a position whereby documents gain greater power than the process or thinking underpinning them. The danger in ‘documentism’ lies in its potential to disrupt ‘...community activities concerning relationship building and collaborative problem-solving’ (*ibid.*: 148). I was aware of the issues surrounding ‘documentism’ (*ibid.*: 148) when devising an intervention (*see* Chapter 3). The intervention involved the introduction of an alternative, enquiry-based lesson plan template to explore trainees’ perceptions at a particular stage in the programme.

The findings from the DfES Standards pilot were added to those emerging from the literature (*see* Chapter 2) and from trainees’ feedback. From this evidence base, I was able to develop the two research questions. These are shown below.

## **1.2 Research questions**

### **1. If and how do pre-service trainee teachers construct their professional teaching identities within a framework of accountability?**

Trainee teachers operate in two cultures: a university and a placement setting such as a further education college. Encompassed within each setting is a sense of history, a series of processes and systems and a range of practices. Questions revolve around how trainees operate within these and other sub-communities and attempt to connect with existing practices as they begin to construct their professional teaching identities.

In arguing that effective communities of practice provide supportive structures in which to engage freely in an open critique of practice, it may

be said that this freedom is that attributed to a professional. Question 1 therefore considers the ethos supporting or impinging upon trainees' professional development. Such reflections led to the second question.

## **2. What are the factors limiting the development of trainee teachers' abilities to construct their professional and teacher identities?**

Considered in conjunction with Question 1, Question 2 considers the variables affecting the building of a coherent account: the cornerstone of future practice. Whilst the reference to a framework of accountability in Question 1 implies bias or limitation, it also implies accountability to a community of practice. In terms of this perspective, trainee teachers are described as accountable and therefore not passive figures (Bolton, 2014:7).

When trainee teachers begin their work-based experience, they acquire temporary membership of existing communities. Termed as 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) they are accepted by the community as novices. Whilst the notion of 'peripheral participation' is raised here for consideration and discussed at a later point in the thesis, the presumption is that trainees become '...active participants in the practices of social communities' and that they construct their identities in participation with others (Wenger, 1998:4). It could be argued however that 'active participation' in such communities is not necessarily achievable (Avis *et al.*, 2003). Previous trainee feedback had intimated the existence of certain limitations affecting their professional development.

As new entrants to a community, PGCE trainees bring levels of competence and experience to that community, carrying as many do skills from a previous job or role. Trainees meet existing members - also with differing levels of competence and experience - at the boundaries (Wenger, 2000:233). Wenger acknowledges the fluidity of such boundaries yet argues for their importance in connecting communities and providing opportunities for different kinds of learning. Wenger argues that it is in crossing the boundaries that learning has the potential to take place. The interchange

between new and existing members of a community may be described however as a source of tension and learning

In participating with others at the tenuous boundaries of a community, trainees actively meet the challenges affecting the construction of their professional teaching identities. Wenger argues that interaction at the boundaries ‘...is usually an experience of being exposed to a foreign competence’ (Wenger, 2000:10). When welcomed by a community, such exposure may be regarded positively because of the ‘generative tension’ it produces (*ibid*: 10). Alternately, it could be argued that when the presence is unwelcome, ‘foreign competence’ may be seen as a foreign incompetence or intrusion. The perceptions of existing participants towards the new entrants (the trainee teachers) are important therefore because such perceptions are likely to govern the trainees’ level of access to and participation in a community.

The challenge for the trainees at the boundaries reflects the ‘pull’ between competence and experience. Tensions may arise when trainees optimistically enter a community described as a community of practice to experience it as dysfunctional or at variance with other communities they inhabit. Question 2 therefore considers the trainees’ placement experience. It explores the domain of a community and how knowledge is represented within it. The question enables a consideration of particular features of a teacher’s professional identity, namely understanding the self as a critically-literate, thinking and autonomous individual.

In concluding this section, there is recognition of the complexities of teacher education and of the need for further research in this area (Loo, 2007). Loo suggests that the ‘...personal journeys of those learning to be teachers ... and the performative nature of the profession’ (p. 439) are areas worthy of further study. Additional factors ‘...that might impact on this complex process of becoming a teacher’ are also referred to: these include the knowledge and experience of the teacher educator, awarding institutions and models of funding (p. 439). This research therefore serves to respond to



Loo's request for further study in the area of teacher education. In seeking to comprehend the learning journeys of trainee teachers and the factors that may interrupt their progress it is argued that the primary purpose of this research is to '...understand rather than convince' (Wolcott, 1994: 369).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

*Extract 1:*

*The early formation of 'teacher identity' and 'professional identity' seems to focus on (notions of) competence ... rather than any sense of being part of a wider social and economic agenda. Furthermore there is little discussion of empowerment or notions of judgement and autonomy. Trainees, while grappling with their personal understanding of professionalism, are also looking for the 'correct answer' and they have an idea that somehow the programme and the tutors are hiding the 'secret tricks' from them! ... This 'tell me how to do it and I will do it' mindset provides a very limited or 'restricted' view of professionalism. This echoes the discussion of the previously published studies.*

(Smith and Butcher, 2008:11)

*Extract 2:*

*(n)ew entrants to the sector do have some concept of entering a profession. However, their concepts of what that means and their evolving identities as professionals is limited and constrained by their experiences within the sector.*

(Smith and Butcher, 2008:13)

The extracts above provide a focus for this chapter. Taken from case studies focusing on the impact of the 'new' professional standards for teachers on new entrants to the post-compulsory sector, the authors' comments highlight concerns regarding trainees' constructions of their professional teaching identities. In Extract 1 the authors refer to a preoccupation with 'competence' affecting the early formation of trainees' dual identities. Traditionally applied, the term competence conjures images of the professional self amidst descriptors of a capable, skilled teacher. Here however, the term is reflective of a focus on compliance rather than competence. Associating teacher competency with teacher identity in this context is possibly misplaced. The distinction between the two is important

because, in a compliancy agenda, it is unsurprising to find that there is ‘little discussion’ regarding the concepts of empowerment, judgement or autonomy. A focus on compliance rather than competence implies a less inclusive, enabling and enlightened view of professionalism. This perspective is exemplified in the authors’ reference to ‘quick-fix’ trainee teachers and to those who defer to supposedly more knowledgeable ‘others’ in their search for the ‘right’ answer. Whilst deference to unknowing others may be regarded as disadvantageous to a trainee teacher (Page, 2010) the opting-out stance adopted by them: ‘...tell me how to do it and I will do it ...’ indicates a passive, less autonomous position. The subtext of this position reflects a trainee who may be prepared to take a less ethical approach in the ‘rush’ to find the ‘correct answer’ or to consider the ‘...moral dimension of what it means to be a teacher’ (Pring, 2011:8).

In the second extract the authors focus more specifically on the contextual factors affecting the professional identities of trainee teachers, stating that their development is ‘...limited and constrained by their experiences within the sector’ (Smith and Butcher, 2008:13).

The extracts are included in order to position the ensuing discussion and to highlight existing tensions interrupting the early formation of trainee teachers’ dual identities as teachers and as professionals. The literature review provides a critical account of the issues concerning teacher professionalism in the post-compulsory sector. The literature is drawn primarily from sources within an educational context because the themes developed within the review reflect the current debate concerning the changing nature of teacher identity and professionalism. Noticeably, the voice of the *trainee*-teacher training to work in the post-compulsory sector is largely absent from such debates.

It is important to state at this point that a proportion of the literature is drawn from the schools sector. Whilst it is acknowledged that certain themes are comparable (if not transferable or equitable) across sectors, the decision to draw on a wider literature base reflects a certain ‘absence’ of the

post-compulsory sector from the political and public agenda prior to 1990. The sector, described as an ‘unsung hero’ (Rammell, 2005: i) continues to occupy a ‘middling’ position between the school and university sectors. When placed within the hierarchy of public or media interest however, it occupies a lower position. This position may be attributed to the lack of powerful voice in political and electoral arenas.

The voice of the practitioner working in this sector is also less evident in early literature. Whilst practitioner research was in existence pre-1990, publication of the work remained largely unrecognised by a wider audience - a situation somewhat indicative of the status of the profession at that time. The significance of practitioner research is raised here primarily because pre-service trainees are placed within differing cultural contexts as part of their programme experience and as such, expected to adopt an enquiry-driven approach as part of their PGCE programme of study. If the view remains that research in both higher and post-compulsory education is regarded as ‘...a cornerstone of the new dispensation in education...’ (Avis *et al.*, 2003) the importance of research in underpinning practice, whilst marginalised and time-bound, remains important. As part of their PGCE experience trainee teachers are expected to use research to inform their practice hence variation between expectation and the domain of differing communities provides grounds for potential conflict.

The review is presented in four parts. The over-arching theme informing the research is that of teachers as professionals and ‘...the extent to which they are allowed to exercise that professionalism’ (Wolf, 2011). The section opens with a discussion concerning the nature of knowledge. Current discourses reflect the tensions surrounding the concepts of professional knowledge, vocational and disciplinary knowledge. Unresolved questions emerge as part of such discourses, for example, is knowledge different in this sector? If so, are different types of teachers required to teach within it? Engaging with such questions highlights a link between knowledge and professional identity. As trainees begin their programmes, they bring with them personal and experiential knowledge and as such, have assembled

identities around such experiences. As they encounter new experiences as part of the transition from student to teacher, their knowledge becomes broadened. It would be misplaced to assume however that this transition is linear and that acquisition of new knowledge contributes to the development of a professional teaching identity. Conflicting demands and ideologies serve to disrupt the notion of linearity thus preventing maturation and consolidation.

The second part of the review focuses on the nature of teacher professionalism. Familiar descriptions of teacher professionalism are challenged by the existence of a different type of professionalism - one described as an imposed 'form of professionalism' (Lingfield, Interim Report, 2012:2). Such a description contradicts the rhetoric present within the current workforce reform agenda promoting the concept of the teacher as a professional. The discussion considers the reshaping of the role and identity of the teacher as part of the reform agenda. Such reshaping, it is argued, configures teaching as delivery and the teacher as a 'deliverer' of political directives rather than a 'custodian' of values (Pring, 2011:13).

In acknowledging that history and politics serve to inform current discourses of teacher professionalism, it is suggested that other perspectives need to be considered in order to advance the discussion. Rather than continuing to perpetuate externalised images of the 'ideal' teacher as part of a continuing agenda of educational reform, other, more focused perspectives are required. Engaging the practitioner as part of a future discourse lies at the heart of the debate. Bathmaker and Avis (2013:731) argue that in focusing on how teachers understand their work and on 'what matters' to them in terms of relationship with students, subject specialism and teaching and learning, there is the potential for '...reworking professionalism with teachers' (*ibid.*: 745).

The third part of the literature review considers the shifting teacher-learner relationship as part of a focus on personalised approaches to learning. As the practitioner in the post-compulsory sector becomes identified as a

generalist rather than a specialist (Fisher and Webb, 2006) the teacher becomes one who is:

*(e)xpected to deliver all the other features of post-modern education - individualised, flexible, any time any place, roll-on/roll off education, using Information Technology, providing exactly what the customer wants to the highest quality.*

(Clow, 2001:409)

As traditional concepts regarding teaching and learning change, so too does the power relationship between the teacher and the learner. This shift towards a paradigm foregrounding *learning and teaching* (rather than *teaching and learning*) places the learner in a powerful role.

The final part of the discussion centres on the domain of a community and the development of the trainee teacher as an autonomous professional. The section considers a philosophical perspective underpinning the development of a critically-literate, thinking trainee teacher. At the heart of the discussion is the notion of a purposeful relationship between the teacher, the learner and learning. This relationship is explained as follows:

*There needs to be a connection between what the teacher does and says (intentionally) and the learning (the coming to understand) ... achieved by the pupil.*

(Pring, 2011:2)

The connection identified by Pring is not achieved immediately. The level of sophistication required is achieved over time and requires exposure to - and reflection on - a range of differing teaching and learning experiences. The final part of the review therefore also considers the on-going needs of teachers. The professional development of teachers is cited within the literature as an area requiring greater focus (Avis *et al.*, 2003; Avis *et al.*, 2012; Guile and Lucas, 1999). The need to support the trainee teacher as part of the transition from training to employment is doubly significant in the post-compulsory sector because unlike their peers in schools, the trainees in this sector are not party to the same induction processes. In

considering the concept of the ‘learning professional’, the work of Guile and Lucas (1999) is considered at this point.

## **2.2 Part 1: Knowledge and professional identity**

The continuing debate concerning vocational and academic education reflects contrasting positions regarding the privileging of knowledge. Implicit within the debate is a view that knowledge is ‘different’ in each of the educational sectors and that different types of teachers are required to deliver different forms of knowledge. This variation is problematic and arguably, has contributed to an incoherent and, as yet, unresolved post-compulsory curriculum.

For the post-compulsory sector in particular, the positioning of knowledge within a skills-driven agenda has introduced further complexities. Questions concerning the nature of knowledge in vocational education and the role of employers within decision-making processes continue to increase tensions (Bathmaker, 2013; Young, 2009). Associating post-compulsory education with the acquisition of skills has brought about a particular discourse and a distinctive shaping of the curriculum. Such discourses, intermingled with other discourses concerning quality and prescription, tend to displace deeper conversations about the role of knowledge. The issues raised here are explored in the ensuing section.

### **2.2.1 The nature of knowledge**

In this section, reference is made to the work of Wheelahan (2008a; 2008b) Baldwin (2010) Rata (2012); Winch (2008; 2010) and Young (2009; 2011). Key themes emerging from their work focus on the positioning and centrality of knowledge within related discourses. The themes reflect the context of further education, the disjuncture between the academic-vocational curriculum and the incoherence of the 14-19 routes. The themes also concern learner access to different types of knowledge, underpinned by

issues relating to social justice and equity. An additional theme, with particular relevance to this thesis, is the role of the teacher educator in preparing trainee teachers to construct their teaching identities as they acquire new knowledge.

Whilst the literature highlights difficulties in constructing professional identities during times of change, the issues affecting the post-compulsory sector concern the *pace* of change rather than change *per se* (Baldwin, 2010). The impact of political intervention post-1992 on working practices is acknowledged within the literature (Avis, 2005; Avis *et al.*, 2003). The unresolved tensions emanating from this time continue to interrupt current discourses concerning teacher professionalism, as reflected in the comment below:

*The managerialist onslaught precipitated by Thatcherism set the context in which FE teachers labour. Moves towards an activist or new professionalism is set within this context and whilst containing progressive possibilities can easily fold back into a form of compliance that draws upon the rhetoric of responsible autonomy and professionalism.*

(Avis, 2005:217)

The role of the teacher educator in preparing trainee teachers to respond to such challenges therefore remains central to this thesis.

In identifying the key themes within the literature, it becomes apparent that a discussion about sector professionalism is also a discussion about knowledge. Some of the existing tensions relating to teacher parity, for example, reflect concerns not only about teacher status but also about knowledge and knowledge hierarchies. Likewise, discourses concerning teacher de-professionalism or the ‘deskilling [of] teachers’ work’ (Wheelahan, 2008a:6) draw attention to discussions about knowledge use and construction. In constructing their professional identities therefore, trainee teachers face controversial questions about knowledge. Such questions occur at a time when other discourses are in play. Debates about



teaching as a craft and the need for generalists rather than specialists interrupt and dominate other discussion concerning teacher education and professional formation.

### **2.2.2 Knowledge and the academic-vocational; theoretical-practical ‘see-saw’**

With reference to post-compulsory education in particular, tensions gather around the terms academic and vocational. The terms are frequently used within the literature to highlight a difference between schools and the post-compulsory sector with reference to students, the curriculum, teacher status and parity (Guile and Lucas, 1999; Wolf, 2011). In accepting the superficiality of these terms, permission is given to assume that knowledge is ‘different’ and operating within different paradigms. It has become part of common parlance, for example, to suggest that the academic route allows for theoretical knowledge and the vocational for everyday knowledge. In this way, knowledge becomes disconnected and categorised. Such separation remains unhelpful and perpetuates an unnecessary divide - often reflected in a view that universities provide ‘the theory’ and schools and colleges ‘the practice’.

In debating the concepts of theoretical and everyday knowledge, Wheelahan (2008: 6) states that individuals need access to:

*(‘d)isciplinarity’ or disciplinary styles of reasoning so that they understand how knowledge is used and the broad criteria that need to be applied in evaluating the validity of arguments.*

(Wheelahan, 2008a:6)

To achieve the level of understanding articulated by Wheelahan, more is required than the simplistic use of the terms academic and vocational.

In explaining the difference between theoretical and everyday knowledge, Wheelahan refers to the meaning systems associated with each (2008a:6).

Theoretical knowledge is described as *principled* (original emphasis) knowledge and the latter as *particularised* (original emphasis) knowledge. In distinguishing between the two, Wheelahan seeks to emphasise the importance of knowledge use. It is in understanding the meaning associated with disciplinary principles that individuals are provided with the capacity to apply knowledge in differing ways and in differing contexts. In explaining the reference to everyday knowledge, Wheelahan refers to a situation where the relevance and choice of knowledge is context-bound.

The importance of identifying the difference between the two concepts becomes apparent when applying the terms to workplace learning and to the current focus on skills and employability in post compulsory education. For those training to teach in this context, the concept of principled knowledge is significant. The diversity offered within the sector reflects a need to take a wider perspective of the teaching role. Unlike teaching in schools, those training to teach in the post-compulsory sector work with students of varying age ranges, levels and abilities within a single day. Theoretically, by drawing on the concept of principled knowledge, those training to be teachers in this sector have the potential to work with or across these variables. In applying these concepts to lesson planning, for example, trainee teachers are notionally, not constrained by the content or subject matter of the intended session because they are able to draw on a wider meaning system to inform their thinking. From this perspective, there is coherence with pedagogy as a philosophy. In contrast however, the current sector focus on employability skills moves the debate into everyday or particularised knowledge. From this perspective, trainee teachers are more likely to plan lessons with an emphasis on ‘what is needed’ to enable the student to perform within a future workplace. The selection of knowledge therefore is likely to be rooted in notions of relevance and application.

It is noted here that the issue of relevance appears as a continuing motif within the literature, appearing frequently in references to learner motivation, orientation and assessment. The question raised by its inclusion - and requiring further consideration - reflect connections between internal

and external decision-making, subject knowledge and content. The questions centre on what is selected and why. In the post-compulsory sector, the term seems to acquire particular emphasis because of its existence within academic-vocational discourses. Implicit within the debate is the suggestion that certain types of knowledge are included whilst others remain excluded. From one perspective, relevant knowledge may be seen as applied knowledge within the work-place - with practical knowledge favoured over theoretical knowledge (Avis and Fisher, 2006). For learners, relevance may be described in other ways, for example, ‘...the relevance of paid employment to their lives and the perceived irrelevance of education’ (Avis, 1997:102). The theme of relevance is revisited at points within the thesis.

In returning to Wheelahan’s use of the terms theoretical and everyday knowledge, reference is made to academic and vocational curricula. Wheelahan (2008a) argues that in considering the vocational curriculum, students need access to *both* theoretical and everyday knowledge - a case argued on the grounds of social justice and equity. In addition, the author argues for balance; stating that a focus on one may be detrimental to the other. A focus on context-bound, workplace delivery, for example, may lessen access to the meaning systems associated with disciplinary or theoretical knowledge; similarly, a focus on theoretical knowledge may reduce the value of tacit, work-based knowledge. Wheelahan argues that a curriculum needs to ‘face both ways’ (2008a) in order to maintain both balance and access to disciplinary and workplace knowledge. In stating the importance of this dualism, the author acknowledges the greater demand placed on those working in the post compulsory sector. In arguing that the academic curriculum faces only ‘one way’, namely towards a disciplinary field of knowledge (Wheelahan, 2008a: 7) fewer demands are made on those involved in delivering this curriculum.

The notion of facing one or both ways however takes on a different perspective when considering a particular phenomenon - that of trainee teachers teaching Advanced level subjects within the post-compulsory

context. Theoretically the nature of A level programmes, the students and the two-year time span offer opportunities similar to peers teaching in schools. Supposedly unconstrained by managing the prospect of imminent learner employability, it could be argued that trainee teachers have, like their colleagues in schools, the opportunity to explore the expanse and use of theoretical, principled knowledge as they prepare their students for a route often associated with entry into higher education. Furthermore, the two-year duration of an Advanced level course provides time for learners to explore future employment and career opportunities and to gain access to other types of knowledge. This linear (if not parallel) approach suggests an ‘ideal’ model for engaging with both types of knowledge. The challenges however, come from elsewhere. Issues concerning learner motivation and learner assessment serve to disrupt the ‘ideal’ described above. The first of the two issues is considered shortly as an aspect of Baldwin’s (2010) work; the second is considered in Part 3 when greater attention is given to assessment processes and practices. Both issues are revisited with respect to the findings and conclusions (*see* Chapters 5 and 6).

The relevance of the above discussion concerning theoretical and everyday knowledge can be summarised here: firstly it serves to question how knowledge is located as part of a university - work-based ITT/E collaborative provision; secondly, it questions the synergy (or otherwise) between theory and practice as part of this provision. This issue is often cited as an area of tension by trainees and, as in the case of this research, prompted further study. Thirdly, discussions about knowledge serve to offer a challenge to ITT/E providers as School Direct, University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and the Apprenticeship model continue to expand. As these initiatives develop, a shared understanding of the role of knowledge in an educational context becomes more pressing. This comment is revisited in Chapter 6. Fourthly, of more immediate concern, is the nature of knowledge within the current agenda of improvement. In the midst of the discussions regarding notions of excellence in teaching and learning and learner engagement, ‘... it appears as though the place of knowledge within the

educational context has been forgotten' (Baldwin, 2010:9). Time is now spent considering this perspective.

In developing her argument, Baldwin identifies with contemporaries (Avis, 2005; Avis *et al.*, 2003) in recognising the diversity of the sector and the rate of change as distinguishing features. Noticeably, in moving the argument forward, there is a focus on the impact of sector reform on knowledge rather than on the sector itself or its employees. In exploring the organisation of knowledge within such contexts, Baldwin, like Wheelahan (2008a; 2008b), considers the place of disciplinary knowledge. She defines the term as:

*(o)rganised and formal bodies of knowledge which may either be those that are usually termed 'academic' but also includes those which are labelled 'vocational'.*

(Baldwin, 2010:9)

In defining the term, Baldwin brings together the often polarised notions of academic and vocational and in doing so, highlights the unifying concept of knowledge. Baldwin identifies three categories of knowledge (*ibidem*: 43): students' or teachers' owned knowledge; everyday knowledge and formal school knowledge. The latter is described as that which could include both academic and vocational knowledge. From this perspective, academic and vocational knowledge are not seen as separate entities but points from which knowledge can be seen, used and located.

Whilst school knowledge is described as reflective of the school, namely, the type of knowledge enabling a school to operate, Baldwin similarly refers to it as '...knowledge which may also be controlled by the teacher for the purposes of disciplinary control' (*ibid.*:45). The subtleties underpinning this comment reflect a possible dualism operating within a teaching session. The dualism relates to the overt and covert use of knowledge. Whilst the former may have roots in disciplinary knowledge, consideration of the latter moves the discussion into another arena, namely behaviour management. In considering Baldwin's references to students' owned knowledge and that

emanating from the students' interests, a link between learner motivation and behaviour can be considered. The difference between the students' owned knowledge and that of the teachers' offers gains attention when considering points of convergence or divergence in a classroom context. The second vignette provided by Baldwin (2010:37) in which she explores the contrast between the students' and the teacher's knowledge and the arising tension between the two, exemplifies the point. The link between knowledge use, ownership and behaviour management is raised here and revisited when considering the Case Studies within this thesis (*see Chapter 4: Rita and Ellie*). In discussing forms of knowledge, 'relevance' and 'real life' knowledge, Baldwin questions if the three are interconnected or transformational. Whilst difficult to answer in contemporary practice, the question remains important.

The differences between the students' and the teachers' knowledge and how each interconnects (or otherwise) in the classroom can be brought together in a discussion concerning the notion of relevance. Highlighted earlier as a repetitive term used within the literature, it emerges as part of a debate concerning the nature and use of knowledge (Rata, 2012; Wheelahan, 2008a; 2008b).

The tensions here centre on knowledge selection, content and who or what is the decision maker. Whilst Rata (2012) sees value in social knowledge - defined as that emerging '... from an individual's experience within a socio-cultural group' (p.104) she questions the over-reliance on such experience when referring to meaning and content. In preferring social knowledge, Rata like Wheelahan (2008a; 2008b) cites issues of access for certain types of groups. In accessing disciplinary knowledge, the individual has the capacity to go beyond the immediate and to think in ways not grounded in experience. For those denied access, the disadvantages extend beyond the classroom. The capacity to think objectively brings with it other capabilities such as criticality and autonomy. These characteristics are required not only for educational achievement but also as aspects of global citizenship. The issue of relevance therefore rests in the selections made. Rata questions the

use of socio-cultural knowledge as the source of the curriculum rather than the source of pedagogy, arguing that a curriculum needs to be able to release individuals from the immediate in order to create other ways of thinking. These ideas are further developed when considering the work of Young (2009; 2011). (See section 2.2.4 Knowledge and the curricula)

### **2.2.3 Subject knowledge and mentor training**

A further area of interest raised by Baldwin (2010) and offering resonance with ITT/E refers to subject-specific training and pedagogy. There are two issues here: one concerns a focus by Ofsted (2003) on the subject mentor at a time when there is a shift away from the subject specialist to the generalist; the other concerns the question of what is meant by subject knowledge. Both issues have relevance to this thesis. In terms of the latter, entrants to ITT/E programmes often declare enthusiasm for their subject as one of their motivations for becoming a teacher. Rooted in personal enjoyment, positive school-based experiences and/or examination success, subject alignment may be described as part of an individual's identity. The transition from trainee teacher to teacher however involves locating the subject within other contexts and agendas. How knowledge is produced and where it is applied (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998) is part of the 'unknown' for many new entrants and as such, becomes part of the teacher education process. How the trainee teacher moved from the position of subject teacher to teacher becomes part of the transition. The situation is muddled however when conflicting discourses concerning subject specialism and the generalist teacher; the nature of disciplinary or non-disciplinary knowledge intersect. In addition, trainees encounter subject knowledge within different guises. How trainees wrestle with subject knowledge described as subject content and transcribed within Schemes of Work, syllabus Units and models of assessment becomes part of the challenge.

Baldwin's reference to subject-specific mentoring (DfES, 2003) raises a further discussion. A decade after its introduction, it could be argued that a

focus on *training* staff to be mentors (in order to meet Ofsted expectations) has overtaken a deeper exploration of what is meant by subject knowledge and pedagogy. Focusing on subject mentor training rather than engaging mentors and trainee in an exploration of the pedagogy and knowledge underpinning teacher education has, arguably, led to misplaced energies and resources.

Generating networks or communities of practice rather than standardising training could provide opportunities to connect discourses concerning knowledge, subject knowledge and professional knowledge. Theoretically, the informal structures offered within communities of practice provide opportunities for informal learning to take place. Baldwin (2010) acknowledges however the difficulties in ‘...transporting communities of practice theory into a formal educational context...’ (p.72). The issues relate to the differing communities of practice; their relationship with the educational context and the place and value of knowledge. Baldwin points, in particular, to the relationship of differing communities of practice with disciplinary or non-disciplinary knowledge.

The discussion raised is pertinent to those preparing trainee teachers for the work-based experience. Teachers in the post-compulsory sector work across a spectrum of classes (*see* Chapter 4 Case Study 2: Ellie). A timetable for a day may encompass the teaching of a Key Skills class followed by an A level class followed by a Skills for Life class. The question here concerns whether those areas listed reflect disciplinary or non-disciplinary knowledge or conversely, that there is not or should not be a difference. Whilst Advanced level teaching may be viewed as knowledge emanating from a disciplinary perspective, an alternative view may be taken with respect to the area of Skills for Life. It could be argued that the latter is generic and as such, draws on general knowledge; it could also be argued that it is ‘vocational’ or skills-based or, in continuing the range of available options, rooted in notions of citizenship. It could be further argued that it is rooted in a philosophical position regarding the skills and knowledge needed for lifelong learning. The options are limitless.



In a context where ‘technical competence’ (Bathmaker, 1991:19) vies for space with that of subject knowledge, the two become not only conjoined but also included in other agendas. The current focus on ‘educational outputs’ (Winch, 2010:19) for example, continues to shape both knowledge and competency-based approaches to learning. In describing the input-output model, Winch defines the former as resource linked and the latter as that associated with knowledge, skills, understanding (and interestingly) virtue. The view that only ‘educational outputs matter’ - with ‘indifference’ attributed to the contribution of the former, (p.19) - creates a different philosophy of learning and locates discussions about knowledge in other agendas. The need for learning to be made visible for public consumption places knowledge in quality agenda where learning outputs can be measured and judgements made.

#### **2.2.4 Knowledge and the curricula**

The input-output model noted by Winch (2010) shows itself in the everyday working of teachers. The notion of learning outcomes can be seen within lesson plan proforma and as such, serves to direct teacher thinking towards predicted consequences or results. In turn, the aims and objectives of a teaching session may become shaped by the learning outcomes rather than reflecting certain philosophies of education. The impact of an outcome-focused approach also shows itself when considering models of assessment and the location of knowledge within them. The nature of learner assessment is explored later (*see*: 2.4.1 Assessment, the teacher and the learner).

In exploring the concept of inputs and outputs, Winch recognises the associations with manufacturing and economics (2010:26). In doing so, the discussion contributes to an existing discussion concerning the operation of business models in education (Ball, 2003; 2010). Attached to this discourse are associated terms such as ‘value-added’, ‘standards’ and ‘good practice’

and the difficulties inherent within each when explored within an educational context (Winch, 2010:28). Young (2009; 2011) contributes to this debate in his discussion concerning the impact of neoliberalism on education. In exploring the consequences of such approaches, Young raises the issue of education in the marketplace. In making links between schools and the economy, Young (2009:11) refers to ‘...a kind of mass vocationalism’ in which schools are:

*(t)reated as a type of delivery agency, required to concentrate on outcomes and pay little attention to the process and content of delivery.*

(Young 2009:11)

In arguing the above, Young refers to the increasingly instrumentalist view of schooling. In an approach laden with targets and league tables, Young expresses little surprise at the impact, described in terms of learner boredom and teacher exhaustion.

In focusing his attention on the 14-19 curriculum and in particular, the current Coalition’s approach to it, Young (2011) raises a concern regarding the current focus on knowledge within school subjects *without* clear references to the 14-19 curriculum. The lack of coherence between the phases is problematic and returns the debate to that concerning access and social justice (Wheelahan, 2008a; 2008b; Rata, 2012). Whilst this concern is acknowledged as such, it could also be argued that notion of phases is becoming an increasingly outdated idea as the participation age continues to rise. Likewise, the notion of phases can be used to serve an argument promoting separation rather than continuation.

In developing his argument, Young refers to three different *Futures* (Young and Muller, 2009) for schooling. The three rest in assumptions about knowledge and the curricula. In considering these with respect to the 14-19 curriculum, Young highlights key themes which have relevance to this thesis. With respect to *Future 1* where the intrinsic value of knowledge is

noted, Young (2011:267) comments on the potential for students and teachers to engage with knowledge constructed by ‘...specialist scholars... who work in and sometimes across the disciplines that school subjects draw on.’ The potential to extend or expand learner knowledge is recognised here. Hence, whilst Young is critical of the backward-looking focus of the Coalition’s current position regarding subject knowledge, there is an awareness that access to scholarly and interdisciplinary knowledge provides learners with an opportunity to go beyond everyday thinking, moving towards the more theoretical. In doing so, the perceived barriers between vocational and academic arenas become blurred. In responding to the question regarding the purpose of schools, Young replies that:

*(s)chools enable or can enable young people to acquire the knowledge that for most of them cannot be acquired at home or in the community, or, for adults, in workplaces.*

(Young, 2009:13)

In a later article, Young (2011) states that it is the:

*(i)nterrelatedness of concepts in a subject or discipline that distinguishes them from the everyday concepts that pupils bring to school, and which offers them ways of going beyond their experience.*

(Young, 2011: 269)

The term ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2009:14) serves to highlight the potential noted in the comments above. As such, the aim or desire is for a curriculum enabling new ways of thinking which raises the debate above that of school or non-school knowledge or the academic or vocational. It is within this higher ambition that the role of the learners’ experiences is considered. The literature (Wheelahan, 2008a; 2008b; Rata, 2012) highlights tensions around this role. The tensions concern the emphasis given to learners’ experiences and its place within the curriculum. Learner experience, for example, can be seen as a source (Rata, 2012) or a resource

for trainee teachers to use as a basis for extending knowledge. Drawing on the learners' concrete experiences may be seen as a tool to aid reflection, abstraction or transference from a 'real' context to a hypothetical one as part of problem-solving activities. The crux of the argument however, concerns basing a curriculum *on* the learners' experiences. Young explores this aspect as part of *Future 2*. Central to this exposition is the role of the teacher. In providing an example from the new Scottish curriculum (Young, 2011: 268) Young shows the teacher in the role of facilitator. In doing so, Young highlights firstly the difference in the pedagogical relationship between the teacher and the student and secondly, a reduction in the part played by the teacher's specialist knowledge. The concept of 'powerful knowledge' is reflected in this position. If a teacher is seen as a professional and defined as one holding specialist knowledge, the position of the teacher or trainee teacher may be viewed differently if located in the role of facilitator. The role of a facilitator is to organise or enable: it is not necessarily rooted in specialist knowledge. The issue of '...the subject specialist set against the learning facilitator' (Avis, 1999:247) is considered in greater depth later (*see*: Part 3). The issue is also revisited when considering the data and arising implications (*see* Chapters 5 and 6).

In proposing *Future 3*, Young (2011:273) brings together notions of the curriculum and teacher pedagogy. In bringing these ideas together as part of a focus on the 14-19 curriculum he reiterates familiar debates concerning 'two kinds of minds' (p.273) - the practical and the academic - and considers employment or career routes often associated with them. Young moves the argument forward when considering the future and speculates on the 'new knowledge' required for tomorrow's society. He considers where the craft-based ideas of today - whilst located in the past - fit with a future economy. Such a debate has an impact on the post-compulsory curriculum and of the teachers working within it. In recognising current and future models of practice, Winch (2010) argues for the engagement of employers as part of a wider sharing of aims in supporting student learning in the workplace. Conversely, Young (2009) speaks of the control of 'much' post-compulsory education placed into '...the hands of willing but often reluctant

private employers.’ The comment reflects the uncertainty surrounding employer engagement which in turn, affects future models of initial teacher training. Trainee teachers are also student learners in the workplace. How they are viewed as professionals, trained and supported throughout their teaching career is considered next.

### **2.3 Part 2: The professional self: an imposed ‘form of professionalism’**

After more than a decade of reform it can be argued that political attempts to bring about workforce reform via a process of intervention has not been achieved and that ‘...professionalism in FE remains an elusive and paradoxical concept’ (Gleeson and James, 2007: 451). The history of the sector post-incorporation and its impact on practitioners continues to resonate within it (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004). Colleges were ‘incorporated’ following the 1988 Education and Reform Act and as such, were ‘freed’ from local authority control. Colleges became responsible for their own budgets and funding was redirected in order to respond to local employer needs. It can be argued however that this ‘freedom’ was rooted in cost-saving measures rather than a commitment to developing sector professionalism. The marketing of courses and of the college itself became an increasing part of college lecturers’ lives. The narratives of ‘embattled’ (Avis *et al.*, 2003:180) lecturers who continue to survive despite the constraints affecting their labour are undiminished. The issues raised by Avis *et al.* (2003) regarding time, administrative pressures and limited opportunities to engage with research and CPD remain current.

The continuing impact of the changes introduced post- incorporation serve to challenge familiar constructs of knowledge and pedagogy and conventional notions of professionalism (Armitage *et al.*, 2007; Avis, 1997; 1999; 2005; Coffield *et al.*, 2005; Donovan, 2005; Fisher and Webb, 2006). As part of their placement experience, therefore, trainees are likely to inhabit contexts and communities where political and historical differences continue. They are also likely to engage with a workforce whose identity and practice is undefined. Comment is made on the limited data available

regarding ‘...who its practitioners are, their dispositions or how they define professionalism in the contested contexts in which they work’ (Gleeson and James, 2007:451).

The instigation of an independent review investigating ‘...ways to improve the professional status of the further education and skills workforce’ (Lingfield, Interim Report 2012) suggests that the identity of practitioners within this sector remains unresolved. In the decade since the introduction of the 2002 regulation requiring teachers in this sector to be qualified, words such as ‘reform’, ‘fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century’, ‘changes and improvements’ and raising ‘the status of FE professionals’ return with an echoic ring. Reference is made in the Report to engaging and giving ‘confidence to all key stakeholders’. Implicit within the comment is an assumption that a lack of confidence exists. In seeking evidence, practitioners and key stakeholders in the sector were asked to comment on ‘what professionalism’ means to them’.

A lack of consensus regarding teacher identity and the inability to define the nature of professionalism is raised continuously within the literature (Cottee, 2006; Eraut, 1994; 2007; Eraut and Hirsh, 2007; Eraut, 2008). Whilst it may be argued that a single, uncontested definition could not be expected (Tummons, 2007) what does become clear is the need to review previous perceptions and models of teacher professionalism in order to reflect a changing political scene. Whilst aspects of professionalism such as role modelling, transmission of values, expectations of the self and others are reflected within early literature (Eraut, 1994; 2007; Hammersley, 2007; Schon, 1983; 1987) it can be argued that these constructions need to be reviewed as the context continues to change (Light *et al.*, 2009:14). Likewise, earlier models of professionalism (Millerson, 1964; Hoyle, 1974) showing the component parts and constructs of professionalism acquire new meaning once situated in other agendas. As the profession is ‘...reshaped to *deliver (original emphasis) the curriculum*’ (Pring, 2011:4) familiar models of professionalism begin to dissipate.

In commenting upon the features of a ‘...modernised teaching profession’, Pring (2011:4) refers to linguist coinage as an indicator of change. Teachers are described as part of a ‘workforce’ (employees or workers rather than professionals); the teacher becomes the ‘deliverer’ of a curriculum ‘devised elsewhere’ (*ibid.*: 3). In the role of pseudo-teacher, the individual is expected to deliver a curriculum imbued with measurable outcomes and to be assessed whilst doing so:

*Teaching therefore comes to be understood in the light of a particular form of life. And that ‘form of life’ profoundly affects the role, training and continuing professional development of teachers.*

(Pring, 2011:5)

In explaining the expression ‘form of life’, Pring refers to that brought about by a preoccupation with student testing. This aspect is considered as part of a wider discussion concerning the nature of assessment in Part 3.

Pring’s descriptions of the modern-day teacher as a ‘deliverer’ or ‘a trainer of those who have to hit targets’ (*ibid.*: 3) may be regarded as a set of descriptors which override or replace familiar concepts of the teacher as a professional. As such, Pring’s views contribute to a continuing debate concerning the professionalisation, de-professionalisation (Ball, 2003; Day *et al.*, 2006; Gleeson *et al.*, 2005; Stronach *et al.*, 2002) or re-professionalisation of teachers (Avis, 1999).

If the role of the teacher is that described by Pring, the case *for* teacher professionalism may be regarded as lost. In the role of deliverer, a teacher needs only to carry out or supply what is required as prescribed by others. In this role he or she is not required to exercise the type of decision-making required of an expert or specialist hence the teacher-as-deliverer supersedes descriptions of the teacher as a professional. The conundrum lies however in such a construction. Whilst the notion of the teacher-as-deliverer operates as a subtext within political rhetoric, its construction exists in opposition to the aspirations of the sector. Here ambitions regarding teacher professionalism remain unabated. This comment is best described via a

historical ‘twist’. A proposal to remove the 2007 regulation regarding teaching qualifications (Lingfield, 2012, Interim Report) caused consternation in the sector. Whilst the motivation for this ‘...decisive change of course’ (Lingfield, Interim Report 2012:2) is articulated in the extract below, the response to the proposal represents practitioners’ views of professionalism:

*Over the past decade, government has attempted to impose by statute a form of professionalism on the further education sector through the development of national occupational standards for teaching staff. As successive reports by Ofsted and academic research have shown, this endeavour has failed to achieve consistency in the diverse provision for acquiring vocational knowledge and skills. In comparison with arrangements in both schools and higher education, the initial training of lecturers and their continuous professional updating in further education are too often reported by those involved to be both haphazard and onerous.*

(Professionalism in Further Education 2012: 2.  
Interim Report of the Independent Review Panel)

It is generally acknowledged that the current layering of teacher training qualifications is cumbersome (an initial qualification followed by Certificate, Diploma and PGCE routes) and that many in the sector welcome a ‘...rolling back of central controls and regulation’ (*ibid.*: 2). The move to revoke the 2007 regulation however raised alarm within both the higher and further education sectors. In response, many practitioners rose to defend their professionalism. Of the 5,332 respondents to the Institute for Learning (IFL, 2012:5) survey, 80% stated that removal of the national requirements would ‘...de-professionalise the sector with unintended consequences.’ ‘Erosion of standards’, ‘undermining professionalism and professional status’ were cited as likely outcomes. It is in this response that the historical ‘twist’ can be found. Whilst an imposed ‘...form of professionalism’ (Lingfield, 2012:2) has existed for over a decade, the proposal for deregulation of the sector was resisted by its practitioners. Such a response indicates a need for a professional identity and a need to ‘belong’ to a profession regardless of external imposition.



The reasons for this response may be rooted in sector history. It could be argued that the loss of any gains made in the historical journey towards professional status overrides external imposition. The recognition of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) as equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for example (enabling practitioners to work in schools) is acknowledged within the literature as a ‘victory’ (Ifl, 2012:1). The victory may be described as a triumph over perception: that those practising within vocational contexts ‘...have, and continue to be considered second class’ (Skills Commission, 2009:17) and therefore accorded lower status. As stated in Part 1 of the literature review, such negative perceptions often rest in assumptions regarding the value of vocational knowledge.

A far larger issue however - a perception of the teaching profession as a whole, displaces the issue of professionalism *between* the sectors. The prospect of parity within and between sectors is reduced because the teaching profession in its entirety is subject to an imposed ‘form of professionalism’ (Lingfield, 2012:2). Altering this perception would require philosophical and political reconciliation. Whilst political rhetoric reiterates the importance of the teacher and teaching (DfE, 2010) it does not necessarily tip the balance in favour of the practitioner as a professional. The dominance of the accountability agenda, resting in a continuing legacy of political mistrust of teachers (Coffield, 2008; Simpkin, 2005) holds greater sway. Such accountability is described within the literature as that indicating a decline in teacher professionalism (Bennett, 2009; Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010; Popham, 2000; Stronach *et al.*, 2002). The tension and ambiguity is exemplified in the comment below:

*It is important to trust our professionals to get on with the job. That does not mean leaving professionals to go their own way, without scrutiny - we shall always need the constant focus on effective teaching and learning, and the accountability measures ...*

(Morris, 2001:26)

The contradiction lies in the need to trust ‘our professionals’ whilst also ensuring that they are accountable.

The externally-prescribed role of the teacher and associated accountabilities is shown within the literature as a continuing trend (Ofsted 2003; 2004; 2006; DCSF Select Committee, 2010; Skills Commission Report, 2009; DfE, 2010). This trend indicates an inability to reconcile ethical concerns regarding the trusting of teachers as a component of teacher professionalism. Wolf's (2011:2) comment some ten years post-Morris may be seen as a plea rather than a solution: 'Ultimately, we have to trust professionals.'

Concerns regarding the external imposition of professional standards, articulated within a framework of quality and improvement are signalled here. Poulson and Avramidis (2003) question the assumption that teaching is improved for the better via a process of '...directing more closely what teachers do in classrooms.' The authors also question the effectiveness of new teaching methods and curriculum development if the teacher has no stake in its success. Barber and Phillips (2000:277) extend this argument by stating that teachers are unlikely to embrace standards or accountability if they are not supported in what they and their students are being asked to do. The authors also provide an alternative view regarding some '...universally applicable lessons' learnt from over a decade of reform. Citing two fundamental premises - that every student can achieve high standards and that radical improvement can be rapidly accomplished - the authors suggest that the key to success is an 'unrelenting' focus on teaching, learning and pupil performance. The setbacks linked to the past are described in terms of a '...single, constantly repeated error' (*ibid.*: 277) namely the placing of ideas in opposition. Using the focus on school improvement over the last twenty years as an example, the authors suggest that by placing terminology such as pressure or support in opposition, sides are taken, leading to tension or low morale. A preferred approach is the fusing or bringing together of often opposing ideas in order to bring about irreversible change. It may be argued that if the approach proposed by Barber and Phillips (2000) operated via trainees' membership of communities of practice, a paradigm shift could occur:

*Remaining on a learning edge takes a delicate balancing act between honouring the history of the practice and shaking free from it. This is often only possible when communities interact with and explore other perspectives beyond their boundaries.*

(Wenger, 2012:3)

Such a shift would contrast to that described as a new paradigm of professionalism, namely managerialism (Tummons, 2007). The impact of this on the labour of lecturers is explored within the literature (Avis, 2003, Colley, 2006; Avis and Bathmaker, 2006). In the managerial world ‘...professionalism is imposed from above...’ (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013:731). Organisations and their employees become part of a prescriptive model based around target setting and performance: accountability for student attainment and progression becomes the responsibility of all employed within such settings. The arising discourse of organisational professionalism (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013) reflects that of conformity to external control: individuals and systems are organised in ways that enable responses to be made to the demands of others.

Organisational professionalism is one of four different discourses of professionalism presented by Bathmaker and Avis (2013). In considering such discourses, it could be argued that history has intervened to create identifiable themes. Post-Incorporation, colleges created extensive in-house quality systems in order to respond to internal and external auditing demands. In establishing these systems however, college lecturers became part of the quality cycle rather than determiners of it. Whatever ‘shape’ professionalism took at that time became subsumed within quality systems and part of a ‘quality’ discourse. This discourse, identified by references to student retention, attainment, completion and employability rates, continues today and operates as a series of more dominant, more powerful discourses.

Continuation of such discourses may rest in post-1993 history and to a possible naturalisation of professionalism within these parameters. Practitioners may have become accustomed to professionalism framed in

this way and, in offering limited challenge to dominant discourses, regard managerial and hierarchical relations as the context for their labour (Avis *et al.*, 2003).

If so, the prospect of discourses formed within occupational groups (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013) becomes even more remote. Reflective of personal beliefs, values and commitments, discourses concerning occupational professionalism provide insights into the professional identities shared by a group. Theoretically, communities of practice offer the potential for such discourses to flourish. In organisations where informal and formal structures coalesce and a shared ethos concerning teacher professionalism exists, the opportunities for mutual conversations arise. This positive scenario is impeded however by a ‘chicken and egg’ situation. It is difficult to discuss occupational professionalism within such communities when the evidence shows a history of failure in developing the professional identities of those teaching in the post-compulsory sector (Gleeson and James, 2007). In situations such as this, where teacher identities remain undeveloped, the opportunities for practitioners to engage in broader discussions about teacher professionalism become limited. In addition, it may be difficult for communities of practice to develop a shared ethos concerning teacher identity and professionalism if members choose to look elsewhere. If, as argued, teachers in the sector ‘...do not turn to notions of occupational or critical professionalism in response to managerial discourses of organisational professionalism...’ (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013:736), options other than those related to a communal vision arise. The authors refer to personal discourses of professionalism which focus on an individual commitment to students and to a subject specialism. Such personal discourses, whilst reflective of an individual’s commitment, may be insular and possibly isolated if structures are not in place to share perspectives as part of everyday practice. The needs of *trainee* teachers are raised with respect to this point. Opportunities to access suitable professional development structures as part of career transition and development become part of the debate about teacher professionalism and identity. It is at this point in the literature review that attention is drawn to

the work of Guile and Lucas (1999). The authors reflect on the changing role of the teacher and issues relating to continuing professional development (CPD) and learning.

### **2.3.1 The learning professional**

Recognised within the literature is the impact of societal and technological change on the sector and its employees (Guile and Lucas, 1999; Wheelahan, 2008). In response, Guile and Lucas (1999) argue the need for a new concept of the teacher employed within it. The authors argue that whilst the previous concept of the ‘reflective practitioner’ provided a way of showing the distinctiveness of being a professional, it offered only a partial view and one not fully representative of the wider professional role. In addition, they argue that this concept has not:

*(l)ed to any significant analysis or engagements with the new contexts and role in which FE teachers are now expected to operate ....*

(Guile and Lucas, 1999:204)

The concept of changing demands on those employed within the sector is described as one not addressed by successive governments. The authors talk of the ‘fragmented and voluntarist’ (Guile and Lucas, 1999: 210) position of ITE and CPD - a weakness repeated within the literature (Avis *et al.*, 2012). In contextualising the work of Guile and Lucas, the comments made some fifteen years ago remain both pertinent and largely unaddressed today. Whilst the issue of ITE and CPD reappear at points in history, it has not been advanced as a key political focus within a broader national agenda. The lack of such a debate is cited by Guile and Lucas as perpetuating the lower status of the teachers in this sector and contributes to a view that FE is treated ‘differently’ (p.208) to other educational sectors.

In drawing on the history of the sector, Guile and Lucas, make reference to the ‘traditions of pedagogy’ (p.206) that have evolved. These traditions

encompass familiar conventions concerning subject teaching; work-related training and qualifications; flexible learning and the teaching of adults. It is argued that such traditions, whilst reflective of the distinctiveness of the sector, also serve to show its separation. Unresolved issues concerning the interrelatedness of the traditions and their links to CPD or ITE remain. The ‘difference’ is explained in terms of a range of issues including the lack of a professional body to represent practitioner views; a focus on an employer-led model of education; application of the FENTO standards (now replaced); the role of further education as part of a model of lifelong learning matched to a need for change and a continuous updating of knowledge and skills.

In endeavouring to reflect the changing demands of the teacher in the sector and in attempting to reconceptualise the professional role as part of this ongoing change, Guile and Lucas (1999:2004) provide the concept of the ‘learning professional’. It is argued that this concept captures the intense economic and technological changes affecting and altering the teaching role. In addition, the concept reflects a need for teachers to move beyond their classroom practice in order to support the development of their learners. This latter point is of note because it highlights the equally changing needs and demands of learners.

The concept of the ‘learning professional’ challenges a model often associated with professional practice, that of the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983; 1987). In critiquing this model, Guile and Lucas (1999: 215) cite three limitations regarding the concept and its interpretation in theorising the role of the teacher in this sector. The three areas concern the importance of research-based knowledge rather than tacit knowledge; the connection between action and reflection and the link between theory, practice and context.

The authors argue that the concept of the learning professional is more appropriate than that of the reflective practitioner in describing both the role of the FE teacher in the twenty-first century and the ‘...shifts away from traditional notions of professionalism’ (p.216). In describing these

movements, the authors refer to the shift from subject knowledge to curriculum knowledge; teacher-centred to learner-centred; intra-professional knowledge to inter-professional knowledge; classroom knowledge to organisational knowledge and insular to connective knowledge. It could be argued that the shifts reflect the changes in policy over time and the impact of such changes in determining or re-shaping the role and responsibilities of the teacher in the post-compulsory sector. The re-shifting of knowledge is central to the discussion. In reviewing the five shifts cited above, it is apparent that the 'specialist' knowledge of the teacher has become reduced as other types of knowledge have broadened. This comment is of significance when considering ITE trainees and programmes and the ways in which teacher educators prepare trainees for working in the post compulsory sector. Of note here is not so much the impact of politics and history on teacher identity - more, how trainee teachers understand and use the shifts in knowledge.

Creating the 'learning professional' requires recognition of new forms of professional knowledge, responsibilities and work contexts (*ibid*: p.220). To move the agenda forward, the authors advocate the training of (established) part-time teachers and the development of a sector General Teaching Council (GTC) or an extension of the (previously) existing one. The demise of the GTC however renders the second of the two suggestions untenable. The future of the Institute for Learning also remains unpredictable. Current prospects rest in the introduction of the awaited Royal College of Teaching: it remains to be seen however if this proposed body will include those working in the post-compulsory sector.

It could be argued that the concept of the 'learning professional' fits neatly into a model of life-long learning where all are involved in a continuous process of learning or re-learning as society, technology and the needs of the workplace continue to evolve and make new demands on employees and citizens. Where it is less successful is when applied to current ITE and CPD processes. It could be argued that the 'learning professional' has yet to

materialise in its fullest sense because the structures surrounding it are not yet in place.

Controversially, it could be argued that a focus on the learning professional is not required *if* the teaching profession is not regarded or classed as an ‘established’ profession (Whitty, 2006: 3). Likewise, the arguments against de-professionalisation become reduced because it is not possible to de-professionalise what does not ‘exist’. For many in the post-compulsory sector however, as evidenced by the Institute for Learning survey (2012), professionalism matters. Thus, in recognition of the absence of a recognised body supporting sector professionalism, professionals are asked to construct their own professionalism (Crawley, 2012). Conversely, in doing so, the prospect of personal rather than critical discourses of professionalism (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013) may emerge. The potential to bring these individual constructions together in order to understand ‘what matters’ (*ibid.* 731) to teachers becomes more remote unless linked together via a learning community or network.

In closing this section, the argument returns to the history and context of the post-compulsory context. The impact of managerialism on the labour of teachers employed within the post-compulsory sector has been highlighted as an area of tension. Whilst such tensions are reflective of the accountability measures present within the sector, a further area is yet to be considered. This concerns the teachers’ labour with learners:

*Teachers’ work is being redrawn whereby it is centred upon the needs of learners. However this is set within the context of a managerialism firmly located within the competitive education settlement.*

(Avis, 2005:217)

Part Three explores the shift from teacher-centred to learner centred knowledge and its location within a personalised approach to learning.



## 2.4 Part 3: Knowledge and the learner-centred teacher

The two extracts used to introduce this Chapter are revisited at this point. The comments make reference to trainees ‘...grappling with their personal understanding of professionalism’ (Smith and Butcher, 2008) and to their limited views of such a construct. The trainees’ comments reflect the context in which they find themselves - where issues of competence override other potential discourses.

Resonant of Kelchtermans’ (2005) perspective regarding teacher vulnerability and the coping strategies adopted by them in response to reform, Coffield *et al.* (2005:18) tell of teachers challenged by the changing nature and concept of their role. The authors tell of teachers ‘shielding’ learners from the pressures on staff and of acting in the role of mediators in order to reduce the ‘negative impact’ brought about by change. The authors present a pessimistic view of the future:

*Further changes which increase the tension between the learner-centred teacher and the demands of bureaucratic compliance placed upon practitioners may drain the enthusiasm of many dedicated staff and ultimately drive them from the sector.*

(Coffield *et al.*, 2005:18)

The reference to the ‘tension between the learner-centred teacher and the demands of bureaucratic compliance’ is raised here. The foregrounding of the learner as part of a reversal of the familiar ‘teaching and learning’ construct is more than semantic and indicative of a paradigm shift in political thinking. The tension identified by Coffield *et al.* (2005) lies in interpretations of what learner-centred teaching *means*, how knowledge is constructed within it, what the role of the learner-centred teacher *is*; *how* the role of the learner is expressed within this construct and importantly, *how* the pedagogy surrounding this shift, *if* explained, is shared with others within a community of practice. Issues concerning learner-centred teaching are complicated by its inclusion within other ill-defined political agendas concerning workforce reform and a ‘personalisation’ of learning.

The personalised learning agenda continues to occupy a place in current educational thinking, despite concerns surrounding the evidence base (public services) supporting its introduction into education. Hartley (2008: 378) refers to personalisation as a ‘policy which is ahead of the evidence; a policy which arguably turns more on the values of ministers.’ The ambiguities surrounding the concept of personalisation are reflected within the discourse. The intermingling of terms such as learner-centred or student-centred with other terms reflects the vagueness of the concept and associated pedagogy. Whilst these ambiguities exist, its transference into practice remains questionable. It is unsurprising to note therefore that a new concept of personalised learning would ‘... generate scepticism in some circles’ (Campbell *et al.*, 2007:141). For existing practitioners, those who have witnessed and attempted to implement successive agendas since the 1990s, such scepticism indicates a guardedness regarding further political intervention.

In terms of political history, Hartley (2008:365) refers to ‘personalisation’ as a second, ‘...complementary phase of marketisation’. Identifying the first as that operating in the 1980s and 1990s when the parent was in the role of customer, its ‘new’ form sees the parent, pupil and the school as *active* participants in the personalised process: ‘...co-authors and co-producers of the ‘product’ itself’ (*ibid.*:366). What is unclear in the statement is whether the word ‘product’ refers to the joint construction of knowledge or to the social well-being and personal development of the learner.

In his comments, Hartley acknowledges the implications for schools rather than higher or post-compulsory settings in exploring the pedagogical implications of personalisation. Campbell *et al.* (2007:145), however, regards higher or post-compulsory sectors as the more likely contexts in which to realise ‘deep’ personalisation (*see* Leadbeater, 2003) because these sectors provide education in the 16-19 age range ‘...where student voice and student choice have a high salience’. The authors argue that in terms of levels of ability and maturity, if it cannot be:

*(r)realised for these students it is difficult to see how it could be for younger, less mature or less able students...*

(Campbell *et al.*, 2007:145)

Whether prominence is actually given to the learner's voice is signalled here.

Pykett (2009:385) considers the way in which the learner is constructed within a personalised learning agenda and questions whether this type of ideal learner - '...a highly innovative, self-motivated, responsive, entrepreneurial and creative person'; one who is an '...active and participatory co-producer of her/his own educational destiny' (*ibid.*: 391) is a natural learner. Pykett concludes that such a learner is '... created by a particular political agenda' (*ibid.*:391). If this is the case, how the learner is constructed and interacts with others is likely to affect the dynamics of a learning community. In a learner-centred model, the teacher is described as a co-participant in the learning process rather than 'teacher as leader' (Lewis, 2008:254). Knowledge is constructed in participation with the learner.

Campbell *et al.* (2007:135) suggest that personalisation may be viewed as a '...socially-constructed idea rather than an individualised concept'. If so, it could be argued that a community may need to shift its domain and its practices to accommodate or represent this perspective. A key factor in the success of such an approach concerns a sharing of the *values* underlying a personalised pedagogy: those influencing the behaviour of teachers and learners and without which the '...pedagogy would collapse' (Campbell *et al.*, 2007:153). A difference in the aims or goals held by the learners and those held by the community could signal such a 'collapse' especially if learners:

*(s)tudy what they need to pass the test, and if this requires rote learning, then this will take priority over more lofty lifelong learning goals.*

(Knapper and Cropley, 2000:85)

The tension between learner pragmatism and aspiration is apparent in the comment above. Whilst learners may adapt their behaviour to satisfy their immediate needs, the teachers' responses may be influenced by the needs of their learners and other stakeholders.

Wenger *et al.*, (2002:167) refer to the 'distortions of behaviour' that result when teachers 'teach to the test'. This latter expression has become part of an educational discourse exposing differing perspectives regarding the value of knowledge and the wider aims of education. Pring's (2011:6) reference to a 'devotion to test practice' locates the argument in differing assumptions about knowledge and learning. Pring questions the current focus on 'high stakes testing' arguing that such attention leads to a narrowing of the curriculum rather than to an improvement in the quality of the learning experience. He argues that the use of such tests '...atrophies the intelligence, and turns young people off further learning' (*ibid.*: 8). Where success is achieved (as evidenced in examination results and league tables) Pring questions their value in terms of student learning and the acquisition of deeper understanding. The issues raised by Pring reflect current tensions regarding the aims of education. The curriculum and accompanying models of assessment are part of a continuing pull between humanist and instrumentalist positions.

It is at this point that time is spent considering links between assessment and teacher professionalism. With respect to this thesis, two key issues emerge from the literature. The first concerns the professional judgement of the teacher in assessing learning; the second concerns links between assessment and notions of personalised learning. Although identified individually, there is a synergy between the two.

### **2.4.1 Assessment, the teacher and the learner**

To position the ensuing argument, reference is made to the comment below. The importance of teacher accuracy, consistency and integrity as part of everyday decision-making is signalled within it:

*Teachers make professional judgements on learners' performance in every teaching and learning session undertaken...*

(Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2005:1)

The extent to which teachers are enabled to exert their professional judgement however reflects one of a number of tensions concerning learner assessment. The prominence of teacher-led assessment within current models, for example, continues to be problematic. History suggests a reluctance to entrust this element of student learning to teachers. Whilst the importance of teacher-led assessment was highlighted by Tomlinson (Working Group on 14-19 Reform, 2004), history also shows a reluctance to fully implement the arising Recommendations. The preference for external regulation rather than teacher-led assessment remains and as such, presents teachers, trainee teachers and teacher educators with particular challenges.

As teacher-led assessment continues to be the less-favoured approach, teachers face certain pressures in responding to external, awarding body requirements (LSDA, 2005). In the role of responders rather than leaders, teachers face the challenge of preparing learners for external assessment whilst ensuring that learning remains both challenging and interesting. The current climate of prescription and teacher accountability does not easily lend itself to achieving some sort of balance. Thus, whilst teachers may be encouraged to develop their decision-making skills as part of an approach to assessment, it is questionable whether the development of such skills is recognised as the skills of a professional. The following comment exemplifies the issue:

*(e)ducational establishments are providing opportunities for teachers to develop their assessment and feedback skills while promoting confidence in their professional judgement and fostering an effective learning environment.*

(LSDA, 2005:1)

The claim that differing education establishments are providing opportunities for colleagues to develop assessment-related skills is open to question. In addition, the extent and the consistency associated with implementation remains unclear. The comment does offer however an ‘ideal’ scenario for the development of trainee teachers. The notion of symmetry, cohesion and harmony between formative assessment processes, teacher confidence and professionalism as part of the creation of a positive climate for learning would be welcomed by many teacher educators as part of a trainee’s university and work-based placement experience. The reality however is somewhat different. The link between assessment and teacher judgement as part of teacher professionalism is not clearly interrelated. The issues are raised at this point for consideration and returned to when considering the implications arising from the data (*see* Chapters 5 and 6). The following section looks more closely at approaches and practices related to assessment and to the impact they have on learning, the learner and the teacher.

In preparing learners for assessment, the role of formative and summative assessment comes to the fore. In exploring definitions of the two, Davies and Ecclestone (2008:72) comment on varying interpretations and misunderstandings operating within contemporary practice. In providing an alternative perspective, the authors refer to Marshall and Drummond (2006) and to the latter’s use of the terms ‘spirit’ and ‘letter’. As idioms, the words are popularly associated with thinking or practices which may be seen as energised or constrained. Located within the domain of assessment, the terms are explored with reference to ‘...instrumental and sustainable formative assessment...’ (Davies and Ecclestone, 2008:73). The ‘letter’ reflects assessment that is perfunctory, serving the end a summative process

whilst the ‘spirit’ offers sustainability via a deeper, more principled engagement. Whilst explained separately, there is an awareness that the two are not unconnected and that teachers may move between each within a teaching session (Ecclestone, 2007).

It is further argued that the terms are useful when exploring learner motivation and autonomy (Ecclestone, 2007). In considering a typology of autonomy, Ecclestone (2007:232) provides two scenarios showing how combinations of assessment practices mixed with differing levels of motivation and types of autonomy can foster either the ‘spirit’ or the ‘letter’ of formative assessment. In one, the combinations serve to reflect the ‘letter’ because the blend within it reflects the language of compliance; the transformative aim developed in the second shows a movement towards the ‘spirit’ of formative assessment. In describing each scenario, the importance rests in the opportunity to explore beneath the superficial use of the term ‘formative assessment’. In doing so, it is possible to study assessment from a sociocultural perspective and to consider the dynamics and interactions taking place within a cultural learning context. From this position, assessment can be seen not as a separate entity but something that shapes - and is shaped by - those engaged with it. Whilst a discussion concerning a relationship between a learning culture and formative assessment is explored at the end of this section, with reference to ‘local’ assessment (Torrance, 2007), and communities of practice, it is noted here as part of the discussion pertaining to assessment in context. In exploring connections between motivation, autonomy and assessment practices, Ecclestone (2007:322) looks at the implications for changing practice. Whilst acknowledging that formative assessment is only one element in developing a learning culture, the gaining of a greater understanding of motivation and autonomy is seen as a way forward.

## 2.4.2 Assessment and personalisation

The LSDA (2005) study highlights a link with personalisation arguing that assessment for learning is ‘...at the heart of its philosophy.’ (LASDA, 2005:2). Using a case study (a specialist Business and Enterprise college) to exemplify the position, the features of a personalised learning model begin to emerge. The identification of preferred learning styles and the designing of teaching and learning sessions to meet learner needs echo the shape of a personalised model aimed at improving learner attainment. Three examples selected from the text are shown below. The comments serve to highlight tensions inherent within the wider argument of learner assessment:

*Extract 1: Often learners do not understand why they have to undertake a task and how it fits into the curriculum; if they did, they would be more inclined to do it. The learning outcomes, in terms of the work that learners have to produce, have to be clearly communicated to learners and involve them in the learning process. Learning cannot be done to individuals, it has to be done with them and by them. (p. 7)*

*Extract 2: The real test is whether learners have learnt and ultimately progressed against the learning objectives defined at the start of the session. (p. 10)*

*Extract 3: Publishing and explaining the assessment criteria before the work is undertaken will demonstrate that there is no hidden agenda. (p. 13)*

Whilst the opening sentence contained within Extract 1 reflects a certain simplicity regarding learner motivation, attention is subsequently drawn towards an emphasis on learning outcomes and objectives. Focus is given to the importance of clarifying and communicating these features to the learner. The notion of providing transparency of assessment procedures to learners is seen however as one contributing to the implementation of other practices (Torrance *et al.*, 2005; Torrance, 2007). Whilst the move towards criterion- and competence-based assessments is acknowledged as that supporting retention and achievement of learners in the post-compulsory sector, it is also argued that the move to providing transparency of assessment procedures has encouraged ‘...the widespread use of coaching,



practice and provision of formative feedback to boost individual and institutional achievement.’ (Torrance *et al.*, 2005:80). Whilst aware of certain benefits to students with reference to the use such approaches, Torrance is also critical of practices which cross areas often labelled vocational or academic. He argues, for example, that the ‘...criteria-focused ‘coaching’ of students...’ includes those following A level programmes in the sector (Torrance, 2007:286). This comment is signalled here as having relevance when considering the encounters of trainee teachers and those teaching A Level students as part of their placement experience in the sector. This aspect is discussed further when considering the findings and arising implications (*see* Chapters 5 and 6).

In scenarios such as those described by Torrance, teaching becomes confused with learner support and attainment. Whilst plans for the incoming National Curriculum show a movement away from coursework-based assessments and a return, in some areas, to end-of-year examinations, current assessment models enable learners to re-draft their work or re-sit examinations or units. Teachers become part of this reworking, re-sitting process. Arguably, the responsibility of working towards achievement falls ‘... as much on the shoulders of teachers as on the learners ...’ (Torrance *et al.*, 2005:46). Furthermore, in ‘explaining’ assessment criteria, lesson objectives and outcomes to their learners, teachers become part of an instrumental, formulaic approach to learning where understanding of criteria supersedes that of understanding new knowledge or acquiring new ways of thinking:

*The clearer the task of how to achieve a grade or award becomes, and the more detailed the assistance given by tutors, supervisors and assessors, the more likely are candidates to succeed; but succeed at what?*

(Torrance *et al.* 2005: 81)

The question posed by the authors reflects deeper issues concerning the nature of knowledge, learning and challenge. In making a link between transparency and instrumentalism, the authors argue that the issue is

regarded as ‘...the most significant challenge confronting assessment in the LSS’ (Torrance *et al.*, 2005:2). Central to the argument is the view that assessment as learning has replaced terms such as assessment of and for learning. The impact of this position is far-reaching. Ecclestone (2000:142) outlines the challenges to teachers’ power with respect to outcome-based assessment and decision-making in attempting to ‘...demystify and democratise both the assessment process itself and the evidence on which judgments are made...’. In addition, Torrance (2007) argues that rather than promoting learner autonomy, the methods used to secure achievement are more likely to lead to the reverse. As the teacher provides greater transparency for the learner in explaining assessment criteria, there is potential for the learner to adopt a narrow focus and to concentrate on meeting the criteria en route to securing a grade or award. In such a scenario, learners become more dependent on the teacher or assessor because the latter is perceived as holding the type of knowledge required to satisfy the learners’ needs. The type of knowledge required here however is not linked to disciplinary or professional knowledge but that connected to the language of assessment and to ‘explaining’ assessment criteria.

Evidence presented in the literature review reflected the problematic debate concerning professional, vocational and disciplinary knowledge. The issue of relevance was also raised within the debate. The problem is revisited and extended here with reference to what counts as important or relevant knowledge. In the situations described by Torrance (2007), not only does the learner demand and expect support, he or she also expects the support to be targeted, namely ‘...to be very specifically focused on achieving the qualification ...’ (Torrance, 2007:282). The impact of this is two-fold. Firstly, learner support becomes part of assessment processes rather than that designed to provide a more holistic approach; secondly, the professional or specialist knowledge of the teacher becomes confined within criteria or performance based models of assessment. In either circumstance, the experience of the learner, the teacher and the trainee teacher becomes narrowed. In terms of relevance, teaching to the test becomes the norm and knowledge is squeezed into compartments to be delivered segmentally

rather than holistically. The opportunities to achieve greater knowledge (Wheelahan, 2008a; 2008b) and ‘...a critical, broad-based education’ (Ecclestone, 1997:4) therefore become more remote. In turn, the lack of a coherent curriculum within vocational education does not aid the derivation of assessment (Ecclestone, 2007). Such incoherence shows itself in the generation of learning outcomes, shaped into assessment criteria and associated tasks (Ecclestone, 2007). The challenge for teachers and trainee teachers is articulated below:

*Unless teachers have a strong professional subject expertise and commitment that can interpret these imaginatively, it is logical for narrow instrumental assessment tasks to fill a curriculum vacuum.*

(Ecclestone, 2007: 331)

In explaining the prevalence of support within the post-compulsory sector, Torrance points not only to the pervasiveness of the assessment practices adopted within it, he also comments on the centrality of such processes within the learning experience. The author points to a view that is ‘...ensconced at the heart of the learning experience ... infusing every aspect of the learner experience’ (Torrance, 2007:291). The impact of this position is reiterated not only in terms of cultural positioning but also in terms of a reduction in learner autonomy and issues of inequity concerning coherence and the universality of assessment. It is at this point that the notion of assessment and learning cultures can be considered.

Ecclestone (2007:322) argues that it is important to consider how such cultures operate in order to understand in what way formative assessment develops ‘...deep motivation and autonomy.’ Implicit within the discussion is the view that formative assessment is part of a learning culture and that an agreed understanding about the principles underpinning assessment affect the thinking and practices of those operating within them. Using the earlier coinage of spirit and letter, whilst some learning cultures develop their practices towards the former, others veer towards the latter. Recognising such orientations becomes important for trainee teachers as they undertake

the work-based placement and encounter differing learning communities. Their attitudes, beliefs, values, personal histories and motivations become added to the mix of existing stakeholders. In terms of assessment, as with other processes, each will bring personal remembrances of success or otherwise. Such remembrances may serve to inform attitudes and approaches to practice. In viewing college entry as a 'second chance' for learners (Avis, 1997; Ecclestone, 2007) a particular stance regarding learner assessment or support may prevail.

In summarising the situation and in offering a way forward, Torrance (2007) provides the following comment:

*To reiterate, we seem to have moved from 'assessment of learning' through 'assessment for learning' to 'assessment as learning'. If formative assessment is to develop more positively in post-compulsory education and training, attention must be paid to the development of tutors' and assessors' judgement at local level, and the nature of their relationships with learners, so that learners are inducted into 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) which explore and interrogate criteria, rather than accept them as given... What is required now is an acknowledgement that local communities of practice are the context in which all meaningful judgements are made and thus should be the level of the system at which most efforts at capacity building are directed. This may start to reinstate the challenge of learning in the post-compulsory sector and attend to it as an act of social and intellectual development rather than one of acquisition and accumulation.*

(Torrance, 2007:292)

The final sentence highlights current tensions. Testing knowledge requires a different perspective to that required in developing the whole child as a future citizen of a global community. In referring to teachers as 'creators of a democratic social order', Pring (2011:7) considers the ways in which, from this perspective, teaching is understood: an approach which '...stands in stark contrast with one in which the teacher focuses mainly on ...individual achievement or government dictated targets.' From this viewpoint the teacher is seen as one not in the role of deliverer or

transmitter of knowledge but one who values equality and self-governance. In placing a different focus on the learner and learning, knowledge becomes reshaped:

*In a radically personalised school, teachers would rarely 'deliver' lessons. Would they be redundant? No, they would focus on other aspects of their role. Tutoring and mentoring pupils would become more important, so that their learning was balanced and fulfilled a core curriculum. Selection and organisation of learning materials would become crucial.*

(Johnson, 2004:12)

The reference to '...other aspects of the role' hints at 'softer' skills: those required by a teacher in the role of nurturer rather than deliverer. The identity of the teacher in this role is signalled here and as such, the emotional labour of teachers is explored shortly (*see Part Four*).

Whilst the literature highlights the ambiguities surrounding the concept of personalisation and variations in interpretation, a persisting view is that a student - centred approach is a positive one (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). Current educational policy promotes this position hence there is an expectation of its continuation. The projected increase lies in market-driven rather than pedagogical sources:

*The changing demographics of the student population and the more consumer/client-centred culture in today's society have provided a climate where the use of student-centred learning is thriving.*

(O'Neill and McMahon, 2005:34)

For personalisation to be achieved, new partnerships, new ways of working with limited state intervention would need to be secured: hence, changing working practices call for new models of understanding (Tusting and Barton, 2003:32). Theoretically, effective communities of practice would offer the structures needed to manage such dynamics because changes to practice would be internally agreed and aligned to organisational goals. The

tension lies however in the effectiveness of such communities in responding to externally imposed mandates in order to renew the practices of the community.

### **2.4.3 The teacher in the role of facilitator**

In concluding this section, perspectives concerning the teacher as a facilitator of learning are brought together (Torrance, 2007; Davies and Ecclestone, 2008; Ecclestone, 2010; Young, 2011). Common within the literature is a view that a movement towards constructing the teacher as facilitator has led to a reduction in the role of both subject knowledge and the teacher as a specialist:

*Whilst in the past the subject specialist was dominant this weighting has been reversed - facilitating learning becomes pivotal with subject specialism being secondary. Such moves carry with them a shift in the identities available for teachers based on a recognition of the social and economic processes, as well as an attempt to reform social relationships. Pedagogic skills have been re-articulated in a manner that accents the enabling of learning over specific disciplinary skills.*

(Avis, 1999: 247 -8)

In scenario such as this, teachers are asked to facilitate access to learning rather than focusing on subject or disciplinary knowledge. The comment regarding the shifting identities associated with these changes is central to the discussion. For trainee teachers, the awareness or otherwise of such shifts prior to beginning a PGCE PCET programme can serve to either reconcile or expose differences between expectation and reality.

Perceiving the self in the role of facilitator also requires aligning perceptions of the learner. In exploring the expectations and experiences of staff new to the post-compulsory sector, Avis, *et al.* (2003:188) comment on teachers' perceptions of the 'good' and 'bad' learner. The characteristics of each reflect levels of commitment and engagement and in some instances include a perception of learners' knowledge and skills prior to joining a college

course. These perceptions may be altered on meeting the students. Assumptions concerning learner choice regarding the decision to go to college matched to high levels of motivation, for example, are unrequited and met with surprise and disappointment. The issue of ‘...students’ personal problems getting in the way of learning’ (Avis *et al.*, 2003:189); adaptations made to teaching in order to accommodate lower standards; teacher vulnerability and possible intimidation - all add up to the unexpected demands made on teachers. Providing learners with access to disciplinary knowledge therefore could help in reducing such demands as the individual is supported to view such experiences with increased objectivity (Rata, 2012). This is explored in Part 4 shortly.

How the learner constructs his or her identity is relevant to the discussion. Much is made of the range and age of learners attending college provision. The orientation of learners in this sector may be shaped by a number of factors ranging from personal aspiration to employer requirements. For some, a ‘vocationally orientated instrumentalism’ (Avis, 1997:88) may enable continuation: the prospect of betterment or improved career prospects underpins such a position. For others, the requirement to attend as part of a day-release or apprenticeship model may bring about a different orientation. In terms of operating within the concept of lifelong learning and the socio-economic drivers of educational reform, it is questionable however whether learners accept the associated discourse of skills transferability. Comments reflecting learner disinterest with ‘...generic and transferable skills’ (Avis, 1997:102 coupled with dissatisfaction of the key skills agenda (Swann, *et al.*,) exist within the literature. How the learner prepares - or is prepared- to engage with learning is relevant to this thesis because of the position the learner takes when interacting with the trainee teacher.

The current context is very supportive of learner autonomy - as reflected in the comment below:

*Over the past 20 years, numerous assessment initiatives have sought to give students more control over their learning and to motivate them to go beyond compliance with the strictures of an end examination.*

(Ecclestone, 2000:141)

Arising questions concern whether the learner wishes or is able to take such control and if so, how this is achieved in conjunction with the teacher.

In summarising the argument thus far, it is argued that trainees' professional teaching identities are increasingly constructed in unfamiliar ways; that external demands have brought about changes to the teaching role and that reconciliation between the traditional and the evolving role has yet to be achieved. It is also argued that in constructing such identities, the identity of the teaching profession, as a whole needs to be considered. Secondly, it is argued that the identity of the teacher is affected by his or her role in constructing and exchanging knowledge. The impact of the personalised agenda on the identity and practice of teachers reflects a shift in the power relationships between the teacher and learner as part of a new paradigm.

The final part of the discussion centres on the development of the trainee as an autonomous professional (Wenger *et al.*, 2002) operating as a member of a community of practice.

## **2.5 Part 4: The autonomous professional**

It is argued that the trainee does not create his or her identity in isolation and that the learning community in which the trainee is placed shapes the identity and practice of the individual (Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011).

Placing trainees in particular cultural contexts can be viewed from a socio-cultural perspective. From this perspective, the individual is seen as part of a cultural circumstance. Constructions of the public and private self, one's role and professional identity are described as those constructed with and by



others within a cultural context. How an individual perceives a situation, thinks and acts may be determined by other internalised factors hence, as participants in a socially-constructed world, the trainees and other stakeholders shape and are shaped by the phenomena within and external to it. This perspective is summarised as follows:

*The work of teachers ... is above all **cultural** (original emphasis) work and teaching needs to be understood as (a) cultural process of negotiation.*

(Bates, 2005: 304)

The vision of the future teacher as an autonomous, transformational, critically-literate individual can inform the domain of a community of practice. Whilst appearing as an abstract concept, the issues surrounding this vision are tangible and therefore able to unite a community. Although it could be argued that there is an established discourse surrounding the training of teachers, it may also be argued that other, alternative discourses or those arising from overlapping communities interrupt the domain. Where communities develop their practice in accordance with the domain, a coherent approach to trainee development and practice is more likely. Incoherence between the domain and the practice is likely to provoke friction, as evidenced in the two extracts (Smith and Butcher, 2008:11) presented at the beginning of the chapter.

The ensuing discussion serves to explore tensions concerning trainees' perceptions of the professional self. Before developing the argument, it is important to consider the terminology generally associated with teacher professionalism, namely teacher agency and autonomy. Agency, described as a '...capacity to envision and act' (Torrance and Maclure, 2010:12) is also referred to as a transitional concept (Biesta and Tedder, 2006:3): something to be understood within notions of context and time. Biesta and Tedder (2006) extend the discussion by adding that agency is not in an individual's possession but in something achieved by action (via a combination of individual effort and resources). Theoretically, by coming together as members of a community of practice the opportunities to exert

agency are increased because participants work collectively to offer either a credible challenge or an alternative to central dogma.

It may be argued that operating within contextual constraints may not necessarily lead to a reduction in teacher agency if space for manoeuvre remains (Day *et al.*, 2006). The detail regarding the substance of such manoeuvrability however remains unclear. The authors develop the argument further with reference to the impact of increasing constraints and to the price paid by teachers in exercising agency. Such costs are accounted for in negative terms and described as those affecting ‘...personal relationships, health and well-being, and the quality of learning which they provide for their pupils’ (*ibid.*: 610). The emotional labour of teachers is considered more fully shortly.

The term ‘autonomy’ is generally associated with notions of active self-governance. When contextualised within a community of teacher educators, the term autonomy may be used to describe an expectation. It can be argued that trainee teachers are expected to develop as autonomous professionals in order to lead the learner and learning as part of a wider agency. As participants in a learning community, there is an expectation that trainee teachers are active participants in the learning process and contributors to new knowledge.

Canestrani and Marlowe (2010:215) argue that teachers need to be critically literate in order to be capable of challenging prevailing ‘top-down’ structures of ‘state-mandated curricula’. The political need for those working in the sector to seek ‘excellence’, demonstrate ‘improvement’ and share ‘good practice’ continues to resonate in contemporary practice as part of the wider goal of raising standards. Research relating to the further education sector however indicates flaws regarding the notion of ‘improvement’ and the sharing of best or good practice (Olin, 2009). Variation between contexts; the uneasy transference of ‘what works’ in one setting to another is cited as an area of difficulty. Olin (2009) argues that professionals do not decide what ‘good practice’ is in isolation; nor do they

adopt top down ‘absolute’ conceptions. It is argued that meanings surroundings such conceptions are generated via a membership of communities of practice.

Rajuan *et al.* (2008:281) use the term ‘critical orientation’ to describe an approach that seeks to empower trainee teachers by encouraging them to question their own values and those of the educational system. As such, a community may expect trainee teachers to challenge perceived knowledge regarding the nature of teaching and learning and to explore such perceptions as a member of a community of practice.

In responding to current challenges, trainees are encouraged to review the underlying conditions affecting political or institutional ideology and to interpret their findings with respect to their teaching role. Trainees are expected to be innovative in their thinking and practice in order to support *their* learners in developing an inquisitiveness towards learning and in making links between ‘creativity and culture’ (Meadows, 2011:2). Whilst the term ‘creativity’ is interpreted in a variety of ways (Ofsted, 2010:5) the value in teachers adopting creative approaches to learning is reflected in the impact of their teaching on learners. The impact is described as that enabling a learner to:

*(m)ake connections across traditional boundaries, speculate constructively, maintain an open mind while exploring a wide range of options, and reflect critically on ideas and outcomes.*

(Ofsted, 2010:4)

It could be said that these characteristics are similar to those expected of trainee teachers.

It can be argued that in order to challenge rather than to continue the status quo, preparing critically literate teachers begins at the pre-service stage (Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010:215). It is envisaged that it is at this stage change can be driven. A popular view is that those joining a PGCE programme will bring with them unfettered thinking matched with an

excitement to trial ideas in the learning environment. Where this perspective or premise begins to falter however is when such thinking does not ‘fit’ with an existing ideology. Whilst acknowledging the limited evidence available regarding trainee withdrawal from ITTE courses, contributing factors include trainees’ unrealistic perception of teaching; a collapse in the relationship between the trainee and the mentor and negative experiences during the placement (Bielby *et al.*, 2007:5). In terms of the work-based experience, it could be argued that once on placement trainees struggle to harmonise their perspectives with the views of their colleagues or with the systems they encounter. Sector retention and personal loss are signalled as possible issues arising from a failure to address trainees’ concerns. (*ibid.*: 2007:5). Developing the critically-orientated teacher therefore may be seen as one way of managing the struggle and bringing about change. Whilst the concept of critical orientation is explored shortly, the issues affecting trainee and sector retention raised by Bielby *et al.* (2007) require further discussion. Time is now spent considering the emotional labour of teachers. In engaging with this discussion, further insights into the demands of the role and the factors shaping the teacher - learner relationship are gained.

### **2.5.1 The emotional labour of teachers**

To explore the concept of emotional labour, the work of Colley (2006) is considered. In exploring how trainee nursery nurses learn to prepare for their role, Colley (2006) raises issues offering resonance with those training to be teachers. Similarly tagged as ‘caring’ occupations, training to be a nursery nurse or teacher appears to bring with it additional layers of responsibility or expectations not required in other occupations. Exploration of the concept therefore enables an understanding of how this work is ‘...learned and performed’ (Colley, 2006:26).

In explaining the concept, Colley refers to the work of Hochschild (1983). The argument centres on the inclusion of the emotional amongst the physical and conceptual constructs of labour. However, whilst recognition

of the emotional is highlighted within the discussion, the argument becomes more focused when discussing emotional labour as part of, or controlled by, the market place (Avis, 2003). The word ‘labour’ is used to depict the work involved in learning to manage not only the feelings of the individual but also the feelings of others. The intensity of the argument rests in the linking of emotional ‘care’ to that of profit or commercial gain. In such scenarios, emotional labour has the potential to become less satisfying and more demanding as ownership moves away from the individual to that of others – who may have other uses for such labour.

It could be argued that the notion of purchasing care is more overt in areas such as childcare and nursing of the elderly and that in the twenty years post-Hochschild, the concept of care operating within formalised structures (such as Residential care or Care Homes) has become part of public consciousness. The term Care presented in its capitalised form therefore may give rise to connotations associated with a particular type of care and one associated with payment. In terms of the post-compulsory sector however, the link between care and financial profit is not as overt. Whilst it is evident that colleges of further education do operate as businesses and have to remain financially viable in order to continue, the link between care and payment is more subtle. A link does exist however and can be seen in the strategies designed to support learner retention and attainment. The extent of the support offered to learners has been articulated in the section on Assessment (*see*: 2.4.1) with specific reference to the work of Torrance (2007) and Ecclestone (2007). Central to the argument is the view that the types of support available to the learner, particularly in relation to learner assessment and transparency, increases teacher dependency rather than develops learner autonomy. How the trainee teacher manages this conundrum and retains ownership of his or her emotional labour returns the discussion to Colley’s work.

In considering the training involved in preparing students to ‘become’ nursery nurses, Colley considers the emotional predisposition and dispositions of the students. This exploration includes descriptions of the

traits equated with the role. Often described in terms of warmth and friendliness, they coalesce to describe ‘...the qualities of a caring person’ (Colley, 2006:18). Included in the discussion are the choices made by the students in joining and remaining on a college course. Where difference occurs, it can be seen in a mismatch between initial conceptions of the role; the ideal - as described within qualification and assessment frameworks and the standards - and reality. Once involved in a work-based placement, the trainee nursery nurses encounter the less pleasant aspects of caring for others. Working with those whose behaviours did not ‘fit’ with their personal or described dispositions brought about personal challenges. In responding to these challenges, some students either left the course or learned to alter their emotional dispositions to enable them to manage the work. For some, the alteration in their dispositions was extensive and became part of ‘...their persona at college and at home’ (*ibid.*: 23). The narrative shows how students had to ‘work’ initially on their own emotions in order to reconcile a perceived or actual gap between their emotions and those of others. In doing this, they were enabled to both adapt and complete the work and the college course or, in making other choices, leave the programme.

The situation presented by Colley offers resonance with teacher education programmes. Similar to the trainee nursery nurses, trainee teachers also bring predispositions and dispositions to the role. How these are explored during the course of their training is of equal importance. For the trainee teacher, as for the trainee nursery nurse, the dispositions are defined by the self and by others. The externally-prescribed description of the role echoes that of the ‘ideal’ teacher reflected in associated literature and the teaching standards. The notion of what a ‘Good’ and ‘Outstanding’ teacher looks like and how to move upwards from one to the other in order to attain the ideal is clearly delineated in Ofsted literature (2014). Difficulties arise however when the dispositions of the trainee veer away from the ideal when faced with the actual. Colley (2006) reflects on:

*(t)he combination of idealised and realised dispositions to which students must orient themselves in order to become 'the right person for the job'.*

(Colley, 2006: 25)

The statement implies a fusing of dispositions to be shaped in some way in order to meet the demands of the job. Certain unresolved questions arise however concerning the type of combinations involved; what is meant by orientation and who has ownership of it? What is meant by the concept of rightness or appropriateness for a job? There is a recognition within the statement however of the need to bring about this type of action in order to move forward.

In exploring the tutors' perspectives of the trainee nursery nurses, Colley raises further issues for attention. Again, comparison may be drawn with teacher education. Colley (2006:20) discusses the "unwritten" curriculum aimed at developing trainees' personal characteristics. Such development reflects the tutors' perception of the intended role and of the characteristics meshed within it. To this extent, activities planned by the tutors at the beginning of the course reflect the importance of group dynamics and emotional bonding. As such, these activities mirror the perceived physical and emotional requirements of the workplace and aim to develop supporting ties for trainees. Likewise, teacher educators aim to 'prepare' their students for the emotional vagaries of the workplace. In many ITT/E courses, for example, there is an emphasis on 'behaviour management' where discussion centres on the use of a range of associated strategies. Central to the discussion is the management of the trainees' own emotions whilst managing the behaviour of others. Discussions concerning detachment, confrontation or diffusion of feelings may emerge within such conversations.

Whilst such a focus on behaviour management is designed to reduce trainees' initial concerns, it also reflects the current political focus on the issue. Whereas the emotional labour extended in managing the behaviour of others mirrors that of the trainee nurses as part of the work-based

experience, a difference lies in the centrality of the issue within the teaching domain and the extent to which external attention is drawn to it. This external attention places further emotional demands on teachers and trainee teachers who, in turn, are faced with responding to political and power-led agendas rather than engaging in knowledge exchange. When considering the consumers of the nursery nurses' labour, for example, Colley (2006:25) argues that children are not the purchasers. Other power sources are in play. In occupations involving caring work, managing both individual feelings and those of others is central to the role; such management is a '...key feature of the workplace, a form of paid labour, or to be more accurate, a labour of *power* ...' (Original emphasis). From this position, the issues of social class, gender and labour are viewed from the perspective of the workplace and those who have control within it. Important within the discussion is the emotional costs of presenting the self from a gendered perspective. The image reflects that of respectability and morality. For teachers, the latest imperative that they dress appropriately (Ofsted, 2014) holds similar connotations.

If management of emotion is a key feature of the workplace for those involved in caring work, the costs involved in this type of labour cannot be underestimated. It is debatable whether in the 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching is clearly defined as a nurturing profession or a vocation. The notion of caring for the learner does emerge (*see* Chapter 4: Case Studies) and although it is muddled in with issues such as learner assessment and attainment, it remains a central focus for many of the trainee teachers in this study. The personal, emotional costs to teachers (Coffield *et al.*, 2005; Colley, 2006) are also in evidence.

The notion of care is also raised by Avis and Bathmaker (2004; 2006). Their work with trainee teachers, training to work in the post-compulsory sector, offers further perspectives on this concept. Drawing on the accounts of trainee teachers, the authors comment on a 'preferred professional identity' and a 'preferred teaching and learning culture' (2004: 306). Care and empathy for learners underpinned notions of a preferred identity whilst



images of a committed student contributed to an idealised culture for teaching and learning. The experiences of trainees whilst on placement however offered contradictions to such perceptions:

*Such encounters not only raise questions concerning the nature of the curriculum and its appropriateness for the learners our trainees encountered, but also points towards the way in which trainees and students understood pedagogic relations. In both there is a tendency to individualise relations.*

(Avis and Bathmaker, 2007:308)

The issue of individualisation (Avis, 2006) is important and needs to be considered within the context of emotional labour and teacher criticality.

### **2.5.2 A critical voice**

Critical orientation requires a critical voice. Page (2010:11) defines the critical voice as an ability to look at information through different lenses and perspectives and to separate the notion of criticism from criticality. Page identifies characteristics of criticality, such as the capacity to recognise propagandist sources and to ‘...separate, sort, question, reorganize and synthesise messages into a coherent whole...’. The author argues that there is a need for teachers to acquire a solid grasp about how people learn and to consider how that understanding translates into the learning environment. The importance of trainees acquiring context-specific knowledge as well as subject-specific knowledge in supporting planning and teaching is signalled here (Mutton *et al.*, 2010; Mutton, 2012).

Page (2010) provides three perspectives for consideration: firstly, that a grounded philosophy or theory is seen as a positive resource for the teacher; secondly, that the classroom space and ensuing discourse is ‘problematic’ and thirdly, that deference to a legitimate ‘power’ exists. Page argues that without a grounded philosophy or theory, a new teacher will not have a ‘... base for figuring out the problems in the classroom and will look to a power

figure to handle the issue.’ (*ibid.*: 211). Abdication to a ‘power figure’ however is viewed as a vulnerable position (Page, 2010; Smith and Butcher, 2008). A more positive position would be that in which the individual takes ownership in responding to various sources of power.

In choosing to defer to a ‘power figure’, the trainee may identify his or her mentor as an appropriate source. The practice of placing trainee teachers with experienced colleagues from related subject areas or occupational fields rests in a notional sharing of interest and expertise. It also rests in a view of one learning from or with another: the equity within such a balance however may be contested. A mentor may be configured as the holder of superior knowledge or as someone with dual knowledge: namely, the holder of occupational or subject knowledge as well as that relating to a skilled practitioner or teacher.

The influence of mentors in shaping the identity and practice of trainee teachers is acknowledged within the literature (Ofsted, 2003; 2006; 2009; Rajuan *et al.*, 2008; DCSF Select Committee Report, 2010; Skills Commission Report, 2009). Deference to a mentor however is not without difficulty. Firstly, trainees may not be involved in a process of negotiation if the power differential is too great. Secondly, the duality of the role may be identified as an area of tension. The mentor may be in the dual role of mentor and Quality Manager hence the duality of role may lead to an alternative discourse or a doubling-up of functions. There is the potential therefore for the trainees’ critical voice to be mediated through the individual in the mentoring role.

The demands of the dual role occupied by mentors may place them ‘outside’ a community of practice hence the mentoring role may not reflect the domain of the community. The opportunity for the trainee to bring something ‘new’ to the community and to ‘pull’ a community’s competence and practice may be reduced if the trainee and the mentor are not operating within a shared domain. In scenarios such as this, rather than the competence of the mentor pulling the experience of the trainee, the mentor

may be seen as acting as a gatekeeper for the organisation rather than a ‘steward’ of knowledge or competence (Wenger, 2000: 233). This situation highlights ‘a significant gap’:

*(b)etween the theories of practice taught by former practitioners, based on how they would have liked to have practised, and the activities performed by current practitioners. This contrasts with a common workplace stance, in which current practice is uncritically accepted as an inevitable reality, and any impetus towards improving the service provided by an occupation is lost. Neither provides an adequate basis for a professional career*

(Eraut, 2007:6)

The danger of a ‘workplace stance’ as identified by Eraut and the realities created by it are signalled here. The stance is at odds with the teacher’s role and to the value attached to tacit knowledge. Pring (2011:18) states that the teacher’s expertise ‘... lies in the practical knowledge gained from experience and critical reflection on that experience in the light of relevant research.’ At the beginning of their ITTE programme however, many trainee teachers have yet to develop not only this expertise but also a *confidence* in this expertise. This perspective is exemplified below:

*Behind all your interactions with learners lies a set of usually unspoken assumptions about how you think students learn, how their minds work and how T&L is best managed. Your teaching methods will reflect these assumptions hence Jerome Bruner’s concern to ‘get teachers (and students) to think explicitly about their folk psychological assumptions, in order to bring them out of the shadows of tacit knowledge’ (1966:47, original emphasis.). In short, tutors need some insight into their own implicit theories that shape how they teach and how their students learn.*

(Coffield, 2008:38)

An assumption may be defined as something that is taken for granted. As such there is fluidity and instability regarding its existence ‘...in the real world of fact and experience’ (Barry, 2002:34). This perspective moves the argument into the realm of social constructivism where assumed knowledge is not ‘taken for granted’ and more dependent upon social and political

power and changing positions regarding seeing and thinking. From this perspective, contingency overrides absolutism as part of a philosophical underpinning: truths are not 'fixed' and meanings are ambiguous. Teacher assumptions therefore, whilst rooted in the self as a learning professional, may be challenged by the arenas they inhabit. Hence, the values and uses of teacher ideas concerning tacit or common sense knowledge (Lewis, 2008) are also challenged. Theoretically, a community of practice offers a space for trainees to explore such challenges and to develop personal insights regarding teaching and learning.

Eraut (2008) explains theory as a series of options. The options include using theory as a 'resource for thinking and understanding'; as a partial explanation for people and events or as something to be used in opposition, namely, choosing different lenses to explore the same domain. This exploration involves the trainee in a process of evaluation and reflection on professional practice as a member of a learning community. Using theoretical concepts to '...re-structure 'common sense' experience' (Cohen *et al.*, 2004:124) is considered to be '...the hallmark of the professional' (*ibid.*: 124). Viewed from this perspective, teacher education may be seen as that cultivating the trainee teacher as a thinking professional rather than that developing the '...teacher as a 'machine' (Stronach *et al.*, 2002).

In the context of contemporary teacher training and education, the development of the autonomous, critical individual is not considered radical pedagogy, although it may be viewed as such (Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010). The critical voice embodies the idea of the critical thinker and is concerned with critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010). The training of teachers is not necessarily regarded as one involving subversion or rebellion: neither is it seen as training for conformity (Lewis, 2008). In citing 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' (1969) as an example of teacher-led idealism and dialectical opposition, Lewis (2008: 254) comments: 'While preaching the virtues of idealism and creative autonomy, she demands her students to be her foot soldiers.'

Teacher educators do not aim to replace one set of ideals with counter-cultural ideals or to clone others. The aim is to offer an ITTE programme which provides trainees with ‘...a theoretical base in which to interrogate the immediate’ and to provide them with knowledge in which to ‘...locate the application of the theory’ (Bousted, 2012:6). In preparing trainees to join the post-compulsory sector and the profession, teacher educators aim to enable trainees to operate confidently as part of a process of social interaction within a learning community. This requires more than self-organization or regulation on the part of the trainee. It requires cultural sensitivity: a strong awareness of what the individual is participating in or belongs to in order to promote agency and the learning of others.

It can be argued that by providing models of critical reflection and dissent the trainee is encouraged to develop his or her own questions and to develop his or her own voice. By deconstructing the identity and role of the teacher, the individual is able to reorganise or reshape it as an ‘insider’ within a community (Wenger *et al.*, 2002:31). The aim is not for the trainee teacher to imitate the teacher-educator or significant other but to develop an individual critical approach to pedagogy. Such development however is done in the face of challenge. The challenge lies in teachers:

*(b)eing given the opportunity to engage in serious conversations about learning and teaching in the context of increasing pressures for accountability and uniformity of instruction.*

(Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010:215)

The use of the words ‘*being given*’ highlights the external ‘awarding’ of such opportunities - resonant of an imposed ‘form of professionalism’ (Lingfield, Interim Report 2012:2). A view reinforced as follows:

*An enormous task ... is to change the culture within the teaching profession so teachers feel safe about taking responsibility as professionals for what goes on in schools rather than seeing themselves as robotically taking impositions from on high and implementing them.*

(McIntosh, 2011:22)

As a member of a community of practice, teacher educators face the challenge of providing opportunities or spaces for trainees to engage in ‘...serious conversations about learning and teaching’ (Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010: 215) because they also operate in a similar culture of compliance. This perspective is reflected in the following comment:

*We are concerned that the extent of centrally-prescribed requirements for initial teacher training provision, and the way in which Ofsted assess compliance with them, are having a deadening effect on initial teacher training.*

(DCSF Select Committee Report: 2010:10)

The word ‘deadenning’ is both emotive and exact.

In concluding the chapter, reference is made to the introduction. It was stated that an initial review of the literature had led to a consideration of four themes and that the review would be organised in response to these. The following chapter explains the research paradigm and methods used to explore such themes in context.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

The aim of the research was to explore the early formation of professional teaching identities with particular reference to new entrants training to teach in the post-compulsory sector. In order to achieve a purposeful response to the two research questions, I recognised that I would need to focus on the trainees' perceptions of their experiences whilst on the programme and following employment, one year later. In focusing on trainees' experiences, it was recognised that the research would be located within a qualitative research paradigm. Whilst a discussion concerning the nature of qualitative research is developed later in this chapter, it is important to state at this point that I chose to use case study in order to show the '...personal journeys of those learning to be teachers' (Loo, 2007: 439). Choosing this approach as part of a qualitative study enables the researcher to understand the experiences of the participants from the participants' perspective (Ely *et al.*, 1991).

As a precursor to explaining the research methodology, reference is made here to the literature review. Whilst an initial review of contemporary literature provided sufficient information to inform the research design and to suggest that there was a case to be explored, I continued to draw on available sources as the research developed. The research was undertaken at a particularly turbulent time in the sector's history thus the literature accompanying the agenda continued to inform the development of the thesis. Hence, whilst the study covered a two year period, reference to the literature continued until publication of the Interim and Final Reports (Lingfield, 2012) into teacher professionalism. As stated (in Chapter 2) the option to deregulate the sector brought the issue of sector professionalism and identity into sharp relief.

The chapter opens with an explanation of the chosen theoretical framework. This is followed by a discussion concerning the nature of qualitative research and the use of case study within it. The cohesion between the three proved to be effective in providing a response to the two research questions.

### **3.2 Selecting a theoretical framework: communities of practice**

References to the selected theoretical framework were made earlier within the thesis. The intention was to signal connections between it, the research questions and the research paradigm. In this section, more detail is provided regarding activities leading to the selection and establishment of the framework. The ensuing explanation refers to its use in other studies and acknowledges the strengths and limitations of the framework with respect to the two research questions.

It is necessary to state that the selected framework was not an immediate choice and that I revisited the theory after beginning my research. My original intention was to explore teacher identity via the use of a conceptual, linguistic study. I was interested in the thinking undertaken by trainees as part of lesson planning processes and the ways in which they articulated their personal philosophies or theories of learning.

My interest in this area had derived from personal observation and practice whilst occupying the role of teacher educator. In this role, I had come to view the practice of the teacher as increasingly functional and less critically reflective. Observation of trainees' practice suggested that although trainees appeared to be able to complete lesson plan proforma as part of lesson preparation, they were less adept at explaining the rationale or theoretical perspectives underpinning a particular session or in making theoretical links as part of a sequence of sessions. It seemed therefore that whilst trainees were able to follow an instrumentalist route regarding the formulaic completion of the written lesson plan proforma - the 'prescribed' Aims, Objectives, Learning Outcomes and approaches to delivery, they were less



successful in explaining why they had made such choices. The importance of the connection between teacher intentionality and pupil learning articulated by Pring (2011:2) serves to illustrate the point here. Thus, the trainees' inability to articulate a personal philosophy or theoretical position with which to encourage student learning as part of a continuous sequence of sessions became an area of focus.

In pursuing this interest, I chose to focus on trainees' explanations as part of the lesson planning process. This perspective can be explained as follows: explanations require thinking not recitation or recall by rote. In providing explanations, trainees are required to make connections between variables; to engage in a process of abstraction and to theorise (Eraut, 2008). Through their explanations, trainee teachers have the opportunity to explore possible binaries as they explain the thinking underpinning a proposed teaching session. The lesson plan can be seen as that showing an overt, public representation of internal thinking. What is logged within the document often highlights aspects of the trainee's pedagogical position, for example, a perceived relationship between theory and practice or practice-theory (Eraut, 2008); the weighting awarded to teacher delivery and learner activity and an orientation towards creative or performance-based approaches. In explaining the thinking underpinning the lesson plan (as a precursor to the actual session), trainees can begin to develop an informed philosophy about learning. Put simply, in explaining *why* they do, *what* they do (in the classroom) in the *way* that they do, enables trainees to develop an understanding of themselves as teachers and professionals.

In order to assess the viability of the proposed research, I undertook a trial study in the preceding year. For the 07/08 cohort, an additional twenty minutes was allocated to my trainee observation caseload. The allocation was designed to provide time for a pre-meeting with trainees in order to discuss their intentions prior to the start of the session. Gathered as part of a cycle of observation, feedback, evaluation and reflection, my aim was to use trainee explanations as the main source of data. Information arising from the trial however showed that the research proposal was untenable.

Trainees' explanations were underdeveloped and therefore unlikely to yield sufficient data for transcription and analysis. I recognised that the research focus was ahead of the trainees' position and that more developmental work would be need to be done before further research could be undertaken in this area. Whilst a conceptual linguistic study was rejected at this point, the subject remains viable for future research. The need for trainees to articulate the thinking underpinning their pedagogical approaches to learning remains important.

In returning to the research proposal and design, my interest in teacher identity remained a point of focus. The perceived 'difference' regarding the university and work-based experience (signalled in Chapter 1) continued to be articulated by trainees as a source of tension. Pursuing the notion of difference caused me to revisit the framework purported by Lave and Wenger. In recognising that trainee teachers operated within a range of communities as part of their programme experience, I also recognised that the interaction between them and other stakeholders was producing a conflicting discourse or set of discourses. In their feedback, trainees frequently commented upon the limited opportunities available to them to engage in a prolonged, meaningful conversation with work-based colleagues. This suggested that the issues surrounding other discourses remained unresolved. Whilst trainees primarily articulated the 'difference' between the university and work-based experience as that existing between theory and practice, it seemed that other factors were in play. The need to understand this perceived 'difference' led to a re-consideration of the framework.

Whilst I was familiar with the concept of communities of practice as part of supporting student learning (in developing action learning sets, for example), in viewing communities of practice as part of an organisational structure in which knowledge is managed, I was able to view the framework from another perspective. The management of knowledge within a marketplace and operating as part of a business model offered coherence with my view of education in its current form.

In establishing the framework, I drew on other studies interested in the development of trainee teachers and in adopting this concept to explore their interest (Avis, 1997; 1999; 2005; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011; Bouchamma and Michaud, 2011; Orr and Simmons, 2010; Orr, 2012). The studies suggested a variation in the efficacy of the framework. Whilst Cuddapah and Clayton (2011:73) state that the theory ‘...opens up rich possibilities for understanding novice experiences in the community...’ others questioned its value when applied to the post-compulsory sector. The view that trainee isolation in context weakens the concept of communities of practice (Orr, 2012) highlights sector difficulties in providing the conditions required to foster such communities. The notion of trainee isolation runs contrary to a definition of the concept and implies a community not constituted as a community of practice or one operating less effectively. It also suggests that the trainee’s position whilst on placement is not given sufficient legitimacy within a community. The notion of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) signalled earlier serves to highlight the comment made here.

Two definitions of a community of practice are provided at this point:

*Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.*

(Wenger *et al.*, 2002:4)

*Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly*

(Wenger, 2006)

Both definitions place the notion of regular interaction at the core of a community of practice. Whilst social contact is acknowledged as an aspect of such interaction, active participation and mutual engagement are identified as key features differentiating communities of practice from other communities.

The first definition highlights the importance of knowledge within reference to the identified topic. Included within it is a view that, via a process of regular interaction, members of a community gradually develop both a distinctive perspective on a defined topic and ‘...a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches’ (Wenger *et al.*, 2002:5). The second definition however includes the notion of improvement - of doing something ‘better’. The notion of betterment fits with the current political agenda of ‘improvement’. In selecting this framework therefore, it was possible to explore trainees’ interaction within context and to explore how they, and the communities they inhabited, interpreted current agendas.

The relationship between a community’s practice, its context and national agendas is signalled here. In responding to Ofsted (2012) criticism regarding the quality of teaching and learning in the sector, Petty (2013:13) offers support for the concept of communities of practice in the post compulsory context. In arguing that it is difficult for teachers to ‘...improve further’ when challenges such as college size, the varied curriculum (defined in terms of level and scope) and increasing teaching caseloads exist, the author states that the ‘...good news’ lies in a strategy described as:

*(s)upported experiments; what some people might call teacher learning communities or communities of practice .... This involves teachers experimenting with their teaching, changing something they think is important and meeting with colleagues to share what they have been experimenting with to get advice from each other.*

(Petty, 2013:13)

Whilst Petty’s definition resonates with those presented above, the reference to the framework in a post-compulsory context provides an added dimension. Rather than viewing the contextual agenda of improvement as limiting, Petty regards the framework as one offering potential. This definition also gives prominence to the notion of experimentation - a concept generally associated with trialling and risk taking. The concept of

risk-taking, raised earlier in the thesis (see Chapters 1 and 2), is signalled here as an important element of trainees' development.

Value is also seen in a connection between identity and learning (Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011:64; Orr and Simmons 2010). The aim of this research was to explore the early formation of professional teaching identities hence the theory offered resonance here. In understanding the self in the role of the teacher, self-reflection and self-narrative are seen (Kelchtermans, 2005) as instrumental in such constructions. Self-reflection and narrative are not necessarily private constructions; they can be seen as activities shared and shaped within a social learning community. There is the potential therefore for individuals to develop their professional teaching identities as a member of a learning community.

In arguing that the '...focus on identity creates a tension between competence and experience' (Wenger, 2010: 182) Wenger states that the 'struggles' members encounter as they seek to find their place in the community adds dynamism and unpredictability. It may be argued that opportunities arise for those who wish to push the boundaries of traditional thinking and who invite the concepts of dynamism and unpredictability to inform their everyday interaction with colleagues; conversely, difficulties may arise for those aligned to homogenous practice or maintenance of the status quo.

In arguing for a focus on identity as central to a community of practice, Wenger refers to 'a human dimension':

*It is not just about techniques. When learning is becoming, when knowledge and knower are not separated, then the practice is also about enabling such becoming... Gaining a competence entails becoming someone for whom the competence is a meaningful way of living in the world. It all happens together. The history of practice, the significance of what drives the community, the relationships that shape it, and the identities of members all provide resources for learning - for newcomers and oldtimers alike.*

(Wenger, 2010:182)

From this perspective, unity between knowledge and the knower is seen as an enabling feature. The individual may be described as one who develops his or her identity as he or she begins to understand the integrated networks that underpin personal and professional learning. Learning is interwoven: not separate. The difficulty lies however in maintaining the 'human dimension' in a shifting, skills-driven agenda.

In adopting the concept of 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; 2006; 2010) as a theoretical framework it is possible to view the trainee as a social individual who, whilst having his or her own experiences of practice, make sense of it in participation with others. This position is summarised as follows:

*It is a perspective that locates learning, not in the head or outside it, but in the relationship between the person and the world, which for human beings is a social person in a social world. In this relation of participation, the social and the individual constitute each other.*

(Wenger, 2010:179)

As new entrants to a community, PGCE trainees bring levels of competence and experience to that community. Trainees meet existing members at the boundaries (Wenger, 2000:233). Wenger acknowledges the fluidity of such boundaries yet argues for their importance in connecting communities and providing opportunities for different kinds of learning. It is in crossing the boundaries, he argues, that learning has the potential to take place. The interchange between new and existing members of a community may be described however as a source of tension and learning. As trainees begin their initial teacher training and education (ITT/E) programme, they bring with them not only competencies from previous experiences but also an expectation of learning 'from' others. How trainee teachers work with existing, experienced teachers within a learning community is signalled here.

In exploring the components of a community of practice - the domain, community and practice - it is possible to see the links between the three. The authors describe the domain of a community as that which ‘...creates a common ground and a sense of common identity’ (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). The domain unites its members and in doing so, invites a commitment and a sense of accountability. When applying this description to the area of teacher education, it could be argued that there is common ground concerning the training of teachers and that the domain is clear. It could be counter-argued however that there may be variation in the emphasis given to the professional development of trainee teachers by a community. Secondly, the domain may not create a sense of common identity. The evidence arising from a review of contemporary literature highlights the lack of a clear identity of practitioners within the post-compulsory sector (Cottee, 2006; Eraut, 1994; 2007; Eraut and Hirsh, 2007; Eraut, 2008). Using this framework to explore teacher identity therefore enabled a consideration of the impact of such blurring on those training to be teachers and on those involved in teacher education. The outcomes are discussed later in the thesis (*see* Chapters 5 and 6).

Within the domain is a notion of ‘...collective competence’ (Wenger, 2006). Representative of the knowledge and expertise of the community, such competence is valued by its members. In adopting this framework, attention is given to the way in which a community displays or shares its ‘collective competence’ with others. The placing of ITTE trainees within work-based settings rests in a view that novice teachers learn from their experienced counterparts and become ‘...initiated into the culture of teaching’ (Kirk, 2013). Trainees observe their mentors in a variety of learning setting and analyse both their own teaching and that of their colleagues. There is the potential for conflict therefore if the observed competencies, representative of a community, are at odds with the trainee’s personal, visualised construction of the teacher and the teaching role.

Whilst the term ‘community’ may conjure generic connotations of kinship and geniality, the concept of ‘communities of practice’ provokes a particular

discussion regarding knowledge creation, ownership and a ‘stewarding of critical competence’ (Wenger, 2000:233). In such communities, the individual, acting jointly with members of the community, define the competences of the teaching role. These competences are not decided or judged by others external to the community. When this perspective is applied to this research however, the tension becomes apparent. Trainee teachers and their colleagues operate in a profession and a sector where external agency and intervention is overt. This raises the question of the individual’s potential to be fully effective or transformational as a member of a learning community and to develop a coherent account of his or her identity. Importantly, the impact of external agency and its associations with standardisation, uniformity and compliance on the pedagogy and practice of trainee teachers is felt by not only the teacher but also the learner. In this research, the learner is seen as a key stakeholder in the community and one whose contribution shapes the role and identity of the trainee teacher.

In describing the term ‘community’ Wenger *et al.*, (2002:28) refer to the social nature of learning. Whilst acknowledging that learning is also an intellectual process, the authors comment on the importance of belonging. Fundamental to the strength of a community is the trust and ‘mutual respect’ accorded to others, characterised by openness and a willingness to challenge alternative views. When considering the concept of ‘community’ with respect to ITTE trainees, trainees ‘join’ a community for a limited period of time as part of the work-based programme experience. In some respects, their ‘joining’ of a community is imposed because trainees are ‘placed’ within work-based communities rather than self-selecting. The context and nature of placing trainees restricts the informalities surrounding the development of communities of practice. The notion of being ‘placed’ therefore may affect the level of access gained to a community of practice and to the trainees’ interaction and participation within it.

Once ‘placed’, trainees become involved in the practice of the community. In exploring the notion of practice, reference is made to ‘...a set of socially-



defined ways of doing things in a specific domain ...' (Wenger *et al.*, 2002: 38) and to '...common approaches and shared standards' that shape both operations and behaviour. A standards-approach to learning was raised earlier in the thesis. It was argued that raising standards and improving levels of learner attainment lay at the heart of the current reform agenda and that a conundrum existed with respect to the linking of academic standards with professional standards as part of this agenda.

In using this framework to explore trainees' experiences therefore, it was possible to see how organisations and the communities operating within them interpreted externally-imposed standards. It was also possible to assess the variation or coherence between interpretations and to consider the impact on practice and behaviour. The narratives revealed not only hidden practices operating within an organisation but also the impact of such practices on the trainees' behaviour (*see* Chapter 4). The case studies provide an 'insider's view of the domain' of a community (Wenger *et al.*, 2002:31) and insights into the constructions of trainees' professional identities as they make connections with the practice of differing communities. The case studies also offer a particular view of the practice of mentors operating in the role of 'knowledge brokers' (Wenger *et al.*, 2002: 202). In reviewing practice, application of the framework exposed a set of approaches that may be described as mirrored rather than developmental. This poses an issue because if the term 'practice' is representative of a community's knowledge, the type of knowledge valued by a community may be called into question (Kirk, 2013).

Whereas the strengths of the framework have been identified as part of the discussion, a further comment is made with reference to its capacity to challenge assumptions regarding the training of teachers in university and work-based settings. Whilst Memorandums of Understanding or agreements regarding delivery of PGCE PCET programmes exist, the framework was successful in questioning the meanings underpinning such agreements. Questions concerning ideology, practice, interpretation, and transference across university- and work-based models are raised as

challenges for future ITTE models of partnership. The issues are signalled here and discussed later (in Chapter 6).

The framework was less effective in identifying the strengths of particular communities of practice. Where trainees were supported and able to exert agency as a member of a community of practice, it was not possible to say clearly why this was the case. The discussion surrounding Eva's adoption of the alternative template is signalled here and considered later (*see* Chapter 5).

### **3. 3 The research paradigm**

I took the view that the early formation of teachers' professional teaching identities occurs within a social context and as part of a social learning system (Wenger, 2000: 227). In wanting to understand trainees' constructions of their professional teaching identities, my interest lay in trainees' perceptions and in their descriptions of social reality. My attention was given therefore to '...meanings rather than facts alone' (Clark *et al.*, 2000:150). To understand the issues from the trainees' perspective, I adopted an interpretive approach:

*Interpretive research is based on the belief that a deeper understanding of phenomenon is only possible through understanding the interpretations of that phenomenon from those experiencing it.*

(Shah and Corley, 2006)

An interpretive approach accepts the researcher as an overt presence in the research, thus enabling the researcher to use qualitative methods to collect and include 'softer' data in order to expose covert meanings. The methods used in this research did expose such meanings and therefore may be regarded as successful. The findings are explained later (in Chapter 5).

The positivist paradigm - described as an approach ‘...which measures and quantifies human behaviour’ (Thompson and Woodward, 2000:3) - was considered a less appropriate option in terms of this research because its primary intention was not to draw conclusions ‘...in order to establish structural explanations’ (*ibid.*: 3) nor to measure and quantify trainees’ behaviour. Human behaviour is unpredictable and uncertain therefore not easily quantifiable. In exploring aspects of such behaviour, the role of the interpretive researcher is to look for ‘...patterns, themes, consistencies and exceptions to the rule’ (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2001:296). The position is summarised below:

*Epistemologically, the researcher is engaged in the setting, participating in the act of “being with” the respondents in their lives to generate meaning of them. Developing themes and storylines featuring the words and experiences of participants themselves is an important result of qualitative data analysis that adds richness to the findings and their meaning.*

(Krauss, 2005:10)

A thematic approach allows for flexibility; it allows time for the researcher to pause and to reflect on what he or she is observing and to review existing data before moving forward. This does not mean however, that the research process is uncontrolled. The research remains ordered, systematic, and rooted in something already known. The methodology undertaken as part of the two earlier studies (Butcher, 2006; Smith and Butcher, 2008) proved to be useful in detailing emerging themes hence a thematic approach was adopted in this research.

As signalled (in Chapter 2) a review of the literature had led to the consideration of four particular themes related to the development of early professional formation. In order to explore these themes in context I viewed the qualitative approach as the one most likely to offer a response to the two research questions.

It is appropriate to state at this point why action research became the less preferred option. I had undertaken action research as part of my Master of Arts (MA) programme and whilst it was appropriate for that study, it was considered less so for this. The former study enabled a review of in-house practices and brought about change at a local level. In terms of this research however, I felt that the issues concerning teacher education and professionalism reflected current, national discussions. The outcomes of this research therefore had the potential to contribute to this debate and to a parallel discussion concerning the shape of future ITT/E partnership models of delivery.

### **3. 4 Case study**

The aim of case study is:

*(t)o stimulate creative thinking and disturb general assumptions. Case studies also reveal the complexities of the practices observed and so help to explain why so often general maxims about what is effective do not work out in real life. Just as the microscope reveals teeming life in a speck of material, so the case study method provides a new lens for looking at a single case.*

(Roberts *et al.*, 2005:11)

In choosing to use case study, there was an awareness of its value in undertaking research within the post-compulsory sector. The quality and success of small-scale investigations in contexts where resources are limited is raised (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001: 2). Having used case study previously (Butcher, 2006) I was familiar with its capacity to bring together information from differing contexts in order to present a more coherent picture of current practice.

Literature concerning the conducting of case study and its strengths and limitations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) serve to show the value and limitations of this approach. Whilst case studies provide opportunities for empirical

accounts, it could be argued that that not all accounts are equally ‘valid’. Smith, for example, states that as perspectives are often framed within time, it is possible to:

*(c)redit some accounts as better because they make sense to us given our interests and purposes at this time and this place.*

(Smith, 1993:150)

It could be said however that what is ‘true’ for an individual is based on their world view at that time: it is their ‘truth’ and as such, has validity. For the purposes of this research, it was important that I acknowledged and attempted to understand trainees’ personal or perceived ‘truths’ in order to explore with them further approaches to pedagogy and practice. This position is explained with reference to the following:

*Case studies are more than descriptions or apt illustrations. They are selected and described in all their specificity in order to understand the theoretical relationship between the events and not just the events themselves*

(Roberts *et al.*, 2005:11)

The question of whether case studies can contribute to a ‘...theory of knowledge’ (Smith, 1993:150) is also raised. In response, it is stated that there was an awareness that the research may or may not contribute to a theory. To reiterate: the primary purpose of this study was to ‘understand rather than convince’ (Wolcott, 1994: 369).

In using case study to present the trainees’ view of social reality, I was aware that there was a blurring between the notions of case study and ethnography and that in wishing to study ‘...things in their natural state’ (Denscombe, 2007:71) the features of ethnography would offer resonance with those of case study. The features include the involvement of the researcher in the field amongst the participants; the merit of everyday (rather than large) events as an important component of research data and an interest in how the members of a culture understand phenomena. A holistic

approach is advocated in order to consider possible ‘... connections between variables’ (*ibid.*: 62). This rounded approach supports the role of the interpretive researcher in looking for both consistency and inconsistency (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2001; Krauss, 2005).

For purposes of clarity, I have used Denscombe’s descriptions as headings in order to explain the approaches adopted.

### **3.4.1 The involvement of the researcher in the field amongst the participants**

Denscombe (2007:69) argues that there is a need for a ‘...public account’ of the role of the researcher’s self in order to support research outcomes. This account reflects ways in which personal experiences, beliefs and interests may affect the interpretation of findings and includes within it aspects of the self, such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and social background. In response, I explain firstly my overt presence in the research and secondly, my perspective on the training of teachers. The following accounts reflect my epistemological and ontological beliefs.

#### **3.4.1i My presence in the research**

My motivations and reasons for undertaking the research were articulated (in Chapter 1). In summary therefore: in the role of teacher educator, my observations of trainee teachers’ practice suggested that they were becoming more risk-averse and less confident in their professional practice. I believed that trainees were becoming less experimental and adopting ‘quick-fix’ approaches in order to comply with institutional requirements. I devised the expression ‘the paler self’ to describe such a trainee teacher. I also felt that differences highlighted by trainees as part of programme feedback processes required further exploration. My position in response to collecting and evaluating trainee feedback is exemplified as follows:

*As a largely practical people, teacher educators are likely to listen first to their students, those who evaluate their courses, and who make the judgements about their teaching - judgements on which important career decisions are often made. But beyond a purely instrumental and potentially self-serving interest, I believe that most teachers, including teacher educators, want their students to gain meaning and insight from their instruction. And what have preservice teachers generally said about teacher education? Make it relevant. 'Teach us things we can use in the classroom.'*

(Tellez, 2007:544)

In undertaking the research, I recognised my involvement as a researcher in the field amongst the participants and built this into the research design. I acknowledged that my interaction with the trainees as part of the programme experience would be explicit and that I would be operating in multiple roles. Whilst my primary role was that of teacher-researcher, I also operated as a university-based teacher educator, Programme Leader, Personal Tutor and Partnership Link Tutor. The multiplicity of roles presented both opportunities and difficulties to be overcome.

In terms of opportunities, it can be argued that in the role of teacher educator I was naturally present within the research and accepted in this role by the trainees. The disadvantage of such a position concerns the ethical domain and this is explored shortly. A further benefit of being present concerns a sense of immediacy: the notion of being there when an event, action or comment arises. Such immediacy provides an opportunity for a description of similarities, incongruities or serendipitous accounts (Fine and Deegan, 1996). I viewed the sense of immediacy arising from the everyday interaction between trainees and teacher educators as an aid to data collection. With the trainees' permission, I was able to collect and record the comments made by them during formal and informal sessions throughout the year. Collecting data in this way enabled me to construct the on-going stories of the trainees and to look at the connections between them.

In arguing the case for the presence of the researcher in the research, the ensuing comment offers a further perspective:

*Who else but independent researchers would risk making themselves unpopular by questioning the wisdom of hasty or incoherent policy? Who else could challenge inspection evidence and offer a reasoned argument as to how empirical flaws had led to erroneous conclusions. Who else would dare say 'the King has no clothes on?'*

(Mortimer, 1999)

### **3.4.1ii Ethics**

Whilst the opportunities of being present within the research are acknowledged, there was also a need to respond to ethical issues. In reviewing the difference between ethnographic and case study approaches, it could be argued that a difference occurs with respect to the extent of the engagement between the researcher and the researched. The term 'immersion' is used in associated literature (Krauss, 2005:8) to reflect the extent of this involvement. I recognised that in my role as a teacher-researcher, whilst not adopting a 'hands-off approach' (*ibid.*: 8), I would not be fully 'immersed' in the research. The professional boundaries surrounding the role of the teacher educator and the teacher-researcher have ethical origins and as such, provide guidance for the researcher. I was aware of such boundaries and operated within them. It was important to address for example, the fact that I was involving my own trainees in the research.

In addressing these ethical concerns, my aim was to ensure that the trainees' experience would not be disrupted by the research and that they would follow the structure of a typical, PGCE PCET programme of study. The term 'naturalisation' has relevance here. The term is used to refer to a qualitative inquiry - concerned with the '...description and explanation of phenomena as they occur in routine, ordinary natural environments' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2001). The data collection process therefore operated naturally within the programme schedule (Appendix 2 Table 2). Data collection points were identified within the existing calendar and



nothing extraneous was added to the year. In naturalising the research, I was able to remain within ethical boundaries, maintain objectivity and minimise bias.

In working within an ethical framework, I introduced the proposed research to the trainees following completion of the Induction phase. The timing was seen as appropriate because the trainees were less 'new' or as apprehensive following the development of early working relationships. In order to comply with ethical requirements surrounding the research process (Burgess, 1984; Mattinson *et al.*, 1993; Wolcott, 1994) I informed the trainees of the intended brief. Time had been built into the session for an explanation of my role: as a Unit tutor on the programme, as a Personal Tutor for 10 of the 21 trainees and as a teacher-researcher. I stated that the research would be 'naturalised' (Hitchcock and Hughes 2001: 296) within the programme and that research activities and data collection processes would fit within the established structure of the PGCE PCET programme. I explained that the collected data would be kept anonymously, stored safely throughout the duration of the two-year study and destroyed on completion. My intention in giving prominence to a discussion of these issues at the beginning of the programme was to reassure trainees of my adherence to ethical protocols with reference to the university's 'Academic Ethical Framework and Guidelines on Good Research Practice (MMU, 2009). I also wished to provide the trainees with time to discuss the aims and objectives of the research and to understand the extent of their participation if they opted to take part.

Following the thirty-minute discussion, trainees were asked for their written permission to engage with the research and to sign the 'Research Consent Form' (Appendix 3). Respondents were given the opportunity to remain anonymous. The full cohort of 21 trainees opted to take part in the research. Had a trainee opted not to take part, the trainee would have continued to operate within the normal structure of the PGCE programme and his or her work would not have been included in data collection processes.

### 3.4.1iii My position on the training of teachers

In accordance with Denscombe's (2007:69) view regarding the need for a '...public account' of the role of the researcher's self, I now explain the second of the two accounts. The following statement reflects my position:

*The notion that our students grow, mature and develop professionally is endemic to our work as university teachers. Indeed, part of the grand raison d'être for locating training programmes in universities at all is that they are the best places for professional growth to happen. That some kind of ontological transformation whereby students acquire professional attitudes during this period with us, is fundamental to the ways in which we understand the world.*

(Pickard, 2009)

It is no coincidence that I have used the terms Initial Teacher Training and Education (ITTE) throughout the thesis. The use of the term Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is used within contemporary discourse but such usage excludes a more rounded view or philosophy concerning the development of a critically-literate, thinking individual. The use of the word 'trainee' (developed, as 'pupils became 'students') is equally insufficient.

In my continuing role as a teacher educator, I argue that trainee teachers need to establish a 'knowing', critical position regarding sector influences, such as political history and agenda, in order to understand the impact of such influences on current everyday practice. The importance of context-specific knowledge as well as subject-specific knowledge is returned to here (Mutton, 2012).

In engaging with a critique of practice as part of their PGCE PCET programme experience, I argue that trainees are encouraged to recognise the conflicting demands prevalent within their daily teaching role and to negotiate such demands as they develop a sense of the 'self' within the role of the teacher. I argue that reaching a position of 'self-understanding' Kelchtermans (2005:1000) requires more than that stated within current

documentation or literature. Such documentation offers descriptions of the 'excellent' or 'outstanding' teacher. These descriptions are often externally constructed and not fully reflective of a practising teacher.

In offering a critique of current agenda and policy, trainees are asked to explore alternatives. It is in wrestling with differing perspectives that trainees can begin to understand themselves in the dual roles of teacher and professional. How trainees wrestle with differing perspectives in order to reach a position of self-understanding is important. In engaging with these differences there is a greater chance of the trainee teacher emerging as a critically-informed teacher rather than an identikit or a 'technician' (Ward and Eden, 2009:104).

The extent to which trainees engage with a critique of practice can be seen, in part, when viewing the trainees' lesson plans. In the role of observer, the teacher educator can visualise what the trainee teacher is intending to deliver within context; consider how the trainee intends to develop the session and review the appropriateness of the range of strategies and resources to be used. The template also exposes the decisions reached by the trainee teacher as part of the preparation and planning process. By looking at the sequential use of lesson plans, the observer can explore with the trainee the philosophical and theoretical processes underpinning personal decision-making. A review of the lesson plan also enables a reflection on how much of the trainee's 'self' is involved in the thinking and planning process and how much reflects the interpretation, direction or intervention of others.

Whilst intervention by others can be seen as either valuable or intrusive, the ensuing debate highlights one of the larger issues in education. The current preoccupation with a standards-driven approach implies a political or state theory of learning. By focusing on the trainees' approaches to lesson planning, insights into such tensions can be formed. In creating their professional identities, my interest centred not only on the trainee as an

active or passive participant in the learning process but also on how he or she managed the participation of other members of the community.

It is important to make clear at this point that the research was not concerned with exploring a mechanical approach to lesson planning with the intention of providing a 'new' lesson plan format nor was it concerned with the operational strategies undertaken by trainees when completing a lesson plan template. The research was not about the 'how to' approach; it was interested in the thinking underpinning the practice. The explanation provided by the trainee teacher in accounting for his or her approach to the lesson and to subsequent decision making is indicative of the developing teacher and professional. The challenge for the trainee arises when (as in this research) the familiar lesson plan template is replaced as part of an intervention aimed at ascertaining or disturbing current thinking (*see Appendix 2 Table 2: Stage 3*). How the trainee responds to such an intervention poses questions regarding the individual as an independent thinker.

#### **3.4.1iv Critical reflexivity**

In defining the above terminology, reference is made to Bolton (2014). The term 'critical' is described as that involving a questioning approach, examining the way in which values, beliefs and judgements are moulded by social and political influences; 'reflexivity' is explained as a focused, detailed consideration of personally-held values and assumptions in order to understand particular perspectives or approaches. In defining reflexivity, Bolton makes reference to 'ethical action' (p.7) and to the behaviours adopted within organisational structures. How the individual reconciles the demands of an organisation with that of a personal value system is raised for consideration here. In attempting such reconciliation, it can be argued that a reflexive approach allows for the use of 'critical questions' (p.7) in order to challenge perceived inconsistencies within certain structures. Reflexivity encompasses the notion of managing uncertainty and limitation and of

designing strategies to manage both. It is from this position that I locate my personal pedagogy. The concept of the reflective practitioner derives from such perspectives and as such, continues to inform many teacher education programmes (Bruster and Peterson, 2013). It continues to be a contested term in current political thinking because it does not fit easily with the construction of the teacher as a technician.

My perspectives have also been informed by the literature relating to disciplinary knowledge (Rata, 2012; Wheelahan; 2008a; 2008b; Young 2009; 2011). In developing the PGCE PCET programme, my views reflect those of Rata (2012). Rata states that it is the role of schools to separate rather than ‘...enlarge the experiential world of the family’ (p119). This comment also applies to colleges and to those teaching in post-compulsory education. Separation from the known to the unknown brings with it certain freedoms - moving from the subjective to the objective. My aim in working with trainee teachers therefore is to support their access to disciplinary knowledge, with the intention of enabling them to ‘...turn experience into an object to be thought about from the position of the critic’ (*ibid.*: 108).

In attempting to describe my preferences, the concepts of reflection, reflexivity and criticality are brought together. Whilst each can be explored separately there is also synergy between them. The benefits of connecting reflection to action and to on-going professional development are extolled within the literature (Bolton, 2014; Gibbs, 1988; Hickson, 2011; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004; Schon, 1983; 1987). In applying these perspectives to the process of early teacher formation, there is an added emphasis on two further elements: context and research. Reflection, reflexivity and criticality do not exist in a vacuum. How these elements connect, fuse or separate across and within particular contexts provoke interest; how this creates new knowledge for the individual is central to my pedagogical position. Added into this perspective however, is an awareness that the concept of critical reflection is a contested notion and therefore open to challenge (Hickson, 2011).

In exploring the concepts of reflection, reflexivity and criticality, I recognise that my preferred model is both aspirational and flawed. It asks trainee teachers to be critical of their practice in order to move beyond the everyday thus 'freeing' them to be innovative and transformative in their work with learners. This type of liberal ideology however does not fit well with current structures and is not easily achievable.

Trainees' accounts of their experiences reflect both the aspirations and the flaws within a preferred model. Whilst the journal kept by trainees as part of the PGCE programme offers a space for trainees to provide accounts of their experiences and to reflect upon them, it does not always provide them with an opportunity to engage with the deeper process of critical thinking. The emotional challenges faced by trainees serve to interrupt connections between experience, reflection and reflexivity. Options to view such experiences from other perspectives and to make other connections become similarly obscured. Such interruptions arise from the emotional labour (Avis and Bathmaker; 2004; Colley, 2006) expended by the trainees as they work within particular constraints.

The challenges brought about by current approaches to learner assessment and to the relationships between assessment, autonomy and motivation (Ecclestone, 2000; Torrance 2007) provide examples of existing tensions. Trainees' accounts tell of the personal pressures they experience as they try to work within such limitations. The emotions attached to their daily labour become heightened as they work with learners orientated towards examination success. In describing such challenges, it is clear that trainees are working in ways that conflict with a model of pedagogy resting in critical reflexivity. Their journal accounts suggest reasons why trainees are able to engage critically or otherwise with the challenges they face.

It is useful at this point to refer to comments made in Chapter 1. In this Chapter, I outlined the reasons for undertaking the research, citing the tensions contained within trainee feedback as those affecting their progress. From this position, I identified three areas of conflict linked to pedagogy,

practice and early teacher formation. I also made links to the tensions contained within the feedback and to the philosophy underpinning the PGCE programme, noting the potential for clashes between the two. In making such links, I was aware that programme philosophy and principles reflected my own position. As a university-based teacher educator, I am conscious of the positions and traditions associated with such institutions and of the privileging of certain perspectives or types of knowledge. I understand that my views on critical autonomy are reflective of wider standpoints linked to social justice and equity and that the value I place on critical thinking affects my understanding of trainees' accounts. In conjuring images of trainees' abilities to critically engage or otherwise with such challenges, there is an awareness of:

*(t)he liberal humanist tradition of higher education, where intrinsic motivation also implies a love of learning, deep commitment to a subject or professional discipline and perhaps feelings of social or collegial obligation.*

(Ecclestone, 2000:144)

My expectations of trainees are therefore informed by such traditions and commitments. They may however be contested and not accepted as absolutes.

In exploring my preferred model of pedagogy, Ecclestone's (2000) comments on the relationships between assessment, autonomy and motivation serve a further purpose. The author's comment that students need to be '...aware of their own motivation and attributions of achievement' (p.156) also apply to my role as a teacher educator. In conjecturing 'good' students as those who achieve autonomous positions and 'poor' students as those who do not there is a danger in making assumptions or ill-informed decisions. The reason why trainees may not develop personal autonomy may be linked to the barriers they face which, in some instances, cannot be overridden (Mutton, 2012). Some of these barriers are highlighted in the field notes, compiled during visits to trainees' placements (*see* Chapter 4: Case Studies).

A further reason why trainees may not be able to attain the levels of autonomy and criticality desired may rest in the area of assumption. Teacher educators may assume that trainee teachers have the skills, abilities and capacity to become autonomous professionals and that the trainees understand the constructs of autonomy and criticality without a need for further elicitation. The danger lies, however, in such skills being ‘...under theorised and rarely developed consciously by teachers’ (Ecclestone, 2000:156). The issue of assumption when confronted by reality is revisited when discussing the two Case Studies: Rita and Ellie.

### **3.4.2 The merit of everyday events as an important component of research data**

The importance of the ‘commonplace’ (Krauss, 2005:9) is recognised in this research. The need to capture meanings often hidden within everyday practice and to categorise and organise ‘...the subtleties of everyday social phenomena in a meaningful way’ (*ibid.*: 9) underpinned the research proposal and informed data collection and analysis processes. In my dual role of teacher-researcher and teacher educator, I was engaged in an everyday interaction with the trainee teachers. By focusing specifically on their daily practice, I was able to observe and identify the layers of meaning present within a learning context but not always recognised as such.

### **3.4.3 An interest in how the members of a culture understand things**

*The goal of a qualitative investigation is to understand the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the point-of-view of those involved in the situation of interest.*

(Krauss (2005: 20)

In designing the research, I took the view that trainees were more likely to hold a subjective rather than an objective view of social reality. As such, the meanings generated by them provided an opportunity for evaluation and



interpretation. In order to extract meaning, I decided to focus on trainees' journal entries. The entries consisted of a series of comments and reflections on the professional role and practice and as such, offered a continuing narrative of their perceptions and progress. In taking the stance that the current dialogue regarding restrictions to the professional role needed to be explored from the trainees' perspective, I selected trainees' narratives as a primary source of data. As such, the descriptions relate the 'lived experiences' (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006:172) of the trainee teachers as they journeyed through the programme.

The use of trainees' narratives was seen as a natural tool within the research process. Trainees wrote these accounts as part of their programme experience and as such, they provide formative accounts of their learning 'journey' (Loo, 2007: 439). The entries offer a commentary on individual teaching experiences and on the variation between learning communities; they show how, in interacting with other community members the individual attempts to construct his or her identity. Avis *et al.*, (2001) refer to the use of a time log diary as a research tool to explore the everyday work of those teaching in the further education sector. Whilst the diaries reflected the context in which they laboured and provided quantitative data, the authors were concerned that issues relating to the focus of the research could be hidden by the methods used. To ensure the capturing of otherwise hidden data and to consider other ways of exploring it, four cameos were used. The cameos provided the inner-stories of teachers, capturing more personal perceptions of the labour process within the sector. The summaries used at the end of each cameo (pp. 72- 75) provides a useful summary of significant issues arising with respect to the research focus and as such, have been adapted for use in this study (*see* Appendix 13).

A longitudinal study enables the monitoring of change. Whilst it may be argued that some trainees are intrinsically motivated to join ITTE programmes (Bielby *et al.*, 2007), trainees' understanding with respect to earlier predispositions is likely to change. Individual actions can change meanings. The narratives provided present evidence not only of change but

also of resistance to change. The intervention introduced at Stage 3 reflects this latter point and is discussed later (in Chapter 5).

Trainees' narratives provide fresh insights into a continuing story. The narratives of those about to join the sector, the profession and varying communities of practice provide authentic accounts of trainees' experiences and record current interpretations of policy in practice. By their very description, trainee teachers are 'new' to the sector, the profession and certain communities. The accounts, written throughout the duration of their training, provide views on the tensions between an 'economy of performance' and 'ecologies of practice' (Stronach *et al.*, 2002:109). The tension is explained as that emanating from a performance-driven model underpinned by notions of audit and accountability at odds with a vocational commitment held by the self. Contemporary jargon reflects notions of economies of performance (Stronach, 2007): terms such as audit and accountability are used with little reference to derivation or meaning. Stronach's (2007) view that learning to teach is emotional but becomes functionalised can be seen in the current discourse. Hence, an awareness of a discourse led by others prompts the argument for the inclusion of the practitioner's voice in the debate, with the imperative that 'Professionals must re-story themselves in and against the audit culture' (Stronach *et al.*, 2002:130). The methods use therefore reflect the prominence given to the voice of the trainees as they begin their PGCE PCET programme of study and continue into employment. The success of the methodology lies in its ability to record change; change in response to the experiences encountered by the trainees and 'voiced' within their journal entries.

The narratives of the trainee teachers, told as they 'learn' to become teachers, are of equal value within a wider story. Such discourses, described as '... a set of ideas, statements and practices that provide a way of representing a particular kind of knowledge' (Thompson and Woodward (2000:23) makes it possible to say some things but places restrictions on others. Whilst naturalisation implies that the researcher is better positioned to acquire information, the interpretive position suggests that educational

researchers are not in a privileged position regarding the acquisition of knowledge. More, that the research provides ‘another voice in the conversation’ to be included amongst narratives offered by others (Smith, 1993:150). In attempting to interpret the trainees’ views of everyday events, the research provided ‘another voice’ - that of the adult learner, training to be a teacher in the post-compulsory sector.

Trainee teachers occupy a learning setting as part of a historical timeline; as such, they experience the existing ideology and discourse of the day and observe the associated practices and behaviours of their peers. Nasta (2007) comments on the way in which educational practitioners interpret standards and warns of interpretations with notions of absolutism and exactness of knowledge. This historical ‘space’ is described as a space in which meaning needs to be negotiated. To ‘sign up’ to current perspectives without an awareness of historical context suggests that political change is rooted in historical continuity which, in terms of the post-compulsory sector, it is not.

The narratives offer insights into practice because they tell of the cultural interpretation of national policy by those in positions of power at institutional level; the mediators of knowledge. Trainees experience a living history of the sector as part of everyday practice. Their accounts tell of policy in practice as opposed to policy and practice. Hence case study research acts:

*(a)s a way of linking the ‘generation of policy with the ‘implementation’ of policy and to look at the fit between the two, all deeply contexted and embedded in this everyday world.’*

(Hitchcock and Hughes, 2001:327)

The narratives offer an account of a trainee’s ‘self-understanding’ (Kelchtermans, 2005) within a culture at a particular time in history. The entries capture trainees’ reflections on everyday practice as experienced by them, thus the authenticity of their accounts is described in these terms.

In maintaining rigour, concerns may be raised regarding authenticity. It could be argued that there is a lack of immediacy between the trainees' experience and the reflections written sometime afterwards. In response, it is argued that the time between the actual teaching session and the entry allowed for a more reflective rather than an emotional account, thus enabling a more objective perspective.

It may also be argued that in my role as teacher educator observing the trainee teachers practice, I could have unwittingly enhanced or interfered with the trainee's logging of a personal account or that such accounts reflected the views of the teacher educator rather than their own. In response, I would argue that the feedback given to the trainee following observation of the session enabled trainees to reflect upon the incidents not necessarily observed by them. Hence, when revisiting the session later, the narrative would reflect new insights considered from a personal yet differing perspective.

To ensure that the individual accounts offered reliability, additional methods reflective of those in interpretive research were used. I drew on a range of sources throughout the course of the programme (*see Appendix 4*). These included assignments, lesson plans and lesson evaluations, mid and end of year programme evaluations, a semi-structured (end of programme) discussion and personal field notes of observed practice. The majority of the trainees' work was kept in the Teaching File hence it was possible to monitor the journal entries alongside a wider evidence base throughout the data collection cycle.

Written and verbal accounts were collected from the full cohort (2008/9) as part of a staged approach to data collection. Using the views of the cohort as well as those of the case study trainees aimed to address gender difference. In a further attempt to gain a male perspective, I contacted Nick, a former trainee. Trainees were tracked into employment as part of *Alumni* processes hence a link with Nick was already established. In addition, the comments made by Nick cited earlier in the thesis (*see Chapter 1*) served as

one of the triggers for the research. As a teacher in his third year, I believed that his views would serve to highlight similarities or differences with those presented by the case study trainees as they completed their first year in teaching. This proved to be the case.

The following section provides a commentary on the sample involved in the research and on the data collection and analysis processes.

### 3.5 The sample

The timing of the research and ensuing data collection process (2008-9) was significant. The trainees were joining the PCET programme when attempts to 're-engineer the sector' (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006:172) were taking place. Developing a 14-16 vocational route led to an increased focus on school and college links and to the transition of students between the two settings. As part of this exchange or transition model, I envisaged that alternative approaches to pedagogy and practice would emerge and that trainee teachers would need to review their approaches to practice and collaborative working as part of this change.

Whilst initial concerns about working with younger learners in the post compulsory context emerged, teaching 14-16 year old learners was '... becoming accepted practice in colleges' (McCrone *et al.*, 2007). School-college links were already in existence in some curriculum areas, thus enabling school pupils to access college resources colleges for part of the week. The arrival of the Diplomas (later abandoned) and development of the Apprenticeship scheme implied that the partnership model would continue to expand. The research therefore became part of a moving political agenda involving the incoming cohort of trainee teachers.

The sample consisted of 21 trainee teachers enrolled on a one year, full time, pre-service, initial teacher education Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Post-compulsory Education and Training (PCET) programme. The cohort included a range of trainees in terms of age, geographical location and socio-economic status. There was an imbalance in terms of gender: this is raised as part of a later discussion regarding sampling. A profile of the 2008/9 cohort is provided (*see Appendix 5*).

The trainees were based within a university and placed in eighteen colleges of further education and two other learning settings for a minimum of 150 hours as part of their programme of study. Programme delivery (initially

university-based) was followed by transition to a placement in a work-based context. Trainees returned to the university at a mid-point in the year (March) and continued in placement until May before completing the programme in June. University and work-based tutors observed the trainees on eight occasions as part of programme completion requirements. University tutors completed a minimum of three observations; work-based mentors completed the remaining five. Caseload allocation involved the division of the 21 trainees amongst two university-based teacher educators.

### 3.6 Data collection

Data collection took place over a two-year period. In undertaking a longitudinal study there was a need to identify key data collection points. Five stages were identified throughout the programme, beginning at the pre-entry stage and ending post-employment. A summary (Table 1) is provided below (*see Appendix 2 Table 2 for complete table*).

Table 1: Table to show data collection points

Stage	Programme sequence
1	<b>Pre programme:</b> Recruitment and selection procedures
2 a-f	<b>On programme:</b> Induction Assignment completion Placement experience
3	<b>1 day return to university</b> Intervention
4	<b>End of Programme</b> Review and group interview
5	<b>Employment: 1 year later</b> Email response

I collected the trainees' perceptions as they passed through each of the stages and drew on the accounts presented using the range of sources identified. I compiled fieldwork notes in response to observations of trainees' practice and post-observation, used a voice recorder to document my reflections.

During Stage 2, four trainees were selected as subjects for case study. The selection was based on an analysis of Phase 1 and 2 data combined with a pragmatic approach to case loading. The pragmatics included appropriate use of resources (time and travel costs) relating to a minimum of three visits per trainee. The criteria designed to select the four case study trainees took into account narratives that informed the research questions, highlighted key themes (as identified within the literature) or raised anomalies regarding trainees' perspectives and expectations.

The case studies were selected because they represented range in terms of background, age and ethnic grouping. I also considered four to be a sufficient number of trainees to study in depth in order to provide a response to the two research questions. There were limitations to case study selection. Two distinctive features characterised this particular cohort: 81% of trainees were female and 76% aged below 35. Programme review documentation showed that previous cohorts were more evenly balanced in term of gender (*see Appendix 5*). The imbalance can be seen with respect to my observation caseload where nine of the ten trainees were female. Subsequently, the four case studies within the observation caseload were female and within a narrow age range: aged between 22 and 35.

It is important to note that the original case study selection had included one male. The difficulty encountered here however was that the trainee was a returning trainee with a requirement for placement attendance only. Inconsistencies in engagement led to this trainee withdrawing in May. Of the three remaining male trainees in the cohort, one withdrew; one experienced ill health and completed in October of the same year and one



completed in June the following year. The retention of male trainees is one worthy of future study.

I used a semi-structured group discussion with case study trainees at the end of the PGCE PCET programme and arranged to meet with them one year later (Stage 5). The distance between employment locations prevented this preferred option so responses were sought via email. In seeking to obtain an unstructured, 'natural' account, I included headings in the email to guide rather than to lead trainees. Previous cohorts of trainees had reported on the value of a guided approach in helping to structure responses. The same email was sent to Nick. Complete data sets were available for two of the four trainees hence two case studies: Rita and Ellie (the names have been changed for purposes of anonymity) were selected at Stage 5. Their narratives provided the most comprehensive accounts in response to the two research questions.

In scrutinising the information, I was looking for patterns, themes or incongruities. In order to collate and analyse the comments, I used an evaluative framework developed by Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) and adapted by Rajuan *et al.* (2008). In their work with trainee teachers, the latter used the framework to consider what internal triggers of learning 'looked like' in practice. The triggers refer to those described by the trainee teachers as opposed to those identified by others. As I was interested in trainees' motivations for undertaking the programme as part of a wider understanding of trainees' perceptions of their experiences I felt that this framework would be appropriate (*see Appendix 7*). It offered a way of organising the trainees' accounts as they passed through each of the stages. I grouped the statements arising from the trainees' journal entries, assignments and evaluations under each of the five headings presented within the evaluative framework: cognitive, mechanical experiential, affective and social. By using this system to organise trainees' accounts, I was able to identify two key themes.

The majority of comments became grouped under three main categories: experiential, affective and social. It became clear that the trainees' were relating stories connected to their emotional selves rather than those concerning their knowledge or skills (cognitive and mechanical). Reflective of the 'pull' between competence and experience and the learning emerging from the 'close tension' between the two (Wenger, 2000:227) the trainees' responses suggested that the learning gained was emotional rather than dynamic.

In order to contextualise the trainees' narratives and in particular, the two case study responses, a more detailed overview of each of the five stages is presented:

### **3.6.1 Stage 1: Pre-programme data: March to September 2008**

I identified Stage 1 as a key stage in developing a thematic approach. It was necessary to establish why trainees were motivated to join the PGCE PCET programme; their aspirations and why teaching in the post-compulsory sector (as opposed to other sectors) interested them. As part of standard interviewing procedures, trainees are asked on three separate occasions to explain their motivations for undertaking the programme: in writing - via completion of the programme application form; verbally, as part of the interview presentation and thirdly, in response to questions posed as part of a formal (panel) interview. Whilst data was collected at this stage as part of standardised procedures, to accord with ethical boundaries affecting research, I did not access it until permission was given by trainees at Stage 2.

### **3.6.2 Stage 2a: The Induction phase (full cohort)**

This stage focused on establishing the structures to support the building of a university-based community of practice. Trainees met with their peers and tutors for the first time following recruitment and selection processes. Team

building activities were conducted in a semi-formal atmosphere, enabling trainees to voice their hopes and intentions in a collaborative, open manner at the beginning of the programme. The accounts collected at this stage reflected the trainees' perspectives prior to the beginning of the work-based placement.

The activities reflected the aims of the research. Trainees explored early constructions of their teaching identity and the nature of such constructs within a wider concept of teacher professionalism. The set task was designed to expose initial views and tensions. Working in groups of three, trainees prepared a ten-minute micro-teach related to their subject area. Trainees were also asked to reflect on this activity and on their experiences as part of the Induction process. This reflection became the first journal entry. In collecting and analysing the data at this stage, cultural differences began to emerge: these are discussed later (in Chapter 5).

Student permission to be involved in the research was requested during this Stage (*see*: 3.4.1i and 3.4.1ii).

### **3.6.3 Stage 2b – 2e**

Trainees considered approaches to learning and developed schemes of work and lesson plans as part of pre-placement preparations. As a Unit teacher, I used a standard lesson plan template, drawn from workplace proforma, to familiarise trainees with the planning of lessons (*see Appendix 8: Template 1*). This template includes a focus on learner outcomes.

Trainees began their work-based placements during this stage. As Stages 2b and c developed in tandem, university-based discussions reflected trainees' placement experiences. Trainees' journal entries and my field notes became the prime sources of evidence in tracking the trainees' experiences. Trainees also completed the Unit 1 assignment during this stage. Comments made in this assignment helped to determine the case study sample.

### **3.6.4 Stage 3: Return of full cohort (1 day: 2 part session)**

The return afforded time for trainees to regroup as members of a community of practice and to partake in a mid-year review. The review involved the use of Promethean software consisting of prepared questions focusing on the trainees' perception of their professional role and identity. Trainees' responses were shown immediately on the screen as a percentage. A discussion involving the trainees and myself followed each on-screen response. The purpose of this activity was to enable a wider discussion following the numerical result.

The disadvantages of using discussion as a method of data collection include the following: firstly, not all trainees' views were adequately represented in the discussion. Whilst the careful use of question and answer ensured coverage of all trainees, it could not ensure depth of individual response. Secondly, not all trainees were present: two trainees remained in placement and did not attend the session; thirdly, the 'voices' of the case study trainees were included in the full cohort session hence, it was difficult to track their particular views at this point. Time was not included within the schedule to follow up the responses of the case study trainees.

The second part of the session developed naturally from the first and included the intervention. In this session, trainees were introduced to an alternative lesson plan template (*see Appendix 9: Template 2*). This template was developed from earlier research (Butcher *et al.*, 2008). Having used an outcomes-based template as part of their experience thus far, trainees were asked to consider an alternative, enquiry-based template in order to review approaches to practice. Trainees reviewed the template and provided a written (anonymous) response (*Appendix 10*). I divided the responses into two sections according to favourability. The reasons given for the choices made were also logged. Data collected at this stage led to a review of themes identified at Stages 1 and 2.

### **3.6.5 Stage 4: End of Year Programme Evaluation**

Two approaches were used at this stage: full cohort evaluation using the methods trialled as part of an earlier study (Smith and Butcher, 2008) and a semi-structured discussion with the four case study trainees.

15 of the 21 trainees completed the cohort evaluation. The remaining six were accounted for as follows: two trainees were continuing in placement; two had suspended studies and two had withdrawn. Trainees operated in informal groups in the absence of the tutor and recorded their responses as part of their discussion. The set questions prepared by the programme team were designed to establish how well the programme had prepared the trainees to teach in the post-compulsory sector and how they viewed their professional teaching identity at this stage of the career. The information provided by the cohort was reviewed alongside that of the case study trainees.

The semi-structured discussion with the four case study trainees included the use of prepared questions. I recognised however that as this discussion followed immediately after the full cohort evaluation, the discussion would need to be flexible to allow for previously raised ideas to be explored in greater depth. I also recognised that as semi-structured discussions can diverge from a central topic, I sought permission from the trainees in advance of the session to make notes. I chose not to record this session as the previous session involved this activity and I wished to avoid repetition. The notes were used with other sources of evidence to review emerging themes.

### **3.6.6 Stage 5: Post - employment: one year later (June 2010)**

The accounts were provided by email. As stated, the preference was for a re-grouping of the case study trainees and whilst a shared interaction may

have enhanced the research, the benefit of singular, written accounts enabled uninterrupted narratives or *exposés* as described by the self. These accounts, when added to those provided whilst on the programme, enabled a selection of a further two case studies: Rita and Ellie.

The narratives provide coherent, detailed and sometimes emotional accounts of everyday practice; they reveal 'hidden' or alternative practices adopted and sanctioned by certain learning communities. The appropriateness of the methodology is reflected in such accounts. In using a qualitative approach, practices often unseen unless the subjects of practitioner research become exposed. The voices of the trainees tell of the influence of compliance and prescription on their professional teaching role and the impact it has on their dual teaching and professional identities. The trainees also warn of ethical concerns relating to the actions of a community involving them in their teaching persona as part of the placement experience. These themes are explored in the ensuing chapter as part of the presentation of data.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation of data**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The data is presented in response to the two research questions phrased as follows: if and how do pre-service trainee teachers construct their professional teaching identities within a framework of accountability? What are the factors limiting the development of trainee teachers' abilities to construct their professional teaching identities?

The narratives of the two case study trainees, Rita and Ellie are presented first. The narratives of the cohort follow this exposition and finally, a narrative provided by Nick, a trainee from a previous cohort tracked into employment. The narratives provide a commentary on the trainees' experiences as part of the transition from a university-based programme of study to a work-based placement and one year post-employment. They offer interpretations of everyday practice as experienced and described by them. The narratives also tell of the interruptions to everyday working practices affecting personal and collegiate decision-making that in turn, affect the learner and the learning process.

The chapter opens with a presentation of the reasons given by the trainees for wanting to join the PGCE PCET programme. Their motivations were explored as part of pre-entry processes in order to establish initial perceptions of the professional teaching role. Once enrolled, trainees' initial perceptions become translated, interpreted and re-shaped by their experiences.

## 4.2 Case Study 1: Rita

### Pragmatics overriding idealism or vocational aspiration

The primary reason given by Rita for joining the PGCE PCET programme was that her subject (Media Studies) was not a National Curriculum subject and therefore not offered within the secondary sector. Rita did not express a preference to teach in a secondary school however. Rita stated that she wanted to be *a* teacher. Her enthusiasm for her subject combined with a wish to share such enthusiasm with others led to a pragmatic decision regarding teaching in the post-compulsory sector. It may be argued therefore that Rita's decision to teach in this sector occurred by default rather than by choice:

*Entering FE is for many, less a career choice or pathway than an opportunity at a particular moment in time.*

(Gleeson *et al.*, 2005:449)

The authors add that sector transition '...is not a smooth one' as changes in personal circumstances often overlap (*ibid.*: 450). This type of entry into employment may be seen as reflective of this sector. Many staff are employed as a need arises and in response to market demands. This situation, coupled with changes in funding mechanisms, has led to the development of an impermanent workforce. The prospect of communities developing as effective communities of practice in such contexts is signalled here.

In her application form, Rita also explained that she had studied the subject at undergraduate level, enjoyed it and wanted to make *use* of it. The notion of subject usage reinforces the view that Rita did not make a conscious decision to become a teacher in the post-compulsory sector. Curriculum boundaries surrounding the teaching of her subject located Rita in this sector. The suggestion is that the sector provided a context or



location *in which to be a teacher*. The notion of ‘matching’ personal needs to that of the profession resonates throughout the research.

Further reasons given by Rita for joining the programme were related to her previous employment and school experience. Rita had undertaken temporary voluntary work in the sector since leaving university and believed that her personal interests and qualities were suited to her perception of the teaching role. Rita’s references to those who had taught her were reflected in her opinions and resonant of those presented in the literature, namely that some constructs of the teaching role are based on earlier, personal experiences as a pupil (Stronach *et al.*, 2002). Such comments suggest a pre-disposition to the role, unlike perhaps other professions. Having experienced temporary roles in the past, Rita also expressed the need to secure a permanent job.

It is argued that at this stage of the programme, Rita’s views are primarily egocentric, focusing more on the self than on the learner. Views on the nature of learning were not clearly articulated during the application and pre-entry processes. Equally, views on teaching as a profession were not clearly presented. Notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teachers did however inform Rita’s thinking. Whilst Rita did not offer a comment on inspirational teachers or teachers as role models as motivations for joining either the programme or the profession, she was able to present her ideas on the semblance of a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teacher’.

The fact that Rita, a mature trainee, used binaries such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ to describe those who had taught her (terms also repeated by her peers) is indicative of a continuing view regarding teachers and teacher performance. A generic yet narrow polarisation appears to exist. The semantics underpinning the discussion serve to show that Rita is aware that teachers’ identities are placed within value-laden constructs. At this stage, however, Rita does not explore ethical aspects underpinning the terms ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or consider possible relationships between the terms and that of a teacher’s character or performance. In this respect, Rita uses the terms superficially.

Noticeably however, unlike that observed in contemporary literature (Morris, 2001; Wolf, 2011), Rita does not include the word ‘trust’ as part of her reflection or with respect to the concept of teacher professionalism. The absence of the word ‘trust’ or references to the trusting of teachers is also noticeable in case study and cohort narratives. When Rita raises the concept of trust at a later stage (Stage 5: post-employment) it is placed within a pastoral context concerning the relationship between the learner and the teacher; it is not about trusting teachers per se.

In constructing a positive learning environment, Rita envisions a relationship between the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teacher. She comments on the methods used to interest learners and to encourage learning. Whilst at this pre-entry stage the link between pedagogy and the creation of a positive atmosphere conducive to learning remains underexplored within her narrative, later journal entries show Rita using strategies to create a positive teaching environment in order to develop a reciprocal teacher - learner relationship. Whilst not articulating a traditionalist view of teaching as a ‘vocation’ in her application form, Rita was determined to establish a positive relationship with her students in order to promote learning. Her comments reflect her personal commitment to this perspective, providing examples of her proactive stance and of the motivational strategies employed. The helpful position adopted by Rita however highlights current tensions within the teaching role:

*The concept of successful teachers as those who, first and foremost, care about their pupils, enjoy working with children and young people, and are willing to offer themselves as well as their teaching craft in the job, does not appear to figure significantly in government thinking.*

(Hayes, 2001:44)

The comment presented by Hayes highlights a continuing tension concerning the prioritisation of the academic, pastoral and emotional needs of the learners. Whilst Hayes cites the caring teacher as one of primary importance, he also notes its lesser placing within political agendas: a view

reinforced by Pring (2011). The very need to argue the case for humanising the learning process suggests that a personalised agenda is not as inclusive as supposed. Although the needs of learners are foregrounded in this agenda, (DfES, 2004) the ethos and structures required to bring it to fruition seem less apparent. Whereas the issue of the care of learners is raised by Hayes and features within the narratives of trainees such comments are made without a thorough account of the learners' contribution to their role in the learning process or to *their* descriptions of the role. For Rita, the tensions become more apparent at Stage 2 and once in employment (Stage 5).

#### **4.2.1 Induction: differing approaches to personalised learning**

Rita was of Iranian heritage; she articulated cultural differences regarding pedagogy and practice to both her peers and myself during the Induction phase. Working as part of part of a group, Rita was asked to reflect on the construct of the professional role and to present her ideas to her peers. Her feedback, provided as part of a group discussion, reflected her early concerns:

*I had a big argument when I got home last night ... with my dad ... after today's Induction ...when I told him what we had done ... as a group, you know ... our presentation ... he didn't agree ... and I'm not sure ... you know, we do it differently ...*

Rita's reflections on the Induction activities and associated tasks tell of the tensions arising at the beginning of the PGCE PCET programme. Although these tensions may be described as external in the sense that they are perspectives discussed in *another* (family-based) context, Rita's revelation shows that she has become aware of cultural differences regarding perceptions of the teaching role as explored firstly within a university classroom and secondly, at home. Her narrative of the group presentation and discussion as related to her family brings about a disagreement. The clash centres less on programme content and more on issues surrounding the teaching persona, selected methods of delivery and the role of the learner.

Rita and her group had planned for an interactive session with the learners; as such, the group regarded the learners as active not passive participants. In this scenario, the teacher was not described as a transmitter of information or one occupying the role of 'teacher as leader' (Lewis, 2008:254). Here, the teacher is described as a co-participant in the learning process. Rita explained that it was this description of the teacher that had prompted a discussion at home.

The clash reflected differing cultural perceptions concerning the roles of the teacher and the learner as they currently co-exist and operate within a personalised approach to learning. Whilst a critique of this approach is presented within the literature (Campbell *et al.*, 2007; Hartley, 2008; O'Neill and McMahon, 2005; Pykett, 2009) the issues raised by Rita's narrative concern the contextualisation of the agenda. Whilst a personalised agenda is learner *focused*, Rita's continuing narrative raises the prospect of an agenda that is learner *led*.

Rita's comments reveal the differing cultural perspectives regarding transmissive and interactive approaches to learning. Her narrative suggests that there is a reduction in teacher status if the model adopted enables transference of power from the teacher to the learner. It can be argued however that what is of greater concern is not the transference of power per se, more the interpretation of a personalised approach to learning adopted by organisations and individuals without explicit delineation of the teaching and learning roles operating within it. The issue of learner orientation is signalled here and discussed more fully (in Chapter 5).

Indicative within Rita's comments is a difference in cultural expectation regarding learning and behaviour. A link between the two has developed over time; its co-existence is expressed in current educational discourse as 'behaviour for learning'. This discourse operates within a personalised agenda hence there is the potential for conflict if a personalised approach to learning is not clearly understood or agreed by all stakeholders. The tension of 'managing' behaviour as part of a learning scenario is signalled here. At

Stage 2, Rita records issues concerning a link between behaviour management and learning. The issue also appears within Ellie's narrative, the second of the two case studies. For Rita, managing differing stakeholder expectations became problematic as she continues her journey.

#### **4.2.2 Differing perspectives on theory and practice**

In the conclusion to the Unit 1 assignment (Appendix 11) written four months into the programme, Rita refers to the approaches adopted by established practitioners. She writes:

*This essay has examined the practical application of several learning theories in relation to A level media studies. It has examined the positive and negative aspects of each learning theory and how successful the theories have been in my own, limited practice. It has become evident that learning theories operate within communication structures that require feedback. Only through clear communication with learners can their needs be identified. A relevant issue here is the practical use of learning theories, it has been suggested by some theorists that trainee teachers are more eager to use learning theories.*

*In examining teacher practices it was found that, whilst new practitioners are initially keen and motivated by their initial training in wishing to implement a range of imaginative and active practices in the classroom, the conditions in which they are employed and the expectations placed upon them militate against this. (Simmons and Thompson, 2008:612)*

*It may be suggested that some practitioners may be cynical of learning theories and their effectiveness....When examining learning in the Lifelong Learning sector, it may be fair to say that past experience will dictate the initial response to learning. Therefore it is important to ensure communication is clear and that feedback from both parties is constant and constructive.*

Extract from Unit 1 assignment

Rita's response raises two issues for reflection. The first considers the differing perspectives operating between trainees and established, practising teachers regarding the relevance and implementation of theoretical

perspectives. The second concerns the context in which both they and the learners co-exist.

In terms of the first perspective, Rita provides a comment on the supposed eagerness of trainees concerning ‘the practical application’ of theory coupled with the cynicism of ‘some practitioners’. Whilst Rita’s comment that ‘... past experience will dictate the initial response to learning...’ is somewhat obscure (yet hints at difference) there appears to be a conceptual link in the ensuing comment regarding a twinning of approaches in providing learner feedback. In this comment, Rita refers to ‘both parties’: it is surmised that the expression ‘both parties’ refers to trainee teachers (possibly a self - reflective comment) and to other practitioners. By implication, there is within her comment a perception that whilst there may be differences regarding the conceptualisation of pedagogy, there should be coherence when in open communication with learners.

The differing approaches adopted by trainees or new teachers and established practitioners are raised within the literature. References to older staff who observe the technological expertise of their younger colleagues and the latter’s ‘...keen awareness of learning objectives, assessment criteria, targets and structured lessons ...’ (Hayes, 2001:45) emerge within the literature. Whilst it could be argued that the age differential between colleagues is less keenly observed in the post-compulsory sector because it attracts established practitioners from other professions, the issues contained within Rita’s comment remain. The issues reflect approaches to pedagogy within a changing context and ‘past experience’ informing practice. It can be argued that because sector concerns have not been addressed or reconciled by political agendas over time, the ‘history’ of the sector continues to permeate the present (Eagleton, 1996:2002). Rita’s narrative suggests however that these concerns permeate the practice of *trainee* teachers. Just as existing practitioners may feel challenged by incoming teachers, Rita’s narrative suggests that a reverse perception also exists. Wenger *et al.*, (2002:31) argue that:

*(a)s the next generation of members brings fresh perspectives, the community's sense of what it is about evolves and grows.*

There is no guarantee however, that an opportunity will be provided for trainees to present their perspectives to the community or that a community will recognise and acknowledge such views.

In terms of the second issue for reflection, Rita refers to contextual issues affecting practice. She draws upon other research to support the view that trainee teachers are motivated by their training to engage in innovative practice but are limited by the context and by associated expectations. Rita does not explore this issue fully but by placing this comment *within* her views on learning theories and differing trainee teacher-practitioner perspectives, the subtleties within the text imply that she has made a conceptual link regarding such tensions.

#### **4.2.3 Trainee teacher agency and compliance**

The tensions outlined in Rita's assignment became more obvious as the placement continues. My field notes show that five months into the PGCE programme, Rita had encountered difficulties in her interactions not only with the learners but also with her mentor and other colleagues. One issue concerned the behaviour of two particular students within an A level Media Studies lesson. I observed the session and during the feedback phase, I asked Rita to discuss why she had not challenged the behaviour of the two learners who had continued to talk to each other throughout the session, irrespective of her presence and the activities she had planned. Rita replied that she was adamant that she would not 'confront' the learners. The reasons given for this stance offers an account of yet another position. Whilst aware of the learner's orientation, Rita stated that she had been 'told' by other teachers not to confront the two learners because of a fear of reprisals. Her mentor and 'other teachers', so the account continued, had confronted the learners and had 'suffered'. Although this comment remained vague, it reflected Rita's selected behaviour, namely not to

interact with the two learners during the session - even though she accepted that this was detrimental to the learners' engagement with the learning process and to her own professional development. In response, I asked Rita to consider a range of strategies in order to respond to the situation concerning both the learners and her colleagues. Following observation of the session, my field notes included the following comment:

*(w)e = teacher educators - send students (trainees) out = 'evangelical' zeal but fall at first fence = other staff?*

The comments made in the field notes recognised the tensions facing trainee teachers placed within differing contexts and communities. The comments make implicit reference to the domain of a university-based community and to an eagerness in preparing trainees to join other communities. The notes also indicate a gap regarding a sharing of the domain of a community of practice as part of transference from one community to another. Whereas Rita's position becomes clearer by Stage 5, her comments at Stage 2 reflect the tensions produced when a community has not agreed the construct of both the teacher and the learner within a personalised agenda. The behaviour of the students in her class reflects a view that the principles of personalised learning have not been explored, agreed or shared within a community. If pedagogical approaches are located within a community characterised by a shared domain, a cohesive approach to practice is more likely to exist. Where there is a mismatch between the domain, pedagogy and practice within differing communities, conflict is likely to arise. Rita's comments highlight the latter.

As new members joining a work-based community, trainees find themselves working with established norms that they do not necessarily acknowledge or understand. In embracing, distancing or offering alternatives to such norms, the trainee attempts to establish him or herself as a valued individual within a community and theoretically, to move from the periphery to occupy a more central role within it. In her narrative however, Rita appears to have assimilated the views of other colleagues rather than asserted her own position within the triangular relationship of trainee, learner and mentor.



Whilst lack of confidence, experience, status or legitimacy within the community may be considered as reasons for such choices, deference to others in this scenario may be regarded as problematic because it places the trainee teacher in a vulnerable position (Page, 2010). The notion of ‘group think’ provides a further perspective here. The term is used to suggest the insular nature of a community where individual perspectives are either subsumed or overridden by the views of other members of a community. Whereas the characteristics of an effective community of practice include the need to share a common understanding, the notion of groupthink works against such an understanding, giving rise to moral and ethical concerns. In addition, certain communities may submit rather than align their domain and practices to organisational criteria. The criteria may differ however from that which supports the development of critically-orientated, thinking practitioners.

#### **4.2.4 Pluralistic fears of non-compliance**

Following the mid-year return to the university, subsequent placement visits revealed that Rita had chosen to continue with an in-house lesson plan template. Despite a stated preference for Template 2, Rita continued to use the in-house template whilst acknowledging that it did not enable her to demonstrate the full range of lesson planning skills. I expressed concern regarding the limitations of the in-house proforma in providing sufficient evidence to meet programme requirements and the teaching standards. In her response, Rita acknowledged an apparent ‘risk’ but also reiterated a determination to continue with the template. Rita explained that that she felt that she ‘had’ to use it; that ‘they’ all ‘had to use it’.

The comment reflects Rita’s decision to comply with the rules and requirements of the context whilst putting at risk an element of the PGCE programme. It is important to note here that the issue raised is not concerned with the use of either template but with the lack of autonomy displayed in practice by both Rita and her fellow practitioners. The tool had

become more than a tool and an element of ‘documentism’ (Wenger *et al.*, 2002:148). Rita’s comments raise concerns regarding control of ‘the field of judgement’ (Ball, 2003: 216). The issue of teacher agency raised in the literature review (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Torrance and Maclure, 2010) is signalled here.

In her assignment, Rita’s comments suggest that agency is something she wishes to utilise but it appears that the context and community in which she finds herself limits her capacity to do so. Her decision to continue with the in-house template reflects a view of professionalism that is ‘... stranded deep within the log jam of expectations and fears about non-compliance’ (Hayes, 2001:46). I argued in the literature review that in order to develop the critical skills of their learners, trainee teachers needed to develop such skills themselves as part of their training programme. The need for critical literacy is described not just in academic terms but also in terms of challenging the status quo (Canestrani and Marlowe, 2010) and of empowering the teacher (Rajuan *et al.*, 2008; Page, 2010). Rita’s decision therefore to comply with community structures and to put her PGCE qualification at risk is noted here.

#### **4.2.5 Ethical concerns and learner expectation**

The discussion between the four case study trainees at the end of the programme served to highlight the changing relationship between the teacher and the learner as part of a continuing approach to assessment and attainment. The discussion opened with trainees reflecting on the role of the teacher as configured at the beginning of the programme and at the end. Rita states:

*Yeh, I did know where I was coming from and had really a quite solid idea in my head of what type of teacher I was gonna be and now... I think ... I’m satisfied but not 100% sure where I’m coming from yet but I don’t think I’ll know until I’m in a job...*

Whilst Rita is able to articulate such views more clearly once in employment, her comments at Stage 4 show that she does have particular opinions concerning aspects of the teaching role. Her views concerning notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teachers raised at Stage 1 return when the discussion centres on the trainees’ interpretations of the terms ‘leader’, ‘facilitator’ and ‘teacher’ and the trainees’ relationship with their learners:

*I'm not a shouty person...I don't like ... name or shame students ... I don't like any of that...I like to be chilled out...I don't want students to come into the class worried about the wrong thing...if they say the wrong thing ... I don't want them to think I am going to shout at them...I still see them as adults... I have a cousin that age...*

*I don't want to be like bad teachers ...(one) that doesn't peck at their self esteem ... that's the problem ... they should lead themselves ... not live up to my expectations ... not necessarily look to me ... now with more experience I see I have a naïve view of 16-18 year olds ... they expect to be led at AS ...*

Her comments reflect her preferred position as a facilitator but also shows a growing awareness that leadership is a part of the teaching role. The twist in the narrative concerns the notion that learners following an Advanced level programme ‘expect to be led’. Ellie, the second of the two case studies, also reiterates a concern regarding a lack of learner independency. Whilst Rita’s comments show that she cares about her learners and provides evidence of a nurturing, humanist approach to the role, it is balanced with a view regarding learner orientation and expectation. These tensions return the argument to the construct of a personalised agenda - whether it is teacher or learner-led and whether both the teacher and the learner have a reluctance to lead learning. In the ensuing discussion, Rita links notions of leadership to learner attainment. Citing an example of predicting learners’ target grades, Rita’s comment exhibits a tension within the teaching role:

*(I'm) estimating that you're going to be a D .... You can't define someone's learning in such simple terms ... I don't like being a leader 'cos of classifying people. I'll try my best to get them where they want to be ... I want them to be who they are.*

The tension between the humanist, the visionary teacher (Pring, 2011) and the one requiring the supplying of a grade is shown here.

Later in the discussion, Rita cites another example of an Advanced level learner who was seen as ‘failing’ until identified as dyslexic. Rita states that subsequent diagnosis (and presumed action) led to an improved target grade: a grade D. Whilst Rita’s comments reflect the mutual pleasure of both herself and her learner regarding this improved outcome, she adds:

*(w)e were both excited about it but in academic terms D is not a good grade*

Her comment prompts the following exchange from her peers:

*Gemma: What is education for? Getting good grades? Fulfilment? Rather than getting or becoming a certain thing? Spending your life in this sort of container... In colleges, it's not about fulfilment ...it's about bums on seats ... money... college position in league tables ... about pushing people up to A and B... Are you going to sit this exam for them?... This is what we are part of now ...*

*Eva: I don't think everyone is a grade A ... later down the track ... gives them false hope ... if you think you are an A student ... get to uni and think I'm not performing as I should be performing ... this is where the worry is ... and that's where I've got concerns ... not everyone is that grade ... Its damaging and destructive on an individual...'*

*Rita: (re-telling the conversation with a learner): He says 'I want a B' What's wrong with a C? Cos I can't get into uni with a C... but he has nothing to back it up ....*

*Eva: ... lot of pressure on teachers to get students through. I never realised this until I did this course ... the time and energy spent on education ... it's like a business ... it's unbelievable...*

In recounting the story, Rita implies that there is a reliance on her to achieve the grade on behalf of the learner, hence the comment by Eva regarding the pressure on teachers to ‘get students through’. The importance of the issues contained within Eva’s comment in response to Rita is signalled here. Such comments reflect a service model of teaching where teachers are seen to

service students as part of a process designed to secure learner attainment. As such, trainee teachers and learners become knowingly involved and complicit in the process. Trainee teachers become caught between the demands of the organisation, the community and the learner: all seemingly focused on attainment to the detriment of professional or ethical concerns. The service model as detailed here suggests an imbalance regarding teacher and learner contributions to the learning process. Rita's narrative suggests that not only is the balance of learner expectation held by the teacher, it is accorded by a type of passive learner whose aspirations lay in the hands of the teacher rather than part of a joint enterprise. This example contradicts the notion of the teacher and learner as co-participants in the construction of knowledge.

#### 4.2.6 Ethical constraints in practice

Rita found temporary employment in a further education college. Her contract was for one year, teaching primarily on Advanced Level Media Studies programmes. The college was at a distance from where she lived so Rita relocated to be near her place of employment. At the end of her narrative, Rita tells of another one-year contract in another college. The issue of temporary and fixed term contracts are noted in the literature as areas impinging on teacher recruitment, retention and career development (Coldwell *et al.*, 2010).

Following her first year in employment, Rita provided the following account in her email response (Stage 5). The content reveals the extent to which certain issues raised during her training continued either to feature or to decrease. The tone shows a more confident person and someone gaining awareness of a theoretical position. It also shows an individual who is aware of the limitations present within the working context. There is little in the ensuing narrative relating to enjoyment or creativity:

*Sorry this reply is so late being very bogged down with work at the moment hope this helps;*

*I have found that my teaching identity is very strong I care about the learners and am interested in their individual goals.*

*I believe in the needs of my learners being met holistically, i feel that in post 16 learners should have more responsibility for their own learning and less of a burden should be placed on the Teacher.*

*I believe that the focus on high grades and distance traveled leads to unethical practice - I was told to re-draft coursework 5 times.*

*I believe that I am truly in this job for the learners and that I have made a difference in their lives.*

*I believe that SMT are truly out of touch with teaching and learning.*

*I believe that the PGCE prepared me to be a Teacher but not to enter the world of Teaching which makes very different demands on you - sometimes it feels like a sales job.*

*I believe that joining a Union is essential!*

*I believe that learners can only learn if they trust you will listen to their needs. And this nurturing often leads to*

*attempted hugging from learners (Don't worry Val i always say don't touch me i'm a teacher!).  
I feel that the best lessons are the ones that are flexible.  
I believe that my learners know that I want what is best for them and they are not statistics to me.  
I believe that I am becoming a better teacher.  
.....P.S Just got a Job at x college in x for a year ...*

In this account, Rita does not refer to the cultural differences raised at the beginning of the PGCE PCET programme, suggesting a possible immersion into an existing culture or a lessening of her concern in this respect. The pressures on teachers raised as part of the end of year group discussion re-appear here. In her account, Rita begins with an apology, referring to being ‘... bogged down with work...’. Time pressures are apparent in this and other trainee accounts.

A key theme present within this account centres on the nature of the teacher-learner relationship operating within a framework of assessment and attainment. The learners feature strongly in Rita’s narrative whilst the interaction with her colleagues is less clearly identified. Seven references are made to the learners suggesting that Rita identifies more with the former than the latter. The pragmatics dominating Rita’s earlier reasons for undertaking the PGCE PCET appear less dominant and are replaced with a saviour-like zeal when working with ‘her’ learners.

In her response, Rita adopts a mantra-like approach, presenting herself in the role of nurturer and advocate. Her emotive response was unprovoked. In asking for a response, the email to trainees included guided headings only. Thus, Rita’s response is *her* response and represents the way in which she had shaped her thoughts, using expressions such as:

*I believe that my learners know that I want what is best for them and they are not statistics to me*

*I believe that I am truly in this job for the learners and that I have made a difference in their lives*

Such idealism and vocational orientation is more evident at this stage than on entry to the programme. The comments above however reflect the tensions faced by trainee teachers in trying to establish a nurturing role and discourse in a climate where assessment and audit processes have become entangled with ethical and pastoral aspects of the role. The following extracts reinforce this view:

*I believe that learners can only learn if they trust you will listen to their needs. And this nurturing often leads to attempted hugging from learners...*

*I believe that the focus on high grades and distance travelled leads to unethical practice - I was told to re-draft coursework 5 times...*

It is noticeable that within the first extract the word ‘trust’ appears in the discourse. It is used in a pastoral sense with reference to the learner-teacher relationship rather than that conceived within contemporary literature regarding the trusting *of* teachers. The second extract shows that whilst Rita expresses concerns regarding the ethics surrounding the re-drafting of work she appears to comply with the directive. She does not however reflect on the nature of her compliance.

The contradiction underpinning the account concerns the learners. Whilst defending or protecting her learners, she is also critical of them. Rita returns to a theme presented at Stage 4 concerning the lack of learner independence. By implication, the learner’s orientation has an impact on the role and practice of the teacher. Rita states:

*(I) feel that in post 16 learners should have more responsibility for their own learning and less of a burden should be placed on the Teacher.*

The ‘burden’ reflects a reliance on the teacher, emerging from an identified lack of learner independence and transference of responsibility from one to another. This theme is revisited shortly in Ellie’s narrative.



Rita's account reveals insights into the hidden agendas operating within an organisation and differing learning communities. She states:

*I believe that the PGCE prepared me to be a Teacher but not to enter the world of Teaching which makes very different demands on you - sometimes it feels like a sales job.*

Rita does not expand on her sales-like role; she does not explain to whom she is selling or the nature of the product to be sold. The comments however give rise to the suggestion that marketing or selling to a number of unknown others is part of her role and that this is *not* the role her PGCE PCET programme prepared her for. The significance of this 'gap' is raised here because of the issues it highlights for those who legislate for or design the teacher training curriculum.

In summary, Rita's narrative provides an account of a pre-service trainee teacher managing the demands of a role perceived initially by the self but altered, described and prescribed by others within and external to a learning community. The prescription is focused on learner attainment at the expense of ethical decision-making. The challenge offered by Rita's narrative may be described as follows: others mediate the learner-teacher relationship as part of *another* political narrative on attainment. As such, the approaches to learning used by trainees and established colleagues and practitioners become shaped by an external strategy designed to ensure learner attainment. The comments made here gather momentum when considered alongside the narrative of the second case study and latterly, the views of the cohort.

The second case study provides another perspective on the argument. As a precursor, it is important to state my position at this stage: it is *not* argued that assessment should be absent from trainee pedagogy and practice. I acknowledge synchrony between the three. What is argued is that the current focus on assessment as a means to learner attainment has reshaped the other two elements. As such, politically-driven, internal and external directives - evidence of which is provided in these accounts of everyday

working practice, has lessened professional decision-making. It is important to note in this scenario the part played by the learner. A lack of learner independence combined with high learner expectations and a quick-fix approach to achieving results is identified within the narrative. As such, trainees experience ethical dilemmas in a context where their collusion is surprisingly overt.

### **4.3 Case Study 2: Ellie**

#### **4.3.1 Pragmatics overriding idealism or vocational aspiration**

The reasons given by Ellie for joining the PGCE PCET programme included the need for a teaching qualification as she was already working as a part time, unqualified teacher in the higher education sector. Ellie was also combining motherhood with teaching. She had opted to take a pre-service, full time route because it offered a quicker route to completion. In addition, because her current part time teaching role was as a home-based tutor, she believed that a part time route was not suitable partly because she could not be observed in the teaching role. As such, a pre-service route would enable her to be observed in practice for the required eight sessions. Thirdly, like Rita, Ellie's subject (Law) was not a National Curriculum subject and therefore the post-compulsory route into employment was considered an appropriate one. Ellie had studied Law at undergraduate level and had considered a career in the legal profession. She decided however to become a teacher and like Rita found that her subject could be located in the post-compulsory sector. Similar to Rita, teaching in the sector was concerned with pragmatics rather than a deliberate choice (Gleeson *et al.*, 2005). Both Rita and Ellie envisaged teaching their subjects in a Sixth Form College - seen by them as a hybrid between secondary school and colleges of further education and an area in which their subjects would 'fit'. They predicted that their subjects would be placed primarily within an A level setting,

suggesting therefore that they had not fully grasped the context (Mutton, 2012) or scope of the provision within the post-compulsory sector.

#### **4.3.2 Assessment, decision making and student inequity**

Extracts from Ellie's Teaching File show an early awareness of the factors affecting decision-making in the role of the teacher. Written in the first term, Ellie's comments relate a discussion with her mentor regarding learner assessment:

*I discussed with x the decision to only put the students with grades A and B into the January AS exam. Apparently it is college policy for students to take all AS exams in June unless a strong case for an exception can be made. x personally would prefer all students to take the first AS exam in January.*

*The issue of exam timing reminded me of discussions in unit 3 over the autonomy of individual teachers and the extent to which this is overshadowed by governmental and organisational policies. It also demonstrates the influence of financial considerations, as apparently this is the reason for the college's preference.*

In this extract, Ellie recalls university-based discussions and revisits them within the placement context. She includes another perspective however: that financial concern intervenes between teacher decision-making and the appropriate timing of student assessment. Whilst the mentor states a preference regarding timing of the assessment, it appears that these views are overridden by budgetary concerns. According to Ellie's narrative, the mentor prefers *all* students to take the exam in January - a preference presumably located in tacit knowledge regarding learner maturation, achievement and attainment. It seems however, that *selection* of students takes place (those with grades A and B) thus denying opportunities for all. The selection seems to be associated with the costs of examination entry matched to predictions of student success - thus reflective of a view that deliberations about learning and assessment '... are dominated by technical imperatives associated with funding, inspection and outcomes-based assessment (OBA) regimes...' (Ecclestone, 2000:142). Ellie's narrative

therefore provides a comment not only on the ways in budgetary constraints leads to local ‘policy’ regarding the timing of learner assessment but also of the impact of such constraints on practice. Professional decision-making is overridden thus bringing about learner inequity. The political rhetoric of the learner being at the centre of certain agenda therefore is one to be challenged.

#### **4.3.3 Assessment, ‘busyness’ and the quick-fix learner**

Another account provided by Ellie shows that the approaches used by the mentor to support examination preparation raise a further tension (see *Appendix 12 ii*). In the role of classroom observer, Ellie comments on the strategies and range of activities used by her mentor whilst teaching an AS Law class:

*x had prepared a brief lesson plan based on his overall scheme of work and materials prepared in previous years.*

*After a general debate, x gave a power point presentation on influences on legislation. He then set the students an exercise on e-lawstudent.co.uk. The learning was reinforced by the use of a crossword. If requested, students were allowed to refer to the textbook during the crossword activity.*

*The students had a question sheet for their work on e-lawstudent. Some groups had to answer the odd numbers, others the even. All the answers were then discussed in a group plenary. The crossword answers were also gone over as a group.*

*We discussed the use of e-lawstudent and x informed me that the students do not like using it. They have also learnt to “cut and paste” key words to find answers quickly without reading large parts of the text.*

*As IT was rarely used when I was at college, I almost assumed that students would enjoy all IT activities, because for me they are such a novelty. This session emphasises the need to plan and prepare for use of IT and to make it engaging. My personal preference would be to find sites on the internet that have practical relevance, for example ... rather than A-level specific sites.*

The extract includes a reference to the mentor's lesson plan and scheme of work and to '...materials prepared in previous years'. This sentence is repeated word for word by Ellie in future accounts, which suggest that both the mentor and Ellie are implementing time-saving measures in order to meet certain, imposed criteria. The example is resonant of that described in Guido's Story (*see Appendix 1*). The concept of time and of the actions played against it emerges as a recurring theme in the data and therefore one to be regarded when considering the results.

Ellie's narrative also provides an insight into the approaches to learning used by the mentor and to the resources utilised in support of such approaches. Noticeably, the account does not refer to an ideological or theoretical position underpinning the selected approaches. What *is* provided is an insight into the 'busyness' of student learning. Crosswords, exercises using information technology, supporting textbooks - all appear as approaches designed to 'reinforce' learning. Ellie's comment later in the extract however reveals an alternative strategy adopted by the learners:

*We discussed the use of e-lawstudent and x informed me that the students do not like using it. They have also learnt to "cut and paste" key words to find answers quickly without reading large parts of the text.*

The strategies used by the learners suggest that they are *also* using time-saving measures as short-cuts to learning. Whilst the extract shows the mentor employing a range of reinforcement strategies, the learners have found alternative strategies of their own, namely 'cut and paste' solutions. The notion of the quick-fix teacher and orientation of the learner raised in the literature review are highlighted here, namely that learners prioritise their needs and 'study what they need to pass the test' (Knapper and Cropley, 2000:85). Somewhat reflective of Rita's account, there appears to be an imbalance between the contributions made by the learner to that of the teacher when considering the notion of learner attainment.

In the midst of such teacher-learner busyness is a trainee teacher who does not have the opportunity to be a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983, 1987). These concerns are highlighted in an extract from my field notes in the role of teacher-researcher, written post-observation of Ellie:

*May 2009*

*The trainee teachers seemed to be activity-driven rather than reflective practitioners. This view is evidenced via the quality of trainee reflections and the lesson evaluations - both of which rarely offered deeper insights into teaching and learning. This finding is significant in terms of the current view that all teachers should be involved in reflective practice. It could be argued that time does not allow for thorough reflective practice; that trainees are so busy in preparing the resources for lessons and are more concerned with their own delivery that they do not accommodate reflection either before or after the lesson.*

(Field note entry)

#### **4.3.4 Assessment and learner ‘enjoyment’**

Further insights into the approaches used by practising teachers to assess and engage learners are provided when Ellie observes another group, this time a ‘Skills for Life’ Level 1 class (*see Appendix 12 iii*). In this extract, Ellie’s account tells of the teacher’s approach when introducing a test to the learners and of the discussion following the session:

*This was a diagnostic session which is the same for every new entrant on the programme. It consists of a computer programme which gives a large number of questions to test literacy and numeracy levels. There is no time limit and the students can continue the test in a subsequent session if required*

*x introduced herself at the start of the session and outlined the nature and purpose of the test. She acknowledged it was boring, but explained it was necessary. The nature of the session meant she could not assist learners during the session. At the end she said they had done well.*

*We discussed the fact this was boring but necessary. We also discussed ideas for workshop sessions. Those that work are those related to the learners' every day lives, eg, comparing mobile phone tariffs to improve literacy.*

*The diagnostic itself was very rigorous and demanding. There was a 15 minute break, but the whole session was very intense for the learners. The skills for life element is seen as the "boring" bit of the course, perhaps because it is the only "academic" part. A lot of skills for life work is now embedded in other sessions. However, x suggested these are not always managed in a way which gives the most benefit, but can focus too much on the learners enjoying themselves. Getting this balance right seems to be the challenge regardless of the context in which learning is taking place.*

What emerges from Ellie's discussion with the class teacher reflects another dimension regarding learner assessment and engagement. In this example, the learners are expected to engage with the test and are cajoled into accepting the necessity of it. Binaries such as boredom and enjoyment are intermingled within the text. The teacher openly shares her perceptions of the test with the students at the beginning of the session. She offers an apparent apology to the learners because of a recognition that the task is 'boring' rather than enjoyable, implying that they are receivers of such a situation. The extract provides an example of a teacher '...translating official criteria...', 'protecting' her learners in order to maintain their 'comfort zone'. (Ecclestone, 2007:326). The extract also provides an example of a teaching model where assessment is the overarching focus. As such, learners are 'engaged' or placated (as in this example) in order to be assessed. This is a reversal of a model whereby learners are motivated to engage in learning; where assessment may or may not follow an input or activity or where assessment becomes an integral part of a sequence of activities.

The issue for debate concerns the nature of learner engagement and an assessment model that drives the learning process. Within the debate is a further discussion regarding stimulus and creativity (Meadows, 2011). This issue is raised again in the latter part of the Ellie's conversation with the class teacher. At this point there is a suggestion that both the teacher and

Ellie share a sense of unease regarding ‘getting the balance right’. The issues are raised here and debated further (in Chapter 5).

In further extracts from the AS Law and Skills for Life classes, Ellie is seen as someone trying to engage her learners whilst managing conflicting notions of their role in the learning process. She is viewed as one trying to locate learning in the experiences of the learners and using strategies ‘... related to the learners’ every day lives’. Further accounts show the strategies employed and accompanying disappointments: ‘*I have tried to mix delivery ... to stimulate my learners’ diverse needs*’ and ‘*Overall, I found this a hard session ... I did not feel my session really captured their imagination ...*’. The comments reflect Ellie’s contribution to the learning triangle, involving herself, the learners and her colleagues.

In later accounts, Ellie reflects on the orientation of learners and how her assumption regarding their approaches to learning was directing her approaches to pedagogy and practice. Ellie had assumed that learners studying in the post-compulsory sector were more likely to be independent learners and as she was an advocate of such an approach, used this philosophy to inform her view of teaching. Ellie repeatedly states in her narratives that she believes that she prefers working with adult learners. Ellie tells of her concerns surrounding her preference and predicts possible outcomes regarding approaches to learning and collegiate working:

*As my placement on this course involves teaching A Level law to 16-18 year olds, I was concerned that this belief would make me feel uncomfortable and leave me unable to engage with and relate to the learners or my colleagues. As a result, lessons could become very rigid and teacher-focussed because I would not have the confidence to use a more facilitative, learner-centred approach ...*

In her narrative, she recognises that she has transferred her perceptions of teaching in a school-based context to that of the post-compulsory sector:

*Perhaps the most worrying (but also useful) insight this exercise gave me was the realisation that I view adults as*



*easier to teach than 16-18 year olds. Having considered this further I realise that this is largely due to viewing the teaching of this age range as akin to a school environment without the perceived problems of lack of motivation and a requirement for rigorous discipline and classroom control.*

Her finding that Advanced level learners in particular were not independent learners removed the expected safety-net of teaching learners on an apparently 'academic' route. Like Rita, Ellie finds herself caught between a philosophical position, an expectation and actual experience. The tension created by this triangle is seen as a recurring theme within the data - the implications of which are signalled here. A mismatch between the three serves to confuse Ellie. Not only had her perception of the teaching role become obscured, so to had the role of the learner hence Ellie felt less assured of the 'fit' between herself in the ascribed role of the teacher and the learner.

Whilst not comfortable in her role, Ellie attempts to devise activities for her Advanced level group that she believes are stimulating, learner-centred and goal related. In this scenario, the goal is described as examination success. The impact of this activity-based approach however can be seen in the field notes. The notes provide a record of a meeting between Ellie's mentor and myself (in the dual role of teacher educator and researcher) in order to address a 'complaint' made by the mentor. After articulating the pressured balance between shortage of time and the need to produce excellent results, the mentor articulated the complaint, namely, that he could not understand why Ellie '... kept using so many games when teaching A Level Law...'. The mentor stated the value of his 'tried and tested' discursive methods and to the successful results attributed to them.

In sharing the outcomes of the discussion with the mentor with Ellie, she responded by explaining that she was attempting to try innovative approaches in order to engage the learners. Her lesson plan showed that she had planned four different activities within the session. Finding that her learners were not as engaged as she had supposed, Ellie aimed to provide

*additional* stimuli in order to engage them. The narrative serves to highlight confusion concerning learner orientation and the concepts of learner activity and learner engagement. I asked Ellie to explain the strategies she intended to employ in preparation for the *next* lesson following the recent discussion with the mentor. Ellie replied that she intended to change her approach by emulating that favoured by her mentor.

The subtleties contained within Ellie's narrative reflect how curriculum subjects are perceived or privileged - would the mentor's comment regarding game- playing be made if the class happened to be Drama and not Law? Are 'games' seen as suited to 'fun' subjects other than 'serious' subjects such as Law? The twist, however, rests not so much in a tension between traditionalist versus creative approaches to learning or about age differentials (Hayes, 2001); it is about interpretations of an agenda related to examination success. For Ellie, the agenda revolves around notions of a learner-centred approach to learning; for the mentor, the approach appears to be located in what is known and safe: the tried and tested. Ellie's comments reflect the dilemma:

*During my placement it had become clear that my experience, as a trainee teacher, and the experience of my mentor have been substantially different. Whereas my main concerns have revolved around the specifications used, devising suitable activities and assessment methods and preparing the students adequately for their examinations, my mentor has clearly felt under considerable pressure from internal quality assurance systems to evaluate the course as a whole (as evidence by my verbal discussions with him).*

*For my mentor, as a subject teacher... low grades or (student) dissatisfaction could affect the future funding for and provision of the Course He informs me (verbally) that he never achieves more than a 'satisfactory' grade on his observations on any course, as he prefers a more didactic, teacher-centred approach to lessons. However, his success rates are high. Interestingly, he suggests that he is now 'left alone' to teach in his own preferred style as a result of his success rates, implying that the success rates are given higher weighting by the College than the observations (presumably due to funding issues). It also suggests that there is a preferred College-wide style of teaching, although this is*

*not stated expressly. This could be seen as encouraging consistency and uniformly high standards, but it could conversely be seen as stifling more diverse approaches and allowed individuals, programme or departments to impose subjective views ...*

Ellie's narrative not only tells of the different approaches to learning used by the trainee and the mentor but also of the impact of quality assurance processes and other pressures on everyday practice. The comments made in the narrative reflect those present in current literature describing the student as a customer in a client-led, market-place view of education (Ball, 2010; Tummons, 2007).

Ellie's narrative also highlights a trade-off: high success rates appease *Satisfactory* ratings for teaching. The adoption of a style of teaching which is *contrary* to a 'preferred College-wide style' remains unchallenged. Ellie's reflection on the advantages and the disadvantages of this 'style' is described in terms of 'encouraging consistency and uniformly high standards' yet 'stifling more diverse approaches'. This is considered in greater detail later (in Chapter 5).

Following the intervention at Stage 3, my field notes show that Ellie adheres to her decision to appease her mentor. Ellie continues to use the in house template until the end of the programme. This choice is considered as part of the full cohort findings later.

#### **4.3.5 Leadership and a student centred approach to learning**

In the group discussion (at Stage 4), Ellie reiterates her views regarding independent learners and learning. She refers to the difficulties she encountered whilst on placement. When asked if an ethical or philosophical position informed her thinking, Ellie replied:

*No (pause) ... if I was teaching adults I would see it very much student centred ... 16-18 ... I don't think that approach totally works ...*

Her comment offers resonance with Campbell *et al.* (2007:145) regarding the realisation of personalised learning within the post-compulsory sector. A tension exists here because Ellie *is* teaching students in the post-compulsory sector *and* in the 16-19 age group. The commentary suggests therefore that this agenda is not fully realised in everyday practice.

In later comments, Ellie reflects on the behaviour of learners at Entry level. She regards these learners as better behaved than the Advanced level learners because the former operated within ‘... firm boundaries’. This theme is returned to again at the end of her first year in employment. Like Rita, Ellie makes links to behaviour and learning. The relationship is signalled here because of its construction within a collaborative approach to learning.

Ellie’s response to notions of the teacher as a facilitator differs to that of Rita. Ellie argues that the word ‘facilitator’ is ‘... wishy-washy...’ and that the word ‘leader’ is ‘more inspirational’ and has ‘more passion’. She adds that it is ‘... easier for them’ (the learners) if the teacher adopts a leadership role. This ‘easiness’ is not explained but implies learner passivity and an increase in teacher engagement.

#### **4.3.6 Boundaries and limitations**

Ellie gained a temporary part time role in a Sixth Form College. She continued to work as a home-based tutor as part of a university distance learning programme and later enrolled onto a Doctoral programme. Extracts from her email response are shown below:

*Hi Val*

*Thank you for your email and sorry it has taken so long to reply. As you may recall, I have been teaching 4.5 hours a week at (name of Sixth Form College) (AS Government and Politics) as well as on various (name of another university) courses. I think what it is to be a teacher varies widely*

*between settings - I still believe a teacher is a facilitator in the sense they offer help and support and should encourage independent learning. However, in an AS setting, I found the requirements of the exams and the simply lack of understanding of the need for independent study means you do have to be far more a "traditional teacher" - if I did set independent projects it could only ever be in class time and it would have to be with very clear instructions and boundaries - and with me keeping a beady eye on them! I don't know if some of this is down to the culture of individual colleges or simply reflects the tight schedules, lack of independent learning at secondary level, etc. ....For me, personally, I think my philosophy of teaching is to treat each learner with respect, offer support, encouragement and passion for my subject and try to develop that passion independently in learners while retaining an understanding of the limitations both internal and external to learners and the need to adjust my style to those. I suppose that is a bit vague though. I think that is to do with my personality too though, as I don't think I'm a natural authoritarian or entertainer, so I have to work within my own limitations! I found the PCGE particularly useful in three ways... Lastly, but by no means least, it was hugely useful practically - I must have used bingo, domino and "You Say, We Pay" around five times each this year, not to mention my own variations (Just a Minute, sentence association games, charades, etc.) ... I also found the comment you made about being a "signpost" in pastoral issues very useful - we had an issue over cyber-bullying and by sticking to your advice I was able to ensure it was dealt with while not becoming involved in a way which would have potentially made my position quite difficult (it is amazing how much you get involved in college life even as a part timer!).*

*In terms of planning lessons, I have stuck to doing written plans (mostly) as I find them an invaluable reminder - also, if I end up teaching AS again in 3 years, it gives me something to work from. I have not really done any CPD if I'm honest*

...

Like Rita, Ellie's opening comments indicate time limitations. Ellie also reiterates her 'passion' for her subject - identified by her at the beginning of the PGCE PCET programme. She also returns to the theme of independent learners and learning: the word 'independent' is referred to on four occasions. Her comments contradict earlier notions of the 'wishy-washy' role of a facilitator and she includes her perspectives on it. In describing the facilitator's role, Ellie uses nurturing terms such as *help, support and*

*encourage*. She reflects on the context of AS teaching within a college setting and on the necessity for her to operate in a more ‘traditional role’ because of the ‘...requirements of the exams and the simply lack of understanding of the need for independent study’.

The irony of setting ‘*independent projects*’ which ‘*could only ever be in class time*’ is accompanied by the language of a traditional teacher providing students with ‘*very clear instructions and boundaries - and with me keeping a beady eye on them!*’ In adopting the so-called ‘traditional’ role of the teacher, Ellie’s comments imply a diminution of the nurturing role. The suggestion is that in order to respond to the demands of examination requirements whilst working with dependent learners, she consciously adopts an alternative persona that she has limited affinity with. Her comments reflect a tension between a teacher conceived as a facilitator or a leader. Ellie states that she is not a ‘...*natural authoritarian or entertainer*’ and therefore needs to work within her own ‘limitations’. Implicit within the comment is the notion of measuring oneself against a particular view of the teacher and how it feels to be at variance with this image.

Ellie’s accounts show a realisation that an independent approach to learning is not shared by her learners. This leads her to speculate on why such skills have not been developed:

*I don't know if some of this is down to the culture of individual colleges or simply reflects the tight schedules, lack of independent learning at secondary level, etc...*

In summary, Ellie’s account provides further evidence of a trainee trying to engage with a learner-centred approach to learning with individuals who are dependent rather than independent. Ellie is also seen as someone who, once in employment, is sufficiently confident to adopt and implement preferred approaches to learning (previously identified as ‘game playing’) in contrast to complying with the needs of her mentor whilst on placement. This section of the chapter concludes with Ellie’s words:

*(I) think my philosophy of teaching is to treat each learner with respect, offer support, encouragement and passion for my subject and try to develop that passion independently in learners while retaining an understanding of the limitations both internal and external to learners and the need to adjust my style to those.*

The key themes arising from the case study narratives reflect the constraints encountered by trainee teachers as part of their programme and work-based experience. The limitations are summarised as:

1. a mismatch between expectation and reality regarding the context of post-compulsory learning. The lack of research undertaken by trainees in preparation for the PGCE PCET programme rebounds on them as part of the work-based experience
2. a confusion arising from interpretations of a personalised approach to learning leading to learner 'busyness' and constructs of the teacher- as- entertainer
3. a pressure to meet the demands of examination success with learners whose learning orientation does not reflect that described as independent learning
4. working with an exam-based, summative model of assessment which does not cohere with contemporary notions of personalised learning
5. using assessment *as* learning. This expression is added to current constructions of assessment *of* and *for* learning
6. encountering ethical dilemmas within professional practice as part of assessment processes
7. complying with existing organisational and community norms and practices to avoid wrongdoing or incur unknown, unseen penalties
8. working with established practitioners operating within certain communities of practice who comply with or subvert community or organisational agendas

## 4.4 Cohort accounts

The perspectives presented within the two case studies are now considered alongside those of the cohort. In doing so, it becomes apparent that the issues raised within the narratives reflect those of the peer group.

### 4.4.1 Pragmatics overriding idealism or vocational aspiration

The reasons given by the wider cohort for joining the PGCE PCET programme echo notions of ‘best fit’ rather than choice. Motivations for joining the programme were not attributed to previously encountered, inspirational role models. The language used by the peer group is generic and grounded rather than adulatory. Her peers reiterate references to ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teachers as articulated by Rita. Applicants talk of a preference to either emulate the *characteristics* of a ‘good’ teacher or the reverse - wanting to be ‘better’ than those who had taught them. They did not talk of being ‘like’ them. Unlike that evidenced within contemporary literature (Morris, 2001; Stronach *et al.*, 2002; Wolf, 2011), the word ‘trust’ or words associated with the trusting of teachers did not emerge as part of pre-entry data. Collectively, the comments reflect the personal and emotional nature attached to interpretations of the teaching role.

Reasons given for joining the *programme* were not directly linked to joining the sector or the profession. The reasons for joining the *profession*, similar to those given for joining the programme were rooted in pragmatics. This finding contradicts views presented in earlier research. Whilst there is some agreement with the view that many entrants to the teaching profession are intrinsically motivated to do so (Bielby *et al.*, 2007) there is a variation regarding the *status* of the profession. The authors cite a high regard for the profession as one of the reasons why applicants wish to join teacher-training programme. Such eminence however was not reflected in this research. Comments made by the applicants for the PGCE PCET programme reflected a conscious ‘fit’ or a matching of a perceived role of the teacher to



their qualities, experiences and needs rather than to the reputation of the teaching profession. Comments made in programme application forms exemplify the point:

*My First Class degree demonstrates the high level of commitment ... I am certain that I would maintain my hard work ... during the PGCE course and beyond, within a teaching post.*

*I have been looking at getting into teaching for a while as I am hoping to further my career and reach my goals in life. I feel as though I have the relevant skills and experience in order to complete the PGCE ... (I have) changed roles over the years ... seeking a career that suits my needs. Teaching is the right path for me to take as I have researched this a lot over the year...*

The comments are reflective of the cohort in presenting an egocentric position. The needs of the self are more clearly identified than those of the learners. Whilst applicants offer some comments related to learner support and achievement, they are presented generically. The comments in these and other trainee application forms tell of the earlier journeys and changing roles experienced by trainees before joining the programme. Trainees joining this programme have often experienced uneven progression routes leading them to join the programme rather than involving them in a vocationally - driven decision. Reflective of the literature, the programme offered some a 'second career' (Maxwell, 2010:185). Cohort data show that all applicants had more than one job before applying for the programme. In some cases, applicants held five or six posts.

Like Rita and Ellie, their reasons for undertaking the programme were layered. Their decisions are largely pragmatic and linked to previous experiences. For this age group, unlike those following an undergraduate initial teacher training route, their earlier experiences are not as closely aligned to school experiences but to previously held jobs or roles. As such, their world views were less naïve; for them, the aim was to progress. The need to secure an income matched with an enthusiasm for their subject led

to a view that the post-compulsory sector would be a ‘place’ for them to work.

Omissions from cohort narratives signal future positions. Whilst comments made by trainees in their application forms show a desire to ‘be a teacher’, what is less apparent is their concept of teaching as a profession; of being a professional and of both within the context of post-compulsory education. Collectively, the information presented via trainee application forms, presentations and interviews reinforced a perspective that whilst applicants held views about why they wanted to become a teacher, few had researched the sector fully; had ideas about contextual influences or had an awareness of current political, national agenda (Mutton, 2012).

Whilst lack of sector awareness was used as a criteria for de-selecting applicants, those who continued on to the interview stage did not expand greatly on the comments made in their written statements. This finding suggests that some trainees embark on a PGCE PCET programme with a lack of understanding of sector demands. Thus whilst trainees may be more prepared to join a PGCE PCET programme because of their maturity and (previous) experiences, they are unaware and therefore ill-prepared to manage the demands of the teaching role in this sector. Their preconceived views of the role and identity of the teacher are not matched to their experiences. The mismatch becomes apparent once the trainees leave the university-based programme and begin their placement experience. They are ‘surprised’ by particular agendas and foci within the sector and associated levels of accountability. They are also bemused by their ‘place’ within a context and a community thus causing them to question their preconceived views regarding the role and identity of the teacher.

#### **4.4.2 Learner support and learner attainment**

Rita’s peers reiterate the cultural clash described in her narrative as they join the PGCE PCET programme and then move into their work-based

placement. Trainees from other cultures tell of their experiences whilst working within another, hidden culture - the culture created around learner attainment. The two comments below are drawn from the trainees' journal entries: a male trainee with Ghanaian heritage writes the first; the second is by a female trainee from Zimbabwe:

*All this leads me into asking who am I? Or how do I see my self in all this? To answer this I need to reflect and consider what would have been the outcome had I had the chance to teach without taking this course ... my assumption and belief are very different to what I am being taught.*

Meli (PGCE PCET trainee)

*Everyone is babied .... wrapped in cotton wool ... it's a tightrope for teachers... English education has the attitude that the learners are always right. Learners have to be treated so carefully, not stimulated to learn. Everyone comes rushing to their aid. I'm used to learners knowing that they have to pull their weight.*

Viv (PGCE PCET trainee)

It can be argued that shifting models in college funding brought about a change in focus that in turn led to a change in teachers' perceptions of the teaching role and teaching identity (Fisher and Webb, 2006). The extracts above reflect the impact of such changes - as viewed by trainees from differing cultural contexts. Meli questions his identity with reference to the programme and to what it is preparing him for. Viv, a trainee who had previously taught in Zimbabwe, reflects on the prominent position of the learner within current practice. The movement away from the teacher to the learner reflects the shifting balance between teaching and learning and learning and teaching. Viv's comments reflect the changes in the teacher-learner relationship and highlight areas of confusion and inequity. Her comments also highlight the tensions inherent within a personalised learning agenda where roles and responsibilities are neither known nor clearly delineated. For Viv, familiarity rested in '*...learners knowing that they have to pull their weight.*' The 'aid' provided to the learners contrasts with Viv's expectations. She reflects on the tension between learners who are 'always right' yet in need of support. In scenarios such as the one

depicted by Viv, the learner is seen as a dependent rather than independent. Those described as ‘rushing’ to support the learners imply the readiness of a range of practitioners intent on providing a remedy - resonant of a movement towards a therapeutic ethos (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009). The issue of emotionally-based pedagogies is explored by Ecclestone (2011). The author comments on the difficulties associated with such a focus, noting its potential to distract from other forms of knowledge. In addition, perceiving the individual as emotionally vulnerable creates a discourse centred on the diminished self (Ecclestone, 2007:464). This ‘self’ is configured differently to that of the independent learner and as such, challenges the construct of personalisation. Of further concern is the extent to which professionals can resist the pressures to meet the emotional needs of their learners. Such pressures are likely to increase as the image of the diminished self becomes embedded within popular culture.

The views provided by the cohort as a whole (as presented in the journal entries and assignments) tell of perceived limitations affecting practice (*see Appendix 6*). The following three extracts tell of trainees’ attempts to ‘be creative’ within the metaphorically termed audit culture. A common theme lies in the sub-text underpinning learner assessment and attainment:

*(I) have just commenced teaching this subject ... and have the testimony of jaded teachers and disillusioned students to go on, I am optimistic that I can be creative and try to make the lessons participatory and bearable until the exam in March.*

Gemma (PGCE trainee (English))  
Placement: Further Education College)

*The examination has proved to be the main focus of the course, and teachers (including myself) are forced to work rigidly to the framework of the specification and previous examination questions (teaching to the exam) with anything outside of this having to be deemed irrelevant. This clearly results in a limited overall learning experience, and removes a degree of teacher autonomy, but is necessary to prepare students sufficiently for the examination. In addition, the management in my placement college understandably puts much emphasis on results as it impacts a lot on finding and teachers’ pay. This does appear to give a distorted picture of*

*performance though and I believe adds a great deal of additional stress.*

Jay (PGCE trainee (History))  
Placement: Sixth Form College)

*My current placement relies heavily on the relationship between the assessment methods employed and the course evaluation process in order to judge course quality ... there is a distinct lack of learner feedback collected in relation to evaluating the course, the learners' feelings and the learners' recommendations ... the main assessment of effectiveness in my current placement is the use of progression and achievement rates ...*

Gee (PGCE trainee (Physical Education))  
Placement: Training Provider)

The data presented highlights the role of the learner in the assessment process. Whilst the trainees and existing teachers are caught up in a whirl of examination preparation and attainment, the learners are referred to as 'disillusioned' and their 'feelings' not 'collected'. The narratives highlight an imbalance regarding the satisfaction of auditable demands and a consideration of pastoral concerns or viewing the learner as human (Pring, 2011). Importantly however, despite their expressed concerns, when an opportunity to appraise and review models of practice is presented via the intervention at Stage 3, the trainees refrain from doing so.

On their return to university (Stage 3) trainees completed the mid-year evaluation. In the first part of the two-part session, trainees explored the enhancements and barriers to their progress. Trainees reported that some of the learning gained in the university was not transferable to the work-based context. The trainees also commented upon the impact of the mentoring role with respect to their development as a teacher. The role of the mentor in supporting trainee teachers' development was highlighted within the literature (Ofsted, 2003; 2006; 2009; Rajuan *et al.*, 2008; DCSF Select Committee Report, 2010; Skills Commission Report, 2009). Whilst some trainees felt supported, others stated their inability to be innovative within

existing constructs. Their comments offered resonance with those stated by previous PGCE cohorts thus suggesting the continuation of a story.

For those trainees working with examination classes (the majority), the restrictions cited regarding their relationship with the mentors seemed particularly pronounced. Unlike the schools sector, the nature of post-compulsory education leads to greater sequential involvement in summative assessments. Trainees are involved therefore in assessment processes as a precursor to an examination. The trainees' comments suggest however that this is not a linear approach and that it is the twinning of learner assessment with examination preparation that dominates and leads the learning; hence, there is reluctance by established practitioners (such as mentors) to try alternative approaches within a short assessment period. The recurring theme of time and actions played out against it is reiterated here.

In the second part of the session, trainees explored the alternative lesson plan template (Template 2) as a means of reviewing their practice at this stage. The data show that whilst trainees were appreciative of the enquiry - based lesson plan template and stated a preference for its use, they were reluctant to adopt it within the work-based context from Stage 3 onwards (*see Appendix 10*). The extracts below show the range of responses:

*It's better because it's more flexible...I've got choices*

*It's not like a form ... this one ... it's more open-ended ...*

*...pins my thoughts down*

*Will I lose marks if I use this one?*

*... would get into trouble for not using the proper one...*

*... it isn't what the college uses...*

*too time consuming, impractical ...*

Whilst the reasons given allude to time constraints, they also imply a sense of wrong-doing because ‘... it was not the right template’. These comments also reflect both Ellie’s and Rita’s position.

Despite their written and verbal protestations regarding existing limitations to practice, the majority of trainees continued to use the existing template (Template 1) for the remainder of the programme. Only one trainee adopted the alternative template: Eva, one of the four case study trainees. The ‘fear of wrongdoing or not complying is signalled here as a determining factor in (trainee teacher) decision-making processes.

#### **4.4.3 Trainees’ inability to define their professional teaching identities**

The end of year cohort evaluations provide by trainees showed that the trainees left the PGCE PCET programme *without* a clear sense of a professional teaching identity. Their comments are reflective of this position, offering generic rather than precise responses. They included ‘... giving the learners the opportunity to set own goals and fulfil (their) own potential’; being ‘approachable’; embracing ‘reflective, inclusive practice’; being ‘respectful’ to peers; having ‘... confidence in everything we do’ and ‘Understanding the importance of paperwork, e.g., Lesson Plans, Schemes of Work, tracking sheets etc ...’.

Although positive and well intentioned, the comments do not reflect a clear sense of self, philosophy, pedagogy or challenge. In addition, their comments do not reflect the domain of a community of practice or show levels of criticality. They do not show, for example, a knowing awareness of acceptance or compliance. The trainees’ inability to define their professional identities is reflective of current literature. The literature highlights the divergent nature of the post-compulsory sector and the difficulties in presenting a coherent account of teacher identity and professionalism (Fisher and Webb, 2006; Gleeson and James, 2007).

In this final section, reference is made to Nick's narrative. Initial comments made by Nick were included within the Introduction to the thesis, serving to contextualise my reasons for undertaking the research. Nick's references to 'teaching as a profession'; to the bureaucracy and prescription associated with it; to the 'art' of teaching and the 'right' of teachers to teach 'in their own unique way' serve as reminders here. Three years after completing the programme and employed in a temporary role as a Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) teacher Nick writes in his email response:

*The teaching I do currently is unfortunately extremely prescriptive, so has been a rather odd experience if I'm honest. Although generally straightforward to teach, it is almost like teaching someone else's lesson plan, so I've had worries in the past about doing something wrong, falling behind, or just missing something unwittingly that the students might need! Although it makes planning very easy, I do feel my creativity has possibly taken a downturn, and I worry that it has led me to being a rather lazy planner, as it makes lessons easier to 'wing', which I feel is a particularly bad thing, although I think every teacher has to do it from time to time!*

*To be honest, I wish my 'first' teaching job had been in a 6th Form college, where I would have had to do much more of my own planning, and relied on my own creativity. Although this may have provided more stress, especially as a new teacher, I think by this point I would be more confident in this skill. I have of course had to do some planning (!) and creating of new materials but I think a prescriptive programme where every teacher does the same thing ('teaching by numbers', in a sense) is not a good way forward. Although not terribly bureaucratic (at least in my current college), I do feel it detracts from a teacher's individuality. We're not expected to write lesson plans for example, as we're not monitored in this area ... but I think that does lead to an imbalance in teaching quality, possibly. Of course, bureaucracy does play its part, and as I'm also based in an office a lot of the time, it can take away from the overall teaching experience. When faced with a prescriptive programme a problem I face personally is going off on a tangent - it's my habit (rightly or wrongly!!) to wax lyrical about a topic and get students thinking and discussing, instead of having to focus on prescribed exercises which I find dull, frankly!*



Nick's comments summarise the tensions between role compliance and individual creativity. For someone who has been teaching for *three* years, the lack of teacher agency features strongly in this account.

In-house destination data for 2011 show that Nick is no longer teaching and that he had returned to university to study for a further degree. Of the four case study trainees, Gemma has also returned to university; Rita's temporary one-year post came to an end and her current status is unknown; Eva's full time post also was also concluded; Ellie remains in teaching (part-time). Whilst an unrealistic perception of teaching is cited as a reason for low retention rates on some ITT programmes (Bielby *et al.*, 2007), with reference to *this* particular cohort of trainees however, retention rates were high: the three-year trend showed retention rates for the programme above 85%. The issue here concerns *employment* rates amidst difficulties in securing permanent positions. This issue is discussed more fully in the ensuing chapter.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The narratives of the full cohort plus Nick's response reflect the content contained within the case study narratives. Collectively the narratives indicate the pressures of an assessment - driven model of learning leading to a reduction in teacher autonomy. Issues such as ethics and the pastoral needs of the learners become subsumed within assessment processes. The narratives tell of conflicts occurring when an approach termed as personalised learning operates within an assessment-led model. Whilst the data show that the trainee teacher's focus *is* on the learner and learning, the data also show that this focus has become distorted by its role within this model.

The identified constraints affecting trainees' practice presented at the end of the two case study narratives (numbers 1-8) are returned to at this point. The statements serve as reminders - reinforced and verified by the views of the cohort. The significance of the narratives rests in the fact that the trainees were placed across eighteen colleges of further education and two training providers. The uniformity of the responses therefore indicates the prevalence of certain behaviours.

As outlined (in Chapter 3) the research methodology and accompanying methods were designed to capture emerging themes. Two key themes can now be identified:

1. The concept of time and of actions played against it
2. Trainees caught between a philosophical position, an expectation and actual experience

The two themes are now explored as part of an analysis and discussion of data.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of the research was to explore if and how pre-service trainee teachers following a PGCE PCET programme of study construct their professional teaching identities within a framework of accountability. The second question focused on the factors limiting the building of a coherent account. The intention was to explore in detail the findings arising from earlier research (Butcher and Smith, 2008) and by adopting a thematic approach, provide sufficient evidence to inform the current debate regarding teacher identity and professionalism. The findings emerging from the 2008 study suggested that trainee teachers placed as part of their PGCE PCET programme within the post-compulsory sector, held a limited view of professionalism. Drawing upon the data (presented in Chapter 4) it is now possible to extend this discussion and in doing so, provide a response to the two research questions.

Underpinning the discussion is an awareness of the complex nature of teacher professionalism and in particular, its understanding and interpretation within the post-compulsory context. Difficulties in providing a coherent explanation of the term and associated constructs were highlighted within the literature review (Cottee, 2006; Eraut, 1994). That the teaching profession does not rest on an agreed body of knowledge or have an overt, recognised professional 'presence' in contemporary society is raised as an area of concern (Crawley, 2012). Whilst it can be argued that a fractured account of teacher professionalism enables others to attack the status of the profession as part of political game-playing, the evidence arising from this research indicates that the lack of a cohesive account has an impact not only on the everyday lives of existing practitioners but also on the experiences of those training to be teachers in the post-compulsory sector. This view is supported by the findings arising from the data. Two key themes emerge: firstly, the concept of time and the actions played

against it and secondly, trainees caught between a philosophical position, an expectation and actual experience. The two themes are inter-related with each containing identifiable sub-themes.

The ensuing analysis and discussion is undertaken with reference to trainees as members of differing communities of practice. The position taken is that if an individual constructs one's self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 2005) with others within a cultural context, the setting in which the trainees are placed and the communities they join have an impact on their professional development.

## **5.2 Theme 1: The concept of time and the actions played against it**

This theme encompasses two sub-themes: firstly, the concept of 'over-busyness' and secondly, differing interpretations of personalised learning.

### **5.2.1 The concept of 'over-busyness'**

This research has unveiled a phenomenon described as 'over-busyness' - a type of hyperactivity on the part of the trainee teachers, practitioners and learners. This phenomenon operates on a number of levels. On one level there is the duplication of lesson plans by trainee teachers and colleagues; on another there is the action taken by trainees in response to passive learner engagement.

Whilst the measures taken by trainees and practitioners in duplicating lesson templates could be regarded as those adopted by resourceful, quick-thinking teachers, the data show that such duplication by trainees was undertaken in haste in order to comply with expectation. Thus, the templates came to represent an organisation's repertoire, operating as public documents of accountability rather than tools of learning. As such, the templates reflect the notion of 'documentism' (Wenger *et al.*, 2002: 148) - used, in this

scenario, as part of an accountability process. Thus, because the templates had not been devised by a community and did not represent its domain they were perceived as having little value. Trainees and colleagues completed the templates in a formulaic manner in order to meet the demands of others. At Stage 3 for example, the data show that the trainees were preoccupied with mechanical and operational constructs rather than philosophical or theoretically-informed positions. This situation offers resonance with Wheelahan's position (2008a; 2008b) when considering the vocational curriculum; the author argues a need for students to be able to access both theoretical and everyday knowledge. For trainee teachers in this sample however, access to either seemed to be limited or mediated by proforma. By Stages 4 and 5, trainees continued to find difficulty in articulating the principles underpinning their practice. If planning is seen as teaching (Mutton *et al.*, 2011) this finding suggests that trainees' use of lesson plan templates does not support the development of pedagogy and practice.

Whilst the trainees were aware that such time-saving measures were adopted not only by themselves but also by their peers, the issue remained largely unchallenged by them. This passive response on the part of the trainee teachers suggests an implied acceptance of the action. Ellie, for example, cites the duplication of her mentor's lesson plans but does so artlessly. As a reminder, it is important to note that it was Guido's actions regarding such duplication that contributed to the development of this research. To find that practising colleagues are also involved in similar duplication is important because colleagues are often in the role of mentor. Thus, if mentors are involved in a mechanical rather than a conceptual approach to everyday practice, the impact on trainees' practice is twofold: firstly trainees may regard their mentor's actions as a reinforcement or an acceptance of their own; secondly, the opportunity for trainees and mentors to engage in a theoretical exchange regarding the nature of teaching and learning may be limited.

The concept of time and busyness is also reflected in the trainees' reluctance to adopt Template 2. In this scenario, an ethical dimension arises. The data

show that whilst 12 of the 15 trainees expressed a preference for its use, only one trainee opted to do so. Whilst time pressures were cited by some trainees as a reason for its non-adoption, namely, the template was too detailed hence there was insufficient time to complete it, its lack of use was more roundly associated with notions of wrong-doing. The perceived timesaving costs attached to the completion of Template 2 shielded another reason for its non-selection. Only Eva, one of the four case study trainees, used the template as part of everyday practice. The choice made by Eva is considered shortly. The fact that the remaining 14 trainees did not adopt the template as part of daily practice is considered here. Trainees stated at Stage 3 that the main reason for the non-adoption of Template 2 was linked to accountability: a fear of wrong-doing; of being non-compliant; of doing something ‘different’ or because the template ‘...wasn’t what the college used’. Implicit within the comments was a view that there was a hidden, ‘right’ way of doing something. The comment presented by Ellie offers some insight here. Her description of the mentor who despite continually receiving ‘satisfactory’ observation grades was ‘left alone’ to teach in his own preferred style because of his high success rates leads Ellie to comment on the existence of a ‘...preferred College-wide style of teaching, although this is not stated expressly.’

Contained within Ellie’s comment is the implication that whilst cultural norms exist, they are not overtly stated or shared with existing communities. An implicit agreement exists regarding how things ‘should be’: a ‘preferred ... style of teaching...’. When the mentor’s behaviour diverts from (or subverts) this ‘preferred’ approach it remains unchallenged by the organisation or the community. The behaviour becomes acceptable because it ‘fits’ within the norms of learner attainment. Ironically, in this scenario, the mentor is able to exert teacher agency. For trainees observing such dualities as part of every-day practice however, they witness a reversal of principles and a different ethical code. Thus, whilst Ellie is busily employing a range of interactive strategies to engage her learners, her mentor maintains a didactic approach. In this scenario, Ellie is reprimanded for ‘game playing’ whilst the mentor’s actions receives legitimacy.

Whilst Ellie and Rita's narratives show a reduction in notions of personal 'wrong-doing' by Stage 5, Nick's narrative displays a continuing caution. His 'guilt' is rendered in terms of '*...going off on a tangent*' and getting '*students thinking and discussing...*'. The comment provides another example of norm reversal. Nick's comment suggests that positive actions such as encouraging students to think and discuss are viewed negatively by unseen others. Nick's preferred approaches to learning appear to be overridden by an organisational approach to a particular, pre-determined programme of study that focuses on '*on prescribed exercises*' - something he exposes as '*dull, frankly*'. Whilst dissatisfied and aware of the impact of such prescription on his practice, his narrative does not refer to strategies designed to manage the situation or show intentionality (Mutton, 2012). Nick seems to be accepting of contextual limitations rather than offering a challenge; as such, the narrative shows little evidence of agency.

The trainees appear to attribute notions of wrongdoing to a '*...field of judgement*' (Ball, 2003:216) which appears to yield unidentified penalties. Thus, whilst Ball refers to practising teachers regarding the dangers of 'performativity' (*ibid.*: 216) the evidence arising from *this* research suggest that pre-service trainee teachers are also affected by such constraints. The trainee teachers however are not so much '*...displaced by the terrors of performativity*' (*ibid.*: 216): they are accepting of it. The evidence suggests that trainee teachers observe and then accept the practices of certain communities as part of their placement experience. As such, the trainees become accomplices, maintaining rather than challenging the status quo. Eva, one of the four case study trainees, however offers an alternative view.

Located within an Art and Design department within in a college of further education, Eva chose to adopt Template 2. Whilst her fellow trainees recognised that completion of a lesson plan was part of their practice, they demonstrated little affinity with the process other than notions of compliance. Eva's reason for adopting Template 2 was that it '*... seemed to fit my approach to planning*'. Whilst possible stereotypes could be

employed regarding the teaching of Art and Design, reference is made here to Meadows (2011) and to the successful relationships developed between the teachers and students in this particular subject area (*see Meadows, 2011 Creative Learning and the new Ofsted framework*). A further link is made to the work of Avis and Bathmaker (2006). Eva's position offers some similarity with that of 'Richard' - one of the four respondents included in the study. In discussing his practice, 'Richard' moves away from the subject study of Art and Design and shifts '...towards an expansive notion of practice that extends beyond technique, drawing upon broader notions of culture and social processes...' (p.176). Central to this shift is the conversation he has with teachers and students. The dialogic encounters serve to inform Richard's perceptions about teaching and learning and to enable him to intellectualise his ideas further. The authors offer the following comment:

*Implicit within his understanding of practice lies a relationship between the production of artwork, student identity and its ongoing development through some sort of praxis that brings together theory and application. What is significant about this discussion is that it illustrates the way in which a quasi-work-based identity informs the development of an orientation towards teaching and learning.*

(Avis and Bathmaker, 2006:177)

Whilst both Richard and Eva's view become modified as they continue to work with learners, it appears that the communities in which they operate provide a set of structures supporting approaches to teaching and learning. For Eva, the dynamics and norms operating within the community enabled her not only to adopt the template but to use it throughout the duration of the programme. As a member of a particular work-based community of practice, Eva had sufficient legitimacy and agency to continue to use the template to support her pedagogic approaches to practice. Whilst the theoretical framework did clarify the features operating within this particular situation, it could be argued that the structures within this community encompassed a particular view, or set of freedoms, concerning



knowledge exchange, learners and learning. Time constraints did not appear to feature within the discourse.

In exploring the actions taken by the trainee teachers in response to time constraints, the role of the learner is worthy of consideration. The findings show that not only are trainees, mentors and colleagues busily involved in developing quick-fix approaches to manage learning, so too are the learners. This is exemplified particularly with reference to Ellie's narrative. Here, the planning and preparation of the teacher is subverted by learners having '*... learnt to "cut and paste" key words to find answers quickly without reading large parts of the text*'. The realisation that some of their learners were interested in a 'quick fix' approach to learning surprises trainees. The tactics adopted by the learners exposed differing priorities regarding 'learning goals' (Knapper and Cropley, 2000:85) thus raising ethical concerns for the trainees. This example is of particular interest because e-learning can be seen as a way of promoting learner autonomy *if* used in a purposeful way by the teacher (Finlayson *et al.*, 2006). The examples provided in the case studies are too few to offer detailed comment but where provided, the suggestion is that technology was used as a search tool rather than integrated into the learning process.

As Rita's narrative and those of the cohort show, the learners know that high attainment grades are needed to ensure personal success and progress yet many remain passive in their engagement with the learning process. Whilst the learners expect the trainee teachers to contribute to their success, they play a limited role themselves thus the passivity of the learner contributes to the notion of 'over-busyness'. The trainees respond to a lack of learner engagement by developing *additional* strategies to involve the learners. In doing so, they attempt to compensate for the passivity of their learners. This compensatory action is reflected in a further heightened role, that of the teacher as 'entertainer'. The term is used here to describe a trainee teacher who attempts to over-engage the learners in order to support learning and learner attainment and to counterbalance the orientation of the learner. The concept of entertainer replaces that of the teacher in the role of

*motivator* - a concept generally understood as part of the teaching role. The research findings show that the trainee teachers are planning activities to ensure that learners are always 'busy' and therefore 'engaged'. The impact of this over-engagement is threefold: firstly, the trainee teachers and learners are continually 'busy'; secondly, the learners whilst 'busy' are not necessarily learning; thirdly, in the midst of such teacher-learner busyness, trainees have little time to develop as professionals (Guile and Lucas, 1999).

In 'entertaining' their learners, trainees are using teaching strategies as learner engagement strategies. The 'doubling up' of strategies is employed to meet the wider goal of learner attainment. It becomes evident however that certain engagement strategies employed by the trainees causes consternation amongst practising colleagues and mentors. This concern becomes particularly pronounced when the strategies are located within an assessment-led model. The trainees become extremely aware of the focus on examination success by Stage 2. As the narratives show, Ellie's mentor interprets her use of a range of interactive strategies adversely in expressing his concern about Ellie's use of 'game playing' with an A level class. Whilst the mentor's comments exposes a tension between the pedagogical approaches used by an established teacher and a trainee teacher, (Hayes, 2001: 45) the perspective needs to be understood within the context of learner assessment. The tensions are signalled here and explored more fully as part of Theme 2.

Once in employment, Ellie continues to use 'game playing' strategies. In the (new) role of teacher, Ellie is able to exercise autonomy and is 'free' to develop her own practice. Whilst there is an awareness that Ellie needed to wait until employment to gain such 'freedom' (having complied with the mentor's wishes whilst on placement) the number of activities listed by Ellie in her email response indicates either a preferred approach to learning or an implicit theory of learning related to active learner engagement. Ellie does not fully explain her choices but both options appear to see the learners as needing to be constantly entertained, engaged or kept 'busy'.

The notion of entertainment is noted alongside that of learner boredom: this binary is also located within a framework of learner assessment. Ellie's narrative regarding the 'Skills for Life' class is raised for consideration at this point. The concern in this account centres on completion of a task (a test) and a presumption (on behalf of the teacher) concerning learner apathy. The teacher presumes that learner boredom is present and presents an openly apologetic stance to learners when introducing the test. The conversation between Ellie and her mentor regarding the delivery of the test brings about an exchange regarding boredom, academia and learner enjoyment. Ellie's later reflection regarding the challenge of '*...getting this balance right ... regardless of the context in which learning is taking place*' is not explicit yet appears to reflect the mentor's perception regarding an overemphasis on learner 'enjoyment' within a range of learning contexts. Ellie's comment on the exact nature of the challenge is also unclear but implies that it is linked to developing a balance between learner enjoyment and the need to support or secure learner attainment. Her comments imply a tension between the two. In the latter parts of the conversation, there is a suggestion that both the teacher and Ellie are aware of this conundrum and share a sense of unease.

### **5.2.2 Differing interpretations of personalised learning**

The unease appears to rest in a contradiction. Whilst the trainees appear to acknowledge within their practice the concept of the learner at the centre of the learning process, they experience confusion regarding the learner's role in it. The trainees begin to realise that they are attempting to manage a designated, student-centred approach to learning only to find that the learners are not equally engaged. Definitions of term personalised learning were explored within the literature review (DfES, 2004; O'Neill *et al.*, 2005; Pykett, 2009). Such approaches prioritise learner choice, regard students as active learners (Rata, 2012) and unlike other learning models include notions of transference of power from the teacher to the learner. The findings arising from this research however calls into question

interpretations of such approaches by organisations and stakeholders such as mentors, trainees and learners.

The discourse of learner engagement is muddled with that of learner entertainment. When the expression 'active learning' is added into the linguistic mix, some light is shed on the trainees' behaviour. In interpreting or misinterpreting this concept, trainees focus on activity-led sessions. The learner is viewed as someone who needs to be engaged immediately via the use of a 'starter' activity, followed by yet another activity, followed by further monitoring to keep the learners 'on task'. The findings from this research suggests that the concept of 'over-busyness' can be associated with particular interpretations of personalised approaches to learning. The approaches have developed in differing ways because of a lack of clarity and agreement regarding the philosophy and principles underpinning it.

It can be argued that contextual and community agreement regarding interpretation is fundamental to practice. It can also be argued that without a shared view, the exposition, dissemination and implementation by central and local bodies may contribute to a confused account of teacher identity. In playing the role of entertainer, the trainee teacher is demonstrating a lack of understanding and confidence in the agenda he or she is working with. In addition, he or she is working with equally unsure or unaware stakeholders.

A lack of identification with the personalised agenda may be linked to a history of minimal stakeholder engagement as part of its development. It can be argued that the imposition of any political agenda without full stakeholder consultation can lead to a 'take the agenda and run with it' approach to dissemination. Such haste contributes to multiple interpretations or misinterpretations, far removed from the initial configuration of the 'story'. The impact of not exploring such concepts with stakeholders or seeking their agreement leads to incoherence and as revealed in this research, incoherent practice.

The evolution and development of personalised learning sits at the heart of current educational practice - yet it is one to be challenged. A difficulty arises when the *needs* of the learners - those which occupy and drive current political thinking and agendas - are not reflected in the *orientation* of the learners. The findings from this research suggest that the learner in this particular sector does not seem to be able to identify his or her *role* within a personalised agenda. If the constituents of a student-centred approach to learning involve both the student as an active learner and transference of power from the teacher to the learner, the research findings suggest that the ascribed role of the learner is unknown or unacknowledged by him or her. Hence, the learner's contribution as an active co-participant in the learning process and a co-producer of knowledge is reduced.

The placing of a consumer or client-centred culture alongside notions of student-centred learning is one requiring further reflection and comment. Whilst the literature points to the impact of an increasingly consumer-led approach in education (Ball, 2010; Kidd and Czerniawski, 2010:21) what is becoming clear in this research is a possible mismatch between a consumer-driven model *and* a personalised approach to learning. It is suggested that early conceptions of personalised approaches to learning *did not* include or recognise aspects of a *client*-centred culture within its constituency. The findings from this research suggest that there has been a merging of differing political agendas and that a changing picture is now emerging. Such mergers have taken place steadily and without overt public recognition or discussion. Only in recent years has the notion of organisations responding to the paying learner become more overt and clamorous.

For many trainee teachers, the merging of differing agendas heralds confusion. The confusion centres on a perception of the teaching role operating within a personalised agenda located within a market-led context. The role of the 'client-learner' is muddled with that of a personalised approach hence the roles of the teacher and learner becomes uncertain. In this somewhat straddled culture, the teacher and the learner adopt diverging orientations and hold differing rather than shared expectations about

knowledge and learning. The situation is characterised by a trainee teacher who is unclear about what a learner-centred approach actually involves in everyday practice and what it *means* to his or her practice. The research findings suggest that trainee teachers interpret learner-centred approaches to pedagogy as a movement away from an assumed, knowledge-based, transmission model of teaching hence while they attempt to engage with learners in an interactive manner, they are unsure about how their teaching role, identity and pedagogy ‘fit’ within an unfamiliar culture.

Whilst it has been argued that within initial teacher training and education programmes, trainee teachers are encouraged by teacher educators to be innovative in their practice and to be creative in their approaches to planning as part of a promotion of active learning, the evidence arising from this research suggests that whilst on placement, trainees experience barriers to such exposition. This position is exacerbated by contradicting notions of learner engagement located within a personalised agenda. In attempting to devise a range of interactive activities to engage the learners, the trainees discover that the assessment models used in certain the work-based provision are *not* student-centred yet drive the learning process. Hence, the strategies used by trainees such as Rita and Ellie to create a positive learning environment reach an impasse.

### **5.3 Theme 2: Trainees caught between a philosophical position, an expectation and actual experience**

#### **5.3.1 Pre-entry: establishing a philosophical position or making a match?**

Prominence was given in the data collection and analysis to trainees’ aspirations, expectations and theoretical positions pre-entry. I gave it this focus in order to understand how initial perceptions concerning teachers’ professional identities were constructed. By exploring trainees’ perceptions at Stage 1, it became possible to explore if such perceptions changed

throughout the duration of the programme and as part of the work-based experience. It also became possible to explore how the structures operating within and external to such communities restricted their actions and their potential for bringing about change.

The evidence emerging from this research suggests that trainee teachers do *not* necessarily begin initial teacher training programmes with explicit views regarding the building of a professional identity; of being a professional or of joining a profession and that these concepts are *not* clearly articulated by the end of the programme or post-employment. What *does* emerge in trainees' accounts however is a strong awareness of the performance-based nature of the teaching role: this facet manifests itself more clearly once trainees embark on a placement experience and affects their perceptions of the teaching role and their 'place' within it.

The views presented as part of pre-entry processes reflected trainees' current positions and expectations of themselves in the role of the teacher. Their views reflect a changing paradigm: one where the constructs of the teaching role are not bound by history or tradition but focused on the present. Pre-entry data show that the trainee teachers did not hold a 'traditional' view of the teacher or the teaching role. The traditional view is described as that often conjectured or popularised by others and one including notions of a vocational or nurturing role. Of the 21 applicants accepted onto the PGCE PCET programme, the word 'vocation' did not appear in the 'Personal Statement' written as part of the application process. Equally, possible synonyms did not appear. The reason for this may lie in the fact that all trainees had been or were employed in full or part time jobs of a permanent, temporary or voluntary nature prior to joining the programme. Considering the age range of this cohort (33% were aged below 25) this comment reflects the unsettled employment situation in *other* sectors, as experienced by the trainees at an early stage of their lives. The traditional view of teaching therefore - popularly described as a 'settled job with prospects' is perceived somewhat pragmatically by the trainees. Teaching appeared to offer a degree of permanence where other jobs did

not. Teaching as a *vocation* however may be viewed as an option rather than a considered choice.

Whilst to some extent the evidence showed agreement with the literature regarding trainees' recollections of previous educational experiences when presenting motivations for joining the programme, such experiences were not closely tied to *school* experiences. Notions of the recollected pupil (Stronach *et al.*, 2002: 116) were in evidence but were extended to include wider, work-related experiences. This finding may be seen as reflective of a post-graduate as opposed to an undergraduate group. Previous work-related influences appeared to contribute to the emergence of a pragmatic rather than an idealised account for those applying to undertake the programme. Few trainees referred to teachers as role models or significant others inspiring them to join a PGCE PCET programme. Comments concerning value-laden constructs of 'good' or 'bad' teachers were in evidence at the re-entry stage and continued to resonate throughout the duration of the programme.

The data show that trainees undertook the PGCE PCET programme in order to satisfy personal needs, develop their career or obtain a teaching qualification for employment or contractual purposes. In addition, they undertook the programme because they perceived the teaching role as that 'matching' their previous experience and qualifications, skills and personal qualities. Finally, trainees stated that they wanted to teach but because 'their' subject was not a National Curriculum subject (Law, Media Studies) they could not teach in a school. Whilst the trainees stated the limitations of 'their' subject with regard to the schools sector, they did so without expressing a strong desire to teach in schools. The comments suggest that the trainees placed a greater value on 'their' subject and their enthusiasm for it rather than engaging in serious deliberations regarding firstly the teaching role and the nature of learners and learning in the post-compulsory context and secondly, the nature of professionalism or of joining a profession. The notion of locating *their* subject within a college as opposed to a school -



making it 'fit' - seemed to occupy a greater position in their thinking at this stage.

The concept of finding a suitable context in which to locate their stated 'passion' may not seem overly significant and that a default position for subjects such as Law is of little concern if teaching is seen as a profession where skills are transferable across sectors. The counter-argument however is that if trainee teachers do not have a strong orientation regarding context (Mutton *et al.*, 2010) and of the learners they wish to work with, they may become part of an unquestioned 'slide' (Gleeson and James, 2007:454) into the sector and into the teaching role. The impact of this may be on sector retention (Bileby *et al.*, 2007). Secondly, whilst a 'passion' for their subject is frequently repeated in the trainees' comments at this stage, it is described within the boundaries of self-ownership: *their* subject. This pronouncement is balanced somewhat questionably against the trainees' limited responses regarding perspectives on teaching and learning. Whilst the applicants repeatedly expressed in their application forms an enthusiasm for their subject and a desire to share this with others, few articulated such enthusiasm within the realm of learners and learning and in particular, contextual learning, (Mutton *et al.*, 2010) namely, working with learners and colleagues in *the post-compulsory sector*. The evidence suggests that this inability to identify such relationships as part of pre-entry procedures had repercussions when trainees were placed in work-based settings.

Whereas it may be said that some of the comments expressed in the trainees' accounts could be described as 'aspirational' (Bielby *et al.*, 2007), such comments appeared less so when considered against other elements contained within the narratives. The notion of 'matching' dominated many accounts. The term is used here to describe the matching of personal achievements, needs, qualifications or experiences to that of the perceived teaching role. The foregrounding of the needs or attributes of the self beyond that of a focus on the learner or learning was a noticeable inclusion. Of the 21 trainee teachers, 19 mentioned that a combination of their personal experiences, characteristics, qualifications and interests had led

them to consider themselves 'suitable' for the teaching role, as perceived, understood and interpreted by them. The notion of 'matching' suggests an insular, egotistical view of the teaching role at this initial stage. Whilst accounts of the characteristics of the 'beginning' teacher are in evidence (Mutton, 2012) the notion of matching as described here suggests that there is a further account to be heard regarding trainee perceptions of a teacher's identity. As a reminder, the notion of teacher professionalism or of joining a profession was not a central feature of trainees' accounts at Stage 1.

It could be argued that egotistical content is understandable within the context of a 'Personal Statement' presented as part of a programme application form. It could also be argued that it is indicative of prospective trainees who have not given deeper thought to the identity and role of the teacher and to his or her contribution to the learning process. It could be further argued that the immediacy of the programme had greater prominence in trainee thinking than ideas concerning the identity and role of the teacher or the nature of teacher professionalism.

Of the comments made in trainees' application forms, few could be described as altruistic. Idealised notions of trainees' contributing to a Utopian state or improved world-view were limited. The data show that the female responses were not overtly different to that expressed by the males in the research: pragmatism appeared to act as a unifying feature. Commonality was also found in the language used to reflect personal enthusiasm (and passion) for respective subject areas and a desire to 'share' their knowledge, experience and enthusiasm with others.

Traditional images of a 'nurturing' profession were not established pre-entry. When viewed from a gender perspective this feature is of interest because of the high proportion of females (81%) within the cohort. This finding appears to challenge continuing views and stereotypes of teaching as a female-dominated profession with a nurturing orientation. The teacher in the role of nurturer *does* emerge as the programme continues - yet it appears to emerge somewhat conversely as a defensive action. Rita, Ellie and their

peers for example appear to ‘defend’ their learners against perceived inequalities. This perspective is explored more fully shortly.

### **5.3.2 The myth of the independent learner**

Whilst there was a noticeable omission regarding philosophical or theoretical concepts of learning in trainees’ application forms at Stage 1, trainees did express views concerning the orientation of the learner studying in post-compulsory education. A recurring view presented by trainees at the pre-entry and interview stage was that learners in the post-compulsory sector had ‘chosen’ to go to college. Encompassed within this view was a perception that because learners had self-selected, there would be a reduction in behaviour management issues thus allowing trainees the opportunity to share their passion for their subject with their learners. Secondly, because learners had self-selected and had taken the next step regarding their education or career route, they would be more prepared to learn. The philosophy of the learner as an independent learner therefore underpinned trainees’ expectations and informed early approaches to lesson planning and delivery. This philosophy however proved later to be flawed and thus detrimental to trainees’ approaches to planning and delivery.

The expectation of the learner as an independent learner may be considered self-reflective. If trainees on ITTE programmes of study are viewed as intrinsically motivated, they may assume equal engagement from their learners because theoretically, the learners had also made a career choice. The narratives suggest however that the trainees are ‘surprised’ by the acquisitive rather than inquisitive orientation of their learners. Discovering that learners operate as pragmatically as themselves is not seen through a reflective mirror.

The evidence suggests that the trainees operate initially on the assumption that learners in this age group and in this sector are independent learners. The trainees soon discover however that this is not the case. Ellie in

particular questions the lack of such skills. Her comments reflect the tensions experienced by trainee teachers aiming to meet the demands of examination success yet finding that whilst their learners wish to achieve a similar goal, they do not share the same orientation. In making pedagogical choices, Ellie demonstrates a preference for using the skills associated with independent study. She finds however that her learners are ill-equipped to respond to this approach and she bemoans their lack of independent study skills. The assumption of learner independency creates a difficulty for Ellie, having planned sessions resting on this assumption. Her options therefore become reduced. Ellie widens her reflection from the immediate to ask why these skills had not been developed either within colleges or as part of pre-college (secondary) provision. Underpinning Ellie's comment is a view that as part of their personal learning history, learners have yet to develop such skills or orientation. The danger of assumption and the importance of elucidation raised in the literature review (Ecclestone, 2000) are revisited here. The need to make explicit the composition of learner autonomy and the skills associated with it require a focus earlier on in the education cycle. In this scenario, assumptions regarding learner autonomy at the post compulsory stage prove to be misplaced.

Once trainees realise that learners are not as independent as presupposed they become aware of a second phenomenon - learner *dependency*. Whilst it may be argued that learners 'depend' upon their teachers in a moral sense - as part of a shared load where each trusts the other to shoulder their respective responsibilities - the findings emerging from this research suggest that it is the teacher who carries a heavier load and that the *trainee*-teacher (in the role of teacher) replicates that of the *teacher* in carrying the learners' expectations. The expectation that the teacher 'shoulders' the responsibility for the learner's achievement is mirrored within the literature (Torrance *et al.*, 2005:46).

The trainees gradually realise that their expectations of the learner are not reciprocated and become aware of the myth of the independent learner by Stage 3. At Stage 4, Eva tells of the amount of pressure on teachers; at

Stage 5, Rita states that ‘...*post 16 learners should have more responsibility for their own learning ...*’ and refers to the *additional ‘burden’* placed on the teachers in response. The comments reflect not only the issue of learner-teacher expectation as part of a triangle of attainment but also a further issue concerning the emotional labour of teachers. Whilst the literature details the impact of the physical workload (Coldwell *et al.*, 2010) and emotional labour of teachers (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Colley, 2006) the demands of the latter are possibly less overt or understood within the public domain.

In perceiving learners as individuals who can organise their own actions in response to initiation by a teacher, trainee teachers develop approaches to learning located in learner independency. In offering a description of the role of the facilitator, Ellie describes the facilitator role as one that ‘... *should encourage independent learning*’. Her view is challenged however when she teaches a group of Advanced level learners who are dependent rather than independent learners. Whereas learner dependency was not confined to level or ability, trainees were particularly surprised when working with learners at Advanced level. Both Rita’s and Ellie’s comments reflect surprise at the disengagement of their learners at this level. The impact on practice is seen in Ellie’s email response. Her rationale for needing to become a ‘...*far more a ‘traditional teacher*’ is linked to the relationship between meeting examination requirements and a ‘... *lack of understanding of the need for independent study*’. Ellie’s comment may be located in personal remembrances of studying at this level combined with an assumption that Advanced Level learners had a particular learning orientation. In either circumstance, as Ellie and her peers narrate, the assumption proves to be unsound. The comments made in relation to A level learners are of interest with respect to the work of Torrance (2007). The author notes that the ‘...*criteria-focused ‘coaching’ of students...*’ includes those following A level programmes in the post-compulsory sector (p.286) hence the implication that A level learners exhibit a similar orientation to peers following non-A level subjects.

### **5.3.3 The reality**

Whereas the nature of teacher accountability or compliance does not emerge within the narratives at the pre-entry stage, issues begin to appear by Stage 2. By the time they reach this point, the data show that trainees have developed some awareness of working with an imposed agenda and the impact of this on their everyday practice. The trainees remain less aware however, of the extent to which these issues are affecting their thinking and practice and thus remain unable to respond effectively to the demands made upon them. When this is revealed at Stage 3, they continue to work for the duration of the PGCE Programme in a similar way rather than considering alternatives.

From Stage 2 onwards the data show that the trainees become aware of the metaphorically-termed audit culture. The checks brought about by such a culture are linked to teacher performance and learner attainment. Trainees comment on the impact such limitations have not only on their practice but also on other stakeholders. Their narratives reflect the dominance of assessment-led methodologies within certain cultures. By Stage 2, trainees have become aware not only of the myth of the independent learner but also of the impact particular approaches to summative assessment adopted within certain work-based contexts have on their practice.

Trainees' comments highlight two aspects of assessment - assessment as part of the learning process and assessment as part of a quality assurance process. The evidence suggests that the two have become intertwined. The comments made by Jay, Ellie, Gee, Rebi and Nick serve to illustrate this point. Whilst measures of assessment are used within the learning process to assess learning, such measures enable other counts to be made. In accounting for learner progression and attainment, information is drawn to define or report on internal and external quality assurance processes. Trainees describe assessment measures as those used to make sector comparisons, to assure funding matched to course continuation and as a tool to measure teacher effectiveness. The impact of assessment processes on

stakeholders however is described in personal terms. Jay describes the situation as unremitting, stating that '*...it seems difficult to see a time when this is likely to change*'. Ellie comments on the stress experienced by her mentor who '*...has clearly felt under considerable pressure from internal quality assurance systems ...*'.

At a time when learners are described as being at the centre of a personalised approach to learning, they are described by trainees as dispossessed or alienated. Jay states that '*...the Quality processes and procedures ... often bemuse students, who would rather be doing something else*'; Gee refers to a '*...distinct lack of learner feedback collected in relation to evaluating the course, the learners' feelings and the learners' recommendations ...*'. Such comments offer resonance with Pring (2011) regarding a humanistic perspective when considering the teaching role and the learner.

There is a noticeable increase in the trainees' concern for the learners during Stages 2-5. This unease appears to displace the original 'passion' for 'their' subject repeatedly stated at Stage 1. The trainees concern for the learners, whilst not clearly articulated as part of pre-entry processes, develops whilst on placement. Trainees display dual emotions regarding the positions taken by their learners: they criticise the learners' lack of independent learning skills whilst appearing protective of them. Trainees are aware of the demands made upon the learners and attempt to shield (Coffield *et al.*, 2005) them from an assessment system that they perceive to be pervasive. At Stage 4 Rita, for example, champions the cause of her learner in gaining a grade uplift yet feels that the grade is still insufficient for the learner to progress. One year later, at Stage 5 Rita rejects the notion of learners '*...as statistics*' continuing the humanist position she purported at Stage 4, a year earlier.

The bittersweet relationship between the trainees and the learners, reflective of contradictory discourses surrounding lecturers' perceptions of their learners (Avis *et al.*, 2002) reflects an ethical domain. As trainees begin to

encounter the nature and range of assessments and assessment methodologies, they also encounter the motivations driving such approaches. The trainees realise that learner motivation is primarily linked to passing the test. They note that the learners are aware of the grades required for a university place and that their learners want to go to university. Whilst such comments appear aspirational, the emphasis is on the word *want*. Similar to that of her peers, Rita's narrative tells of students who '*want a B*' and appear content to 'push' for a particular grade. The 'push' by learners however appears to disregard ethical boundaries and to involve the trainees.

Whereas the learners know that certain grades are needed to gain a university place, trainees' accounts show that some learners are either not prepared or sufficiently self-motivated to work towards securing them. The notes made during the end of year group discussion provide examples of this. The accounts provide evidence of learners' career plans rooted in a pragmatic perspective. The trainees express concerns however at a perceived mis-match between learner attainment and progression. Eva's comments reflect unease over the awarding of grades and the impact on those learners who, later in their career, struggle to meet the demands made of them in higher education. This concern continues into employment. At Stage 5 Rita restates her belief that '*...the focus on high grades ... leads to unethical practice*' as exemplified by *her* re-drafting of coursework.

The trainees' perception of the ethical relationship binding themselves to their learners is called into question as part of their professional practice. The research findings suggest that trainees are concerned about notions of the ethical self. This concern is attached to their personal decision-making and to the decision-making of others with reference to learner assessment. Whilst trainees' accounts provide evidence of their attempts to support the achievements of their learners, their comments show that learner support is located in other practices that trainees feel are unethical. The accounts by Ellie, Rita, Viv and Meli serve as reminders here. The trainees state that the support offered to learners was reactive and produced in response to a type



of helplessness indicative of a performance (rather than learning) orientation (Watkins, 2010). Whilst it is acknowledged that learners need to be supported to achieve, in this scenario pastoral support is located in another place. In this research, learner support is described in terms of learner attainment: learners are supported not to fail. Trainees are asked to ‘support’ learners by ‘repeatedly re-drafting learners’ course work’ for example. Such actions are indicative of the expression ‘teaching to the test’ and to the distorted behaviours (Wenger *et al.*, 2002) arising from such an approach.

The trainees’ collusion in unethical assessments procedures whilst on placement and in employment is raised as an area of concern. Although trainees’ narratives provide evidence that they are disturbed by it, there is little evidence of trainees exerting teacher agency and challenging such approaches. Whilst they question their mentors about approaches to practice, they do not appear to seek guidance from the community in resolving apparent differences. This may be because of the peripheral nature of the trainees’ role or to the legitimacy of it as ascribed by others in the community or the organisation. Such reflections raise concerns for trainee teachers ‘sandwiched’ between three world views concerning the teaching role: one constructed by the trainee; one by the mentor and one by the learner.

This research indicates the moral challenge encountered by trainee teachers caught up in the supposed assessment methodologies needed to secure learner attainment. The impact of this position is described by Jay who provides an insight into what is deemed to be acceptable knowledge namely: ‘...*(teaching to the exam) with anything outside of this having to be deemed irrelevant.*’ Trainees’ comments from Stages 2-5 reflect the perceived impact on practice generated by assessment-led models of learning. Comments made by Gemma, Ellie, Jay and Nick are referred to here. At Stage 2, Gemma refers to the ‘...*testimony of jaded teachers and disillusioned students*’ and of her optimism in being able to ‘... *be creative and try to make the lessons participatory and bearable until the exam in*

*March.* The word ‘bearable’ suggests that both the learners and the trainee do not see the lessons and/or learning as enjoyable. The sense of a deadline (March) implies that there may be a change in attitude or approach post-exam. Ellie’s comments regarding her attempts and disappointments in capturing the learners’ imagination characterises Stage 3 and at Stage 4, Jay comments that the ‘...examination has proved to be the main focus of the course’. His reflection includes a telling comment: ‘This clearly results in a limited overall learning experience, and removes a degree of teacher autonomy ...’ At Stage 5, Nick states that he wishes his first teaching position had been in a Sixth Form College where he believed he would ‘... have had to do much more of my own planning, and relied on my own creativity’.

The comments suggest that trainees were attempting to devise innovative sessions for the learners but were conscious of limiting structures surrounding their choices. In certain cases, the evidence suggests that trainees focused their practice on achieving good examination results and that any choices regarding pedagogy and practice needed to ‘fit’ this outcome. The trainees’ unease regarding approaches to practice reflect those highlighted in current literature. The references signal concerns regarding restrictive practice emerging from a narrowing of the curriculum and an emergence of management principles in education (Craft, 2001; Meadows, 2011; Tummons, 2007).

Whilst the trainees frequently raise the issue of creativity, there is little evidence to show that their notions of creativity depended ‘on the theory of creativity which underpins pedagogy’ (Craft, 2001:18). Such a theory was not clearly articulated in trainees’ narratives nor was it articulated in their accounts of their discussions with mentors. By implication, if neither the trainees nor the mentors share a discourse regarding creativity within teaching, learning and assessment, the trainee is denied the use of a conversant role model. Equally, the mentor and the community are denied alternative or ‘fresh perspectives’ (Wenger, 2002:31).

The findings show the dangers inherent in linking learner assessment to ‘a system of national accountability’ (Toone, 2013:15). The dangers are made visible in the practice of the trainees and later, in their (new) role as teachers. The narratives suggest that a focus on learner attainment evidenced by examination success as interpreted by an organisation has been absorbed by certain communities within it and that a distorted view of learner achievement and attainment operates as a domain within a community. Trainees are confused by this situation - hence the feedback given by previous cohorts regarding a supposed tension or difference between theory and practice and university-and work-based practice may be reviewed and considered in these terms. Importantly, whilst trainees are puzzled by what they see and experience, they do not engage in a discourse with others in order to discuss an alternative account. It is at this point that the trainee as a member of a community of practice can be considered.

#### **5.3.4 Communities of Practice**

Trainees’ responses to the intervention at Stage 3 show the extent not only to which they had adopted the restrictive practices of a community but also their reluctance to alter their current approaches. The pull of the community in determining trainees’ actions is both implicit and explicit. Whilst trainees’ narratives show little awareness of being members of a work-based community of practice - trainees continue to refer to ‘I’ rather than ‘we’ - they are reluctant to work differently to their peers and comply with the contextual norms exhibited by them. It appears however that the needs of the community are overridden by the demands of the organisation.

It is at Stage 3 that the tension between the trainees’ positions, expectations and actual experiences becomes clear. As expounded as part of pre-entry procedures, trainees ‘expect’ learners in the post-compulsory sector to be independent workers and construct their thinking and planning around this pre-conception. They find however, that their experience does not match their expectation. Their narratives show that the discourse with their

mentors does not include a shared exploration of the philosophy of the independent learner and the impact of such a philosophy on pedagogy and practice. This discussion is pushed aside in favour of a centralist philosophy concerning learner attainment.

The role of the mentor emerges in this research as one that unintentionally limits rather than supports the trainees' professional development. Whilst the literature indicates the importance of the mentoring role in supporting trainees' progress (Ofsted, 2003; 2006; 2009; Rajuan *et al.*, 2008; DCSF Select Committee Report, 2010; Skills Commission Report, 2009) it also highlights the inconsistencies attached to it within the sector and the impact of such inconsistencies on trainees' development (Ofsted, 2006; Ofsted, 2007). In considering the triangular relationship affecting the mentor, trainee and learner, the question of whether a mentor is a gatekeeper, negotiator or role model arises. The findings arising from this research indicates that there is one particular point where divergence occurs: this point is defined as the time when trainees employ innovative ideas or strategies or take risks. The argument is supported as follows: programme data for the cohort show that no formal complaints regarding subject knowledge or professional conduct were recorded. There was evidence to show however, that where problems did arise, they were connected to trainee approaches to delivery. The tensions were twofold and reflected both mentor and trainee concerns. Whilst mentors questioned trainees' approaches to practice, trainees reciprocated by talking of a '*creative downturn*' - a term coined by Nick. Mentors seemed to interpret trainees' interactive approaches to learning as risky and likely to endanger examination success.

In scenarios such as this, a view of a role model as a 'powerful aid': someone '...who can provide a learner with an apprenticeship approach to developing creativity' (Craft, 2001:18) is reduced. The trainees *are* adult learners and therefore the notion of role modelling remains important. Whilst there is evidence to show that trainees are responsive to the needs of their learners and in turn, plan lessons to engage them, the role of the

mentor is seen as important in helping to interpret or mediate the orientation of the learner. This finding emerges as a significant feature within the research.

The placement experience involves the trainee teacher, the learners and practising colleagues participating in a process of social interaction. The trainees as members of a community become involved with the structures operating within the context. The evidence suggests however, that behavioural norms have become skewed by organisational and individual interpretations of particular educational agendas. By placing the trainee in certain contexts, the evidence implies that he or she has become part of a collaborative circle engineered around student attainment. Importantly, trainees knowingly collude in this process and reflect such tenets within their behaviour. Trainees recognise the inequities within the context yet comply with existing norms.

The findings from this research indicate that part of this collusion is linked to the trainees' inability to establish a personal, theoretical, critical discourse within the community. The importance of such a discourse concerning critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010) is given prominence within the literature (Rajuan *et al.*, 2008; Page, 2010). By Stage 5, the trainee teachers' inability to operate as critical thinkers within the structural boundaries of the community becomes apparent. The inability to engage in a critical discourse is identified as a factor limiting the construction of a professional identity. The implications of this are discussed shortly (see Chapter 6).

The comments contained in trainees' earlier narratives show trainees making conceptual links to issues affecting practice. The references are less theoretically-based however, they are concerned with quality assurance systems and processes and a focus on examination success as a measure of overall effectiveness. Once employed, case study trainees' comments show a continuing awareness of the performance culture and tell of its impact on their practice.

#### 5.4 Response to the two research questions

In response to Question 1, the findings suggest that trainee teachers have a limited awareness of their *professional* identities following completion of the programme or one year later post-employment. Professionalism is viewed as procedural rather than representative of a professional body of knowledge. The trainees leave the programme with an awareness of meeting professional standards but not with a strong sense of the professional self. Whilst the use of standards is reflective of the methods used by a profession to measure the performance of its membership, it is an incomplete measure and offers only a partial construction of the professional self.

Whereas the exclusion of the trainees' from contemporary debate is described as that exercised dually by political 'others' and by local interpretation, it also involves a type of self-exclusion on the part of the trainees. Trainees begin the PGCE PCET programme with a focus on self-actualisation in the role of the teacher rather than a consideration of the self as a professional working with a professional body of knowledge. The findings suggest that a concentration on teacher professionalism does *not* dominate trainee thinking or practice. Trainees are not focused on making an overt commitment to joining a profession when joining a PGCE PCET programme. Their thoughts are largely pragmatic and understandably on securing future employment. In addition, trainees like Ellie question why such attention is given to teacher professionalism as part of a PGCE PCET programme of study, assuming for example, that it exists and that this situation is sufficient. As such, it is argued that trainees do not lay claim to a position or provide an alternative account to others regarding their interpretation of teacher professionalism.

In terms of constructing their *teaching* identities, the findings suggest that trainees' self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 2005) is skewed by the agendas they are working with and that certain perspectives gained whilst on the

programme continue into employment. Continuing tensions cited by Ellie and Rita at Stage 4 are reiterated one year later (Stage 5). The tensions are identified firstly as those existing between a teacher operating in the preferred role of facilitator and a learner whose dependency upon the teacher limits their response to the facilitation role. Secondly, trainees adopt or revert to a so-called 'traditional' style of teaching in opposition to their preferred position as facilitator in order to manage the approaches to assessment used within work-based settings. The issue arising from constructing their teaching identities under the guise of 'traditionalism' are twofold: firstly, it suggests that knowledge is located in a transmission model and that the role of the teacher is to transmit knowledge in order to ensure that learners pass their examinations - teaching to the test (Nuffield Review, 2009; Pring, 2011; Wenger, 2002). In doing so, teachers have little time to nurture their learners. Secondly, reverting to or continuing in the role of the 'traditional' teacher is at odds with a teacher whose identity is constructed around the current personalised agenda - that described as student-centred or focused (DfES, 2004; O'Neill *et al.*, 2005).

The identity of the teacher as nurturer conflicts with the demands of the teacher in the role of assessor. The tension becomes more pronounced as the placement continues. The trainees become aware that they are 'accountable' for the successes of their learners. They also find, as they work more closely with their learners, that the personal needs of the learners *matters* to them. The findings show that the pragmatics demonstrated pre-entry underpinning the trainees' reasons for undertaking the PGCE PCET programme; their egotistic views regarding the role of the teacher and their 'passion' for their subject become less intense as they begin to focus more on their learners.

Question 2 considered the factors limiting the development of trainee teachers' abilities to construct a coherent account of their professional and teacher identities. The findings suggest that whilst the trainees' pragmatism and resilience appears to enable them to complete the programme and to

secure employment, they emerge with a limited awareness of their professional identities and a fractured account of their teaching identities.

Whilst the evidence shows that trainees enter PGCE PCET programmes with less idealised or traditional views of teaching and its professional role, the findings also suggests that trainees do not engage in a conversations about teacher identity and professionalism within their work-based communities. There seemed to be a scarcity of in situ discussions about what learning *is* and limited opportunities to share debates moving ‘... beyond the technique of subject specialist pedagogy to embrace deeper issues surrounding contemporary and future practice’ (Fisher and Webb, 2006: 348). This situation is problematic if *effective* communities are described as those that enable trainees and practitioners to participate freely in the resolution of everyday issues. The agenda within organisations is so focused on issues connected to learner attainment and to quality-related processes connected to learner attainment that little space is consciously provided for conversations concerning trainee teacher development. As Ellie states at Stage 5 and importantly, one year later, there is ‘...*little time for CPD*’.

Whilst on placement, trainees become legitimate yet temporary members of existing communities. The findings show that although trainees do not talk about being excluded or alienated (Orr, 2012) from their respective communities, their comments show that they do not see themselves as fully integrated members of certain communities. There is little evidence of collaborative learning or collegiate activity whilst on placement. In arguing that interaction at the boundaries is usually an experience of being exposed to a foreign competence’ and one that may produce ‘generative tension’ (Wenger, 2000:10) the issue here concerns the lack of ‘pull’ between competence and experience. The lack of generative tension is reflective of the roles played by both the trainees and existing members of a community and their contribution to its domain.



For trainees, their attempts to trial new ways of working are blocked early on in the placement experience. Ellie's narrative provides detailed evidence of this. The comments made by other trainees also reflect this position: references to 'jaded teachers' serve to reinforce the point here. Similar to the findings in other related ITT/E research (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006) the trainees encountered to some extent, demoralised lecturers. Described as a 'phenomenon' (p.179) by the authors, trainees continued to meet issues related to workload post-training.

Mentors do not appear to provide the pull of experience to support or develop the trainees' competence. It was signalled that on entry to the PGCE PCET programme, some trainees talked about wanting to learn *from* others. The findings show that few trainees refer to their mentors as teaching or professional role models. Mentors appeared to provide few alternative views of teaching or of developing a professional teaching identity for trainees to consider. A reason for this may be found in the community itself. The perspectives that are provided are representative of a culture constructed around learner attainment and of the practices inherent within it. These perspectives are presented with few links to trainees' professional development: repetition of practice rather than development appears to dominate the discourse.

It could be argued that those participating in effective communities of practice should be able to share the same objectives whilst holding a differing perspective. Theoretically, in sharing objectives yet adopting a differing standpoint, the domain of the community remains uncompromised; the community gains legitimacy within an organisation and acquires a voice. The evidence suggests that certain communities are not operating as effective communities of practice because the requirements of an organisation, in responding to external political demands, provide little space for effective communities to develop. Agreement regarding a body of knowledge required to constitute that of the teacher and professional is secondary to that agreed with respect to learner attainment. The development of the trainees' dual identities in such contexts therefore is

limited. The opportunities for trainees to develop as critically-literate, thinking and autonomous individuals are limited by the context and the communities in which they are placed.

In presenting Question 2, I argued that I did not see the trainees as passive figures. Pre-entry data reinforces this perspective: trainees enter PGCE PCET programmes with intentions to complete the programme and to become a teacher. For Rita and Ellie, at the end of their first year in employment - whilst still vibrant characters, they have either managed or become part of a cultural ethos constructed around learner assessment and attainment. Trainees meet the challenges arising from context-bound requirements but appear to do so on their own. There is little evidence to show that trainees exert agency, actively bring about change or create opportunities for challenging the existing structures or procedures that inhibit learning as part of a community. The evidence suggest that as the trainees continue through the year and into employment, they appear to succumb to or be subsumed by the demands of an assessment-led approach operated within an organisation and agreed consciously or subconsciously by a community.

In summary: the limitations affecting the construction of the trainees' teaching and professional identities can be described as both structural and perceptual. Whilst the trainees adopt the practices of the work-based communities they inhabit, they appear to remain outside of the community itself - identifying more with their learners than the learning community. This situation continues post-employment.

Limitations also arise from the trainees themselves. Whilst it is evident that trainees have the capacity to complete the programme, the findings show that trainees are ill-prepared to join the sector. There is little evidence in pre-entry data to show that trainees understood the sector, its employees or the learners within it. The prevailing view that learners in this sector made a conscious decision to go to a college or other learning setting and were therefore independent learners was not supported by the trainees'

experiences. The trainees aimed to compensate for a lack of learner engagement by developing more activities. In doing so, trainees felt that they were working within the realms of a personalised agenda and complying with the principles underpinning it yet taking on more responsibility themselves. Trainees became aware of the demands attached to the assessment of learners and to the hidden penalties attached where learner 'success' was not achieved yet they did not appear to have either the confidence or capacity to implement strategies to reduce the impact of this. As such, trainees experienced the pressures attached to an assessment-driven approach established within the work-based context. From this perspective certain conclusions can be drawn.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications for the future**

The evidence arising from this research suggests that for trainee teachers placed within the post-compulsory sector the process of acquiring a professional teaching identity is complex and less assured. The evidence not only coheres with that identified within current literature regarding the problematic nature of teacher professionalism, it also intensifies and extends it. The conclusions and implications for the future are substantial.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

Three conclusions are drawn in response to the findings. Whilst discussed separately, they are also interlinked. Firstly, trainee teachers are not held to account *as professionals*. If accountability is derived from responsibility (Popham, 2000), it would follow that trainee teachers acting in professionally responsible roles would be regarded as accountable. The conclusion drawn from this research suggests however that trainee teachers, mentors and teachers are not held to account as professionals because they are subject to rather than included in decision-making processes. Teacher accountability has become part of teachers' labour rather than constructed as an acceptable part of a professional role.

Educational policy post-1992 has redefined connections between professional responsibility and accountability. Framed within an agenda of improvement, the professional role of the teacher has become diluted as teachers take on greater responsibilities for the attainment of their learners. As trainees' narratives show, teachers have become deliverers of targets rather than creators of the curriculum. The work-based communities they join as trainees or later, as employees, offer insufficient challenge to existing processes hence trainees do not have a space in which to resolve the connections between educational policy and their professional role. In recounting the ethical dilemmas they face, trainees attempt to reconcile their professional self-concept and views on professional practice with those of

existing practitioners and of the organisation. In emulating the practice of their colleagues, trainees look towards compromise, compatibility or compliance and begin to work ‘...in ways that are contrary to such a professional self-concept’ (Fisher and Webb, 2006:342).

In implementing agendas abstracted from educational policy, organisations make little reference to teacher professionalism. The impact of insufficiently mediated agendas therefore becomes visible in the standardised practices of existing staff. Trainees struggle to exert agency in managing external and internal influences and in extricating themselves from knowingly unethical practices. For some, their identities become shaped by an institutional focus on particular agendas symptomatic of an imposed ‘form of professionalism’ (Lingfield, 2012:2).

The dominance of the discourse surrounding accountability and compliance excludes that of others. Critical discussions regarding the constituents of teacher accountability fail to emerge hence there is a lack of clarity concerning to whom or for what teachers are accountable. Whilst trainees are aware of what they must do to ensure learner attainment - and the consequences if otherwise (in terms of funding or course closure) - they are unsure about what teacher accountability *is*. The narratives surrounding conflicting agendas are neither sufficiently explained nor shared hence the trainees work with fragmented stories; the reality of their experiences disrupts connections to expectations thus hindering the development of their teaching identities.

The second conclusion is that knowledge is constructed within an assessment-led approach to learning. The trainee teachers experience knowledge within the confines of particular approaches to learner assessment. Rather than working with formative assessment to support learning, they experience assessment *as* learning (Torrance, 2007). Debates concerning ‘academic’ or ‘vocational’ knowledge take second place to the type of knowledge required to pass a test. In addition, subject and professional knowledge become squeezed within the power discourses of

learner assessment and attainment. Once on placement, trainees experience the ‘official-unofficial’ discourse surrounding knowledge and the learning society (Bathmaker, 2005). Their idealised expectations of intrinsically-motivated, independent, post-compulsory learners become altered as they work with learners in the role of trainee and employee. In both roles, their expectations and desires for learners to be active, inquiring participants in the learning process is central to their philosophy of learning. This philosophy lies in constructivist theory where knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in a social setting with a shared dialogue - a scenario suited to the preferred role of facilitator. The discourse of learner assessment, however, is not located in constructivist theory. The realisation that a goal-orientated culture creates learner dependency rather than independency leads trainees to alter their perceptions of both their learners and themselves.

Furthermore, the contradictions inherent in a personalised agenda surface as trainees worked with learners who expect to be led. For the trainees in this research, leadership came to be seen as leading learners to achieve successful grades rather than towards the gaining of new knowledge. Whilst trainees may have wished to operate in the role of facilitators, few were unable to do so because of the drivers associated with success. In responding to such drivers, trainees needed to rethink their approaches to pedagogical practice. In doing so, they relinquished elements of their preferred pedagogy in favour of those of the existing community. Where attempts to provide alternatives were made, trainees were confined by the demands of an impending examination or assessment task. Hence, meeting knowledge enshrined within learner assessment models became problematic for trainees. The role of the trainee teacher therefore becomes distorted as he or she becomes engaged in a redefinition of knowledge or in understanding what ‘counts’ as valuable knowledge.

The third conclusion is that the domain uniting a community and promoting the individual as a critically-literate, autonomous professional is undermined by other conflicting agendas. These agendas supersede the domain of a

community as part of transference or exchange from one community to another.

In terms of this research, the philosophy of the PGCE PCET programme was explained as that resting in the development of the professional, critical self. The vision and purpose emanating from this philosophical position has the conscious aim of developing a certain kind of teacher - one able to recognise the context in which he or she is working and to challenge existing discourses (Bolton, 2014). How this philosophy is exchanged as part of collaborative delivery across different communities is of concern here. The evidence suggests that the structures within certain contexts enables or disrupts the development of the professional, critical self.

Whilst much has been made in this research about the pragmatics surrounding trainees' motivations for joining the programme, the conclusion drawn is that pragmatism does not offer a bulwark against other agendas and expectations. Whereas pragmatics and tenacity may have enabled the trainees to complete the programme, their experiences of learner assessment and attainment processes continued to have an impact on their professional teaching role post-training. The consistency of the cohort response - mapped across 20 different work-based locations - combined with the longevity of the study, reinforces this view. Trainees' perspectives concerning assessment practices, learner orientation and workload remained constant from Stage 2 and one year later, once in employment. Thus the suggestion that teachers modify their views at the beginning of their teaching career as part of a tripartite notion of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction (Day *et al.*, 2006:608) is interpreted differently with reference to this research. In this study, trainees appear to deconstruct their initial views regarding the identity of a teacher yet either fail to reconstruct them on a personal level or opt to reconstruct them to fit an existing organisational model. In the role of newly qualified teachers, the narratives tell of continuation of practice rather than alteration. The suggestion therefore is that trainees become immersed in existing cultures and struggle to emerge as critically-literate, independent practitioners.

Earlier in the thesis it was argued that the turbulent history of the post-compulsory sector affected the practices of existing teachers. Whilst this research found little evidence to show that there was a conscious transference of an inherited discourse from practitioners to trainees, there is evidence to show that trainees not only internalised an existing discourse regarding learner attainment, they reflected it in their practice and continued to do so post-training. Existing practitioners appeared to be less threatened by the arrival of trainees with ‘new’ ideas or ‘new’ ways of doing things (Hayes, 2001); they were more fearful of trainees de-railing the route to learner attainment. The pull of the community in supporting organisational agendas around attainment and quality was so powerful that trainees had little opportunity to exchange their knowledge and experience and to play a more central role. Thus, pre-service trainees encountered similar constraints to their in-service colleagues as part of their placement and employment experience, with limited opportunities to interrupt this cycle.

Whilst the narratives show that trainees held alternative views of the teaching role, they chose to articulate them within the university-based community rather than as part of the placement experience. In such communities, although membership is temporary, trainees occupy a central place within them. They are expected to review their professional practice, with others, in an open and constructive manner. In these communities, trainees are viewed as professionals with a professional role to enact. Their identity as a critical practitioner is pronounced within the domain. It appears however that this domain does not traverse differing contexts because in certain work-based communities, a focus on responding to a compliancy agenda has replaced the domain. Attempts by trainees to propose or enact their own ideologies became blocked or bypassed by contextual structures and their capacity to override such structures (Mutton, 2012) remains limited. As such, trainee teachers placed in particular work-based contexts do not have anywhere to locate *their* descriptions of teacher professionalism because the concept is insufficiently vocalised or shared. Not only is their



‘voice’ unheard, the opportunity for trainees to practise their critical voice is limited because the underlying structures are unsupportive of such practices.

If, as argued, trainees teachers develop their professional teaching identities via interaction within social settings the impact of such limited provision in shaping teacher the identities of newly qualified teachers cannot be underestimated. In moving forward, recognition of a community’s domain and its importance within organisational structures needs to be agreed, upheld and revisited as new ITT/E partnerships evolve. It is at this point that implications arising from the research can be considered.

## **6.2 Implications for the future**

Whilst the conclusions drawn relate to the findings of this research, the implications for practice have a wider remit. These are considered with respect to the future of teacher education - placed within a context of sector deregulation, fragmentation of the routes into teacher training and the implementation of School Direct.

Firstly, the implications for university-school/college partnerships rest in the contested area of criticality and homogeneity. Contemporary literature suggests that organisational interpretation of educational policy over time, has led to the development of a particular ideology and a narrowing of professional practice within everyday working. Whilst this comment is not new, what is of concern is the impact of this situation when viewing trainee teachers as future practitioners and agents of change. It can be argued that a stage must be reached when the trainee is enabled to exert his or her ideology regarding pedagogy and practice and to ‘... emulate the teacher’s methods without sacrificing her own vision’ (Tellez, 2007:151).

Whilst the findings from this research suggest that emulation of others’ practice is not always beneficial, supporting the trainee to make explicit his or her ‘vision’ regarding pedagogical practice remains important. This

process is not without difficulty however. It requires those involved in supporting trainee teachers to engage with a critical discourse. This research highlights the potential difficulties:

*It will be interesting to see to what extent practitioners involve themselves in the debate. An important aspect of the de-skilling of teachers was the replacement of their power to innovate by a curriculum which is static and state-imposed. Will the contemporary culture of teaching include a willingness to engage again in debate about curriculum development?*

(Johnson, 2004:8)

Partnerships need to determine a space in which communities can engage in a critical discourse not only about the curriculum in the post-compulsory sector but also about the role played by trainee teachers within it. Currently, time constraints coupled with a lack of an institutionally-led ideology regarding professional practice places restrictions on such discussions.

The integration of course and workplace learning (Maxwell, 2010) requires more than recognition of an apparent theory-practice divide. Collaborative partnerships need to support trainee teachers in their attempts to construct a critical ideology around the building of their professional identities. This requires a conscious effort at a time of deregulation. The contradictions in developing the professional teacher at such a time are clear. Deregulation concerns the profession as a whole because it permeates all sectors. As initiatives such as School Direct become embedded, there is a danger that the instrumentalist teacher will emerge.

The gain of individuals with a successful, previous career in business or industry to the post-compulsory sector needs to be balanced against the possible loss of teacher training programmes to accompany the transition. Whilst occupational knowledge offers value within the post-compulsory sector (and has been part of its tradition) its inclusion with an ITT/E framework is now under threat. In response to current agendas, partnerships need to articulate how they will develop an individual's subject and

pedagogical knowledge within a changing context. This research highlights the need for partners to provide the trainee teacher with contextual knowledge in order to help them understand and mediate existing political policy in order to prepare them for the challenges they face. Such an approach requires an appraisal of the attention given to professional learning amidst other discussions concerning ‘...what counts as achievement in the organization’ (Watkins, 2010:5).

If such discussions do not take place, the current political stance regarding greater teacher autonomy (Wolf, 2011; DoE, 2010) will remain rhetorical. Conceptual reform (Tellez, 2007) is required. The current placing of trainees in work-based contexts needs to be considered alongside ideologies of practice. Placing trainee teachers in work-based contexts where development of the critical teacher is not at the heart of its working endangers the profession as a whole. As School Direct continues to develop, the cautionary tale provided by this research is as follows: where organisations are focused on a results-led, league-table agenda, the prospect of developing a critically-literate, future teacher is reduced. Future trainees trained in such contexts risk replicating such ideologies rather than challenging them.

A further implication for ITT/E partnerships concerns personalisation. Partnerships need to make transparent the role of the teacher and the learner within a personalised agenda. In arguing that learning is assessment-led, its location within a personalised agenda adds further complexities. In its broadest sense, a personalised approach to learning would involve both the learner and the teacher in a process of negotiation. The philosophy underpinning such an approach however has yet to develop to the point whereby the teacher and the learner work collaboratively to generate new knowledge and take joint ownership of the learning process. Whilst post-16 contexts are supportive of the philosophy underpinning the notion of the independent learner as part of ‘work readiness’ strategies, the transition from school or other post-compulsory settings does not carry with it a legacy of learner autonomy. Learners need to be supported to develop the

sophisticated thinking skills required prior to joining a post-16 course. The structures of learner and learning support have become confused with other agendas and need to be untangled. Such untangling requires a holistic rather than a diminished view of the learner (Ecclestone, 2007).

If, as suggested, learners have evolved into performance-orientated rather than learning-orientated learners and that ‘quick-fix’ teachers and learners have arisen in response to the mechanisation of education, the roles of the teacher and the learner need to be reevaluated. As the demands of the learner become more apparent, learner expectation needs to be factored into future discussions. Equally, the provision of pastoral or emotional support - echoed in the trainees’ narratives - needs to be revisited. Its current position within the attainment agenda is adding to the emotional labour of teachers and thus distorting the teacher-learner relationship. The impact of this aspect of teachers’ work on sector retention is returned to shortly.

The interplay between the agendas of personalisation, learner support and assessment also require greater understanding. The connections within this triangle are insufficiently explained hence confusion about roles and responsibilities persist. The trainees’ narratives provide consistent evidence regarding trainee and learner engagement as part of the assessment process and of the unease experienced by both parties as a result of this engagement. The trainees appear unsure of where to place their allegiances as they experience a tussle between the demands emerging from local interpretations of learner assessment and the conflicting demands of their learners. In appearing to place their allegiances with the learners rather than a community, the trainees are highlighting their insecurities around this issue

Finally, universities and their ITT/E partners need to engage in a discussion regarding a philosophy of collaborative practice in order to understand what collaborative learning *is*. Furthermore, partners need to discuss the formal and informal structures associated with an identified and identifiable philosophy. If communities of practice are valued as supportive structures

as part of a collaborative programme of teacher development, the conditions required to support these communities need to be both agreed and implemented before the trainees are placed within them.

Underpinning the domain of such communities would be a vision of teaching as a complex activity with a recognised need for teachers to engage in an on-going process of professional learning (Panitz, 1999); a space where abstract knowledge and professional knowledge are recognised as part of a community's practice. For trainee teachers to be effective in their training and future role as teachers, they need to become immediate, active members of such communities. Whilst it is understood that this position is not easily secured, it is important that ITT/E programmes and partnerships recognise the position of immediacy. It could be argued that the current Ofsted framework (2014) does not allow for peripheral engagement of trainees. The expectation is that trainees will be involved immediately and make rapid progress. In this context, the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' is ignored and outdated. Ironically, in scenarios where immediacy is foregrounded, the importance of the thinking teacher becomes heightened.

The implications for teacher educators rest in working with trainees emerging from differing, less-idealised positions, thus offering challenges to existing perspectives regarding teacher identity and professionalism. As trainees' narratives tell a different story on entry to PGCE ITTE programmes, questions concerning the currency of existing accounts of teacher professionalism and fitness for purpose can be asked. Whilst the literature reflects a reduction in the status of teaching as a profession - vocalised and lamented as a loss of autonomy in public and political arenas - incoming trainees may not share such concerns. Their narratives signal a different approach to constructing a professional identity and differing interpretations of the teaching role. It could be argued that trainees are already mentally prepared to work with the notion of teaching as a 'job' and that somewhat ironically, it is the teacher educator and associated practitioners who attempt to provide them with a protective, 'professional'

uniform. As such, the teacher educator and his or her peers may be seen as anachronistic.

A second challenge for the teacher educator is that brought about by political intervention within the higher education sector. The introduction of the business, quality and the outcomes-based, performance models in the post-compulsory sector are now evident within higher education. Finance and education are becoming synonymous and tensions regarding conflicting ideologies and agendas pervade the discourse. The threat to the distinctive nature of higher education (as opposed to universities) by a utilitarian, generic approach to knowledge exists (Wheelahan, 2013). The challenge for teacher educators lies in supporting the development of teacher trainees whilst also operating within a culture of accountability. Restrictions to their personal and professional practice may, like the trainees in this research, lead to compromise, compatibility or compliance. The tension in helping to resolve such difficulties becomes apparent, especially if teacher educators believe that a consideration of moral issues ‘... distinguishes their form of professionalism from one resembling a pure apprenticeship’ (Tellez, 2007: 545).

Whilst aware of the challenges, it is possible to identify areas where teacher educators can support trainee teachers in meeting the challenges they face. Firstly, teacher educators can help trainees to unpick assumptions surrounding terms such as ‘criticality’ and ‘autonomy’ and to consider them within the context of post-compulsory education. As part of a shared discussion there is the opportunity to explore the complexities and challenges underpinning the labels as part of work-place learning and to consider feasible strategies in response. Secondly, teacher educators and mentors can develop stronger connections between ITT/E and CPD *if* their roles become part of a professional formation model. Whilst the findings from this study echoes many others in supporting the development of the learning professional (Guile and Lucas, 1999) and in arguing the need for a coherent approach to CPD post- training, the teacher educator is well-placed to broker the links between the two. The importance of continuing CPD as

part of career development remains constant; its shape and content as part of career transition however need further exploration. Thirdly, teacher educators can support trainees by exploring more fully the emotional labour of teachers (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Colley, 2006). It could be argued that this concept is underplayed in some ITT/E courses and therefore not fully recognised within the teaching role. Whilst the research did not seek to make a link between it and the retention of the newly-trained teacher in the classroom, trainees' narratives suggested that many trainee teachers become disillusioned whilst on placement. For the two Case Studies, the disillusionment continued into employment. To reduce this, greater attention needs to be paid to the labour of teachers as part of the change agenda.

This research highlighted two issues requiring further attention. Firstly, that trainees did not *join* the PCET programme with a sense of building a professional identity as part of a transition from self to professional self and that they *left* the programme with an awareness of meeting professional standards but not with a strong sense of the professional self. Secondly, that certain communities did not provide them with the opportunities to explore this self (Kelchtermans, 2005) in ways that enabled them to develop as confident professionals. Their views of teaching as a 'profession' and of 'being a professional' were not coherent and therefore opened up the possibility of teacher vulnerability post-training. Whilst the use of standards is reflective of the methods used by a profession to measure the performance of its membership, it is an incomplete measure and offers only a partial construction of the professional self.

Unless trainee teachers leave a PGCE PCET programme with more than a semblance of a professional identity, cumulative, future risks affecting the identity of the wider teaching profession are likely to unfold. This comment is set against the knowledge that the Case Study trainees, like many others in the sector, secured temporary teaching positions. Sector instability does not favour the construction of a coherent professional identity hence arguably; the need to focus on CPD remains stronger in this sector than in others. Little time is allocated to CPD despite a view that it is an effective

way of retaining a ‘modern professionalised workforce’ (Further Education Workforce Strategy Survey Report, 2011).

The future of teacher education is at a crossroads. It may be argued that incoming trainee teachers could be ‘left’ to continue with a pragmatic mindset - one more suited to teaching described as a ‘job’ and the teacher as a curriculum ‘deliverer’ (Pring,2011). Arguably, joining a twenty-first century ‘workforce’ requires neither a description nor a professional identity. As the role of universities in educating teachers reduces in favour of school and employer-led provision, it is feasible that the pragmatic teacher will survive. In considering the teacher of the future, it is an appropriate point to revisit the concept of critical reflexivity. The concept was discussed in Chapter 3 (Methodology) and included within the discussion was recognition of trainee teachers’ ability (or otherwise) to engage critically with the challenges they faced. In revisiting the concept here, reference is made to the recently-introduced ‘Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training’ (2014). The *Introduction* to the Standards includes the opening statement below:

*Teachers and trainers are **reflective** and **enquiring** practitioners who think **critically** about their own educational assumptions, values and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world. They draw on relevant research as part of **evidence-based practice** (original emphasis)*

(Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training –England, 2014:1)

The contextual presence of the statement implies recognition of the value of the reflective practitioner within a changing world. The additional reference to research also indicates a link between professional learning and critical evaluation. Whilst the ‘unknowns’ remain present - ownership of the Standards; their introduction at a time of deregulation; the role of the



employer as part of implementation; their existence as part of a long-term commitment to workplace learning - the suggested link between criticality and practice offers a space for teacher educators to begin 'fresh' discussions with trainees about teacher professionalism, pedagogy and practice. In my role as a teacher educator, for example, there is an opportunity to explore the concept of dual professionalism (as expressed within the Standards) as part of a wider discussion concerning the nature and use of knowledge. Additional discussions can centre on how trainees combine elements of occupational, pedagogical, subject and professional knowledge within and external to the classroom. The issues of managerialism and performativity have not been displaced by the introduction of the new Standards hence supporting trainees' to engage critically with the challenges they face remains present.

This support is defined as that designed to encourage trainees to identify, negotiate and manage contextual approaches to learning and assessment in order to support the development of a coherent account of teacher professionalism. Whilst teacher educators need to assist trainees' understanding of the context in which they are placed and to support a greater evaluation of their role within it, the greater task is to enable trainees to understand how *their* knowledge, actions and decisions can be transformative for their learners. To achieve this, trainees need to experience a range of learning contexts and communities in order to develop a personal ideology and a vision that can be translated into contextual practice. Perceived binaries concerning compliance and creativity; theory and practice are reduced if trainees are able to establish themselves as individuals with a critical, conceptual approach to teaching and learning.

### **6.3 Final reflections**

In concluding the thesis, reference is made to a popular view that educational research findings remain unconsidered by politicians because they do not include or offer alternatives. In response, as the education

sector is currently imbued with a number of reviews affecting future curriculum and qualification developments, the voices of the trainee teacher and teacher educator could be included within them. Whilst numerous ‘consultations’ regarding educational change abound, higher education institutions have to fight for a place at the partnership table.

The thesis concludes on a pessimistic note. Whilst my personal knowledge has increased significantly as a result of engaging with it and the Doctor of Education programme, I recognise the difficulties in sharing the findings as originally intended. As part of the research focus and design, I stated in the Introduction to the thesis that the conclusions will be disseminated at political and practitioner levels. I argued that the findings arising from the research would promote the questioning of assumptions regarding the impact and implementation of policy on the everyday working practice of the teacher educator, the trainee teacher and all those involved in the training and education of future teachers in the sector. The sector however continues to face turbulent times and to encounter continuing criticism regarding the slow improvement made within it (Ofsted, 2012). Teacher education programmes continue to be caught up in policies with a misplaced focus. Political attention would be better paid to the structures supporting colleagues to remain in the sector and the profession rather than those about to join.

The development of future teachers appears to lie in the hands of the initially proposed FE Guild (BIS, 2012). The introduction and re-naming of the Guild (now the Education and Training Foundation) in the same academic year however reflects a continuing, unsettled picture. It remains unknown therefore whether these on-going developments will create a culture in which to support the development of the trainee as a critically-literate, future teacher and professional who in turn will shape the lives of their learners.

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## Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Guido's Story: Extract from Assignment 5

### (Doctor of Education programme: Phase A)

*Whilst observing the classroom delivery of a trainee teacher during Spring 2008, I noticed that his lesson plan was showing the wrong date. When asked about this, the student offered the view that he had 'forgotten' to change it from the previous week.*

*Extract taken from Doctor of Education Research Log. Entry entitled: 'Recycling the lesson plan'.*

Following the reading of this extract, it could be the case that an unnecessary fuss is being made by an over-zealous observer about something which appears to be the result of a forgetful mind. Equally, one could ask if a lesson plan requires such scrutiny and proceed to question the relevance of such a task. The above extract, however, provides an introduction to the debate surrounding the proposal.

Placed in isolation, the trainee's response regarding his action may not 'seem to matter'. When placed next to a series of similar comments and actions, however, it probably does. It is, in fact, this sense of continuation and repetition that has gained my attention. The ways in which trainee teachers approach the lesson planning process and construct the lesson plan forms the basis of this proposal. The research will seek to explore the apparent conflict between expediency and creativity regarding the trainee teacher's approach to lesson planning and in particular, to establish *if* the trainee teacher is able to identify such a conflict.

In my role as teacher educator, I have become increasingly aware that there has been a growing tendency for trainee teachers, working in the post-compulsory sector, to become *so involved* with the completion of the lesson plan template that they are becoming more 'forgetful' of the thinking underlying it. In the extract above, the fact that the student 'reveals' that he has forgotten to change the date is *not* the issue. From a point of censure, it could be argued that the real concern is to do with his inability to revisit his previous lesson plan or to update it from the previous week. He is content to recycle it and to offer the same plan to *another* class. In this case, the student view seems to be that the lesson plan, once written, will 'do the job'. Equally, the student, as with his peers may be prepared to take the risk of being 'found out' because the task of planning every night is indicative of the workload associated with it - hence the incident may be cultural rather than incidental.

The above comments could prompt a further debate regarding ethical and moral issues, the flexible use of a lesson plan compared to notions of durability; it could include discussions surrounding a 'lazy' student or a time-saving economist. Within the midst of the debate would be views on professionalism. These debates, however, coalesce under the heading of the *real* cause for concern - the impact of evidence-based, outcome-based learning on practice.

It may be useful to consider how this situation has arisen. The lesson plan template appears to have evolved alongside the changes occurring within the post-compulsory, Learning and Skills sector (LLS), causing it to situate itself within a particular paradigm. Current literature (Armitage, et al. 2002; Coffield et al 2005; Browne, 2007) offers a comment on the rapid changes which have taken place within this sector over the last two decades. The discussion centres around the impact such changes have had on the curriculum and on the professional lives of those delivering it. Hence this research, whilst seeking to account for the credibility of such views, will seek to locate itself in the trainees' approach to lesson planning within a context of change.

Stage	Programme sequence	Cohort	Evidence source	Objective of data collection
<b>1</b>	<b>Pre programme</b>			
	Recruitment and selection	Full cohort	Trainee application forms presentation panel interview literacy assessment task	To establish initial motivations for undertaking the PGCE PCET programme
<b>2</b>	<b>On programme</b>			<b>Objective of data collection</b>
2a	Two day Induction phase	Full cohort	Trainee journal entry comments made in response to Induction activities including 10 minute group presentation	To develop and challenge Objective 1
2b	Unit delivery	Full cohort	Trainee journal entry comments made in response to Unit delivery: Unit 1: Theory and Principles of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Unit 3:	To monitor development of trainees views regarding development of professional identity
2c	<i>Trainee placement experience Nov 08 -May 09.</i>	Observation case load of 12 trainees	Journal entries Lesson plans Lesson evaluations Lesson observations Observer feedback Mentor feedback	To extract data as part of case study selection process
2d	Assignment completion	Full cohort	Trainee assignment-based written comments	extract data as part of case study selection process
2e	Case Study selection January 2009		Journal entries Observations Lesson plan Lesson evaluations Observer Feedback Unit 1 Assignment responses	select case studies based on case load and accumulated data
2f	Trainee placement experience Nov 08- May 09.	Observation case load including 4 case studies	Journal entries Observations Lesson plan Lesson evaluations Observer Feedback Mentor feedback	To monitor developments of 4 case studies with reference to the two research questions; to identify emerging themes
<b>3</b>	<b>1 day return to university</b>			<b>Objective of data collection</b>
		Full cohort	Written and verbal responses to Intervention	To monitor reaction to intervention and identify emerging themes
<b>4</b>	<b>End of Programme</b>			<b>Objective of data collection</b>
		Full cohort plus group interview with 4 case studies	End of year evaluation  Transcripts	To explore distance travelled since September with reference to the two research questions To consolidate themes
<b>5</b>	<b>Into employment: 1 year later</b>			<b>Objective of data collection</b>
		4 case studies	Written responses to set question/s	To check thematic development post programme completion

# Appendix 3: Research Consent Form



## RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

08-09

As a research-based institution, we continually engage both ourselves and our students in practitioner-led research. Last year we took part in a CETT study, writing an evaluative report on the impact of the new Standards on trainee teachers. This year, we are involved in two studies:

- Promethean funded Research - led by [Name]
- Professionalism, compliance and creativity - led by Val Butcher

We ask for your consent to be involved in the research process. Both studies comply with MMU ethical guidelines and associated issues regarding anonymity and confidentiality. You are entitled to remove yourself from the research process at any time.

If you are in agreement with the above, please sign and date as indicated below:

Name: [Signature] .....

Programme: PGCE PCET .....

Date: 19/11/2008 .....

Thank you for your engagement

Val Butcher  
Head of Secondary Programmes and PCET

[Signature]  
Programme Leader:  
PCET and B A (PT)  
Programmes

## Appendix 4: Data collection sources

### 1. Cohort data:

- trainees' lesson plans (LP)
- lesson evaluations (LE)
- reflective log entries (RL)
- critical incidents contained within the Reflective Log (CI)
- trainees assignments (ASG)
- programme evaluations (mid -term and end of year evaluations) (PE)
- written response to Stage 3 intervention

### 2. Case study data:

- trainees' lesson plans (LP)
- lesson evaluations (LE)
- reflective log entries (RL)
- critical incidents contained within the Reflective Log (CL)
- trainees assignments (ASG)
- group interviews (GI)
- post-employment (email) narratives (EM)

### 3. Researcher's field notes and recordings

- observation of trainee notes
- personal reflections
- file of progress: monthly updates recording stages of research and themes/issues arising



**Appendix 5: Cohort data showing three year trend: gender and ethnicity**

Year	Number in group	Male	Female	Ethnic Origin	Cohort number
06/07	23	10	13	White: English /European	20
				Asian	3
07/08	22	9	13	White: English /European	20
				Asian	2
08/09	21	4	17	White: English /European	18
				Asian	1
				South African	1
				African	1

## Appendix 6: Extracts from trainees' assignments

The following examples show evidence of annotation (X) as part of the data analysis process: see Appendix 7 for comments regarding use of evaluative framework.

Key Skills Communication is a compulsory course for learners aged 14 – 19 (DCSF 2008b). The ~~Sixth Form~~ centre runs the course at both level two (GCSE level) and level three (A Level). The principles behind this course are that it is supposed to improve learners' communications and comprehension skills. The policy behind it comes from the Leitch Review (2007): by 2011, the UK government aims to get 59% of the adult population to be qualified up to level 3 (DIUS, 2007:10). At level three, it is assessed through an individual portfolio and an exam that focuses on testing skills of comprehension and synthesis. I have found that the learners on this course are reluctant to participate; are angry that it was not something that they "signed up to". All my learners are doing vocational subjects: Sports NVQ, Business BTEC and Public Services NVQ, none of which have an exam element. *Impact therefore?*

In formulating a plan in managing a class, interpersonal communication theory can be employed. William Schultz (1958) identified three types of need: inclusion, control and affection (Burton and Dimpleby, 2000). It is clear in the literature that there is affection in abundance in Summerhill School, and, I like to think, in my Access to HE classes. However, control is needed with some of the more disruptive learners who also present a barrier to the learners who want to be there. *because?* Here, it is difficult to apply a humanist model to the Key Skills class context. ~~However, one way of motivating learners is that fact that the Level three qualification can be converted into 20 UCAS points which learners can use for entry into Higher Education (UCAS, 2009).~~

Attributing UCAS points can be seen as a motivational target for learners – or a goal-oriented activity (Houle, 1961), an extrinsic motivator where an "external factor influences learners" (Gravells, 2008). Contrasting this to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I posit that the goal aspect is distinctly unimportant: NVQ learners are learning for the vocational, or career, experience, and going to university is of little importance. *New Diplomas? Possible contrast?*

As I have just commenced teaching this subject and have the testimony of jaded teachers and disillusioned students to go on, I am optimistic that I can be creative and try to make the lessons participatory and bearable until the exam in March. *X*

In considering the pros and cons of testing, Dewey argued,

*"Democracy cannot flourish where the chief influences in selecting subject matter of instruction are utilitarian ends narrowly conceived for the masses and, for the higher education of the few, the traditions of a specialized cultivated class." (1916: 192)*

Stephen Jones (2008) also makes a compelling argument against the testing culture of teaching and encroaching blandishment of education,

*"Whatever you teach at whatever level, the increasing reliance upon narrow and compartmentalised learning means less discretion for the teacher and more standardisation" (Jones 2008)*

[8]

However one criticism of this theory is that negative behaviour can be reinforced, for example if a student is being disruptive and getting lots of attention, the attention is the 'reward' and therefore they may repeat the behaviour.

Furthermore, there is much emphasis on lesson plans and objectives in my placement college, that students have to meet by the end of a lesson. This is a behaviourist concept, again arguably which views learning in too much of a simplistic way, as something that can be measured.

There are other schools and theories that are reflected in the Alps system, as already mentioned. For example, Rogers humanist theory that there must be a 'unconditional positive regard' Wallace (2007, p83) i.e. a relationship of trust between the learner and teacher, is reflected in Alps.

However arguably Rogers's theory can be explained in neo-behaviourist terms. The trust and respect can be considered to be the reward for the learner attending classes, acting as positive reinforcement and motivating learners. It can also be viewed in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, e.g. the trust and respect can help the learner feel safe and valued and raise self esteem. The basics of Malow's theory is that;

'in order for people to do their best, to achieve self-fulfilment, a number of other needs have to be satisfied first, including psychological needs such as food and warmth; safety needs such as feeling secure both mentally and physically; social needs such as friendship and esteem needs such as respect.'  
Tummonds J. (2007),

However, learning does take place where the environment may be difficult e.g. a cold room, or when students are hungry. Although it may not be the best learning environment, learning is still possible. However it is common sense to minimise barriers to learning as much as possible, and therefore increase motivation, by putting the radiator on or closing a window for example.

From teaching the revision class, it is clear that Non Verbal Communication is essential; Wallace S (2007 p24-5);

'What we actually say only accounts for about 10% of our communication (Mehrabian, 1972)'

then 'evaluation' the aim of formative assessment is to gain clarity. Due to <sup>the</sup> formality of structure it produces product, clear achievement and performance goals which benefits lessons by structuring a sense of direction and purpose to delivery of content. It requires time, discipline and experience to ensure productive formative assessments are made.

Conversely, it is perhaps so structured in framework that is leaves little opportunity to develop enthusiasm, creative innovation and nurture learner enthusiasm. OFSTED suggested in TES January 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 p12, 'teaching is often boring and fails to inspire' perhaps a product of formative assessment used to plan lessons.

It is used for teacher and learner to review learning and recognise where strengths and weaknesses. Overall this provides an individual assessment which used productively, may result in higher individual achievements and grades. The individual is more likely to be inspired and motivated to learn as their own individual needs are listened to and supported. The down side to this is the resource of time given classes of thirty students.

For new teachers into the profession, assessment is time consuming and often stressful. The wider implication to generate effective learning from teaching plans is new teachers require practical guidance and hands on support from more experience team members. Implication is a hands-on commitment from the business team in order to generate effective learning standards.

Six key assessment principles as outlined by Pollard A in "Reading for Reflective Teaching, p284, firstly, assessment is used as a continuous part of the teaching-learning process. The implications for education practice are that assessments gives value and a sense of purpose to individual lesson planning. Evaluation of individual learner progress after each lesson forms the basis for content in the next. Assessment from an on going evaluation perspective adds value to Kolbs learning cycle by providing critical reflection with feedback from learners. Lessons plans are therefore tailored to pace, learning levels and needs of individual groups of learners. Conversely, it means that each lesson is individually planned, prepared and evaluated making for high levels of time commitment to lesson planning.

Secondly, "assessment should exert positive force on the curriculum at all levels" (Pollard A. Reading for Reflective Teaching p.284) Implications for education practice mean that feedback from individual teachers is listened to, heard and acted on at curriculum levels. In reality are teachers heard and indeed listened to in terms of influencing curriculum.

Referring to a discussion paper by Eric Hoyles "Prestige, Status and Esteem", if assessment at teacher level is of intrinsic value and exerts positive force on the curriculum why, therefore, is there a need to "recruit, retain teachers and improve their morale?" Eric Hoyle discusses that 'new professionalism' will enhance the 'status' of teaching. It does however raise the question, of disillusionment in teaching if teachers at classroom levels are not listened to by those influencing the curriculum. Professionalism in the teaching profession is perhaps, facing more than a 'status' issue.

Thirdly, assessment for learning measures performance progress of individuals, but has evolved from individual learners being the end product to the ranking of the school or

**Appendix 7: Table 2. Evaluative framework developed by Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) and adapted by Rajuan, *et al.* (2008)**

The framework was modified for use in this research in order to categorise the trainees' responses collected throughout the data collection period. The responses were grouped under each category

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Academic Knowledge and Skills (Cognitive)	Subject mastery: learning how to teach subject matter: assessment of pupil achievement <i>The academic is often embedded within technical and practical issues of more immediate concern to student teachers</i>
Technical Knowledge and skills (Mechanical)	Reference to general principles and specific instructions: predetermined rules and regulations of classroom procedures  Achievement of clearly defined goals of control and organization of learning situations ' <i>regardless of diverse situations and contexts</i> '
Practical knowledge and skills (Experiential)	Coping strategies and suggestions for decision making in unclear and unknown situations whilst creating a conducive learning environment
Personal knowledge and skills (Affective)	Feelings and personality characteristics necessary for confidence in developing a personal and professional teaching identity. <i>This domain is indicative of student teachers as they pass through a transition phase of identifying with pupils to identifying with the role of the teacher</i>
Critical knowledge and skills (Social)	Abstraction: ability to make connections beyond the classroom or to question <i>'the goals and hidden agendas of education aimed at betterment of society...or that relates to moral or ethical issues'</i>

### Appendix 8: Lesson Plan Template 1

	<b>Lesson Plan Template 1</b>		<b>Programme:</b>		
Teacher:		Date:		Time (start/finish):	
Topic:					
Aim:					
Learner Outcomes. By the end of the session learners will be able to:			Evidence of achievement of Learning Outcomes:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		

	Approximate timings	Teacher Activity	Learner Activity	Resources / Room Layout
Sequence of Learning Activities:				

Differentiated Tasks:				
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<b>Evaluation:</b>		
<b>Session Notes</b>		
<b>Details for this lesson</b>		

## Appendix 9: Lesson Plan Template 2

The template was developed as part of the ‘Creative Partnerships’ research brief (2008). It was modified for use in this research in order to reflect the post-compulsory context.

	<b>Lesson plan template</b>		<b>Course:</b>		<b>Group:</b>
Teacher:		Date:		Time (start/finish):	
Topic:					
Focus for Enquiry (key questions for investigation, context for learning)			Key tasks		
• • •			• • •		
Prior Learning (What do they already know/have already experienced)			What input have the students had in the development of this session?		

	Purpose	Teacher Activity	Learner Activity	Classroom Environment (resources and layout)
Sequence of Learning Activities:				

Notes:

Inter and Intra personal areas of learning.  (differentiation, learning styles, social health, ECM)	ECM	M.I	VAK	L/N
Plenary and Reflection	Key Questions	Knowledge and Understanding	Metacognition	Development of ideas for future sessions.
<b>Session Notes</b>				
<b>Details for this lesson</b>				



## Appendix 10: Responses to Template 2

The following examples show evidence of annotation (X) as part of the data analysis process. In order to identify themes, comments from sources such as this were grouped using the evaluative framework developed by Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) and adapted by Rajuan, *et al.* (2008).

### Evaluation of 'new' Lesson Plan template Wed 21 Jan 2009

- What is your reaction to page 1?

I like it because it makes you think more about what you are doing & why you are doing it, makes you think - is everything relevant? or are you just filling the time?

- What is your reaction to page 2?

Reminds you about specific learners & gives observers an awareness of anything they need to know. Makes you evaluate as opposed to just telling the story.

- Does this template enable you to approach the planning process differently? Please explain your response.

Yes because it would ensure everything you do is relevant to learners/unit/course. And would make you truly reflect on the lesson.

- Would you use this template when planning your class sessions?

Yes  
No

#### Please explain your response

Yes because it would structure the lessons & make them follow on more efficiently.

- Would anything prevent you from using this template?

Yes, I do think it is a bit lengthy to use every lesson but I would use it as a Unit plan - rolling lesson plan.

- Any further comments:

Evaluation of 'new' Lesson Plan template  
Wed 21 Jan 2009

• What is your reaction to page 1?

- It's asking for a lot of information which encourages one to think deeply, and critically, about one's Subject.
- Seems flexible in terms of timing and unlike traditional 'form' format of lesson plan.
- Seems a bit overwhelming at first!

• What is your reaction to page 2?

I really like the section for identifying whether one's subject matter and knowledge needs updating or developing. I also like the reflective aspect and it encourages one to consider developments for the course's/unit's future.

• Does this template enable you to approach the planning process differently? Please explain your response.

Yes - it seems far more creative and one is 'forced' to have a better overview of the course's/unit's curriculum. Also, it'll help with differentiation.

• Would you use this template when planning your class sessions?

Yes - will give it a go!  
 No

Please explain your response

This template would, in my opinion, be useful for planning units on an Access course. However, I'd worry about Ofsted/internal inspector's response - but, to be honest, if learners were happy and engaged that's all that matters to me!

• Would anything prevent you from using this template? What matters to me!

With key skills may be some resistance from college as course is so restrictive, target and exam driven.

• Any further comments:

Evaluation of 'new' Lesson Plan template  
Wed 21 Jan 2009

- What is your reaction to page 1?

Focus for enquiry is more realistic than learner outcomes - cannot predict what a student will learn.

- What is your reaction to page 2?

Details for this lesson - a good idea

- Does this template enable you to approach the planning process differently? Please explain your response.

Yes - focus for enquiry + evaluation

- Would you use this template when planning your class sessions?

Yes  
No

Please explain your response

But not at the moment.

- Would anything prevent you from using this template?

Other members of staff encourage the colleges lesson plan - possibly try it later in teaching career.

- Any further comments:

## Appendix 11: Extract from Rita's Assignment

Unit 1, PCET,

Unit 1

assessment has its benefits as it is anonymous there is less chance of prejudice. However when an examiner marks a media studies paper it may be fair to say that it will be almost impossible to remain dispassionate. As there is no canon of material within media studies at A-Level, the students are influenced by varying styles of material which may all be considered post-modern to a degree. Therefore their reading and understanding of texts at this level will be heavily influenced by their own personal experiences. Therefore it could be suggested that some understanding of the student's backgrounds is essential to understanding their interpretation of texts.

This essay has examined the practical application of several learning theories in relation to A Level media studies. It has examined the positive and negative aspects of each learning theory and how successful the theories have been in my own, limited, practice. It has become evident that learning theories operate within communication structures that require feedback. Only through clear communication with learners can their needs be identified. A relevant issue here is the practical use of learning theories, it has been suggested by some theorists that trainee teachers are more eager to use learning theories,

In examining teacher practices it was found that, whilst new practitioners are initially keen and motivated by their initial training in wishing to implement a range of imaginative and active practices in the classroom, the conditions in which they are employed and the expectations placed upon them militate against this. (Simmons and Thompson, 2008: 612)

It may be suggested that some practitioners may be cynical of learning theories and their effectiveness. However it is only through trial and reflecting as practitioners that we can fully understand how learning theories can improve our practice. When examining learning in the Lifelong Learning sector, it may be fair to say that past experiences will dictate the initial response to learning. Therefore it is important to ensure communication is clear and that feedback from both parties is constant and constructive.

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## Appendix 12 (i) Extracts from Ellie's Teaching File

### Reflective journal entry: October 2009

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#### OBSERVATION OF EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONER IN YOUR SPECIALIST CONTEXT

Always remember that you are a visitor in the classroom and be aware that you should act as a fellow professional at all times.

When observing the session you should make notes on the following:

Teacher x	Class / course AS	Subject Law
Day & Time 24 <sup>th</sup> October, 9am	No of students 15	Level 3

**Planning and Preparation** (e.g. Scheme of work, lesson plan, context )

x had prepared a brief lesson plan based on his overall scheme of work and materials prepared in previous years. The majority of the lesson involved a mock examination paper. This was a question taken from a previous paper, but chosen because it also reflected the new specification.

**Managing the Learning Environment** ( e.g. health & safety issues addressed, behaviour management)

Although there were points in the revision session that x had to remind students to pay attention, no real issues arose.

**Activities and use of resources related to subject** (variety of methods, differentiation, relevant and inclusive resources.)

The session consisted of revision of statutory interpretation (as a whole group, using the whiteboard) and then a mock exam question.

**Communication** (eg management of group and individuals in the specialist context)

It was surprising to see that some students were not very focussed during the revision session. However, they were all called on to contribute to the whole group.

**Assessment and checking of learning** (e.g. methods used in class, feedback given)

x used directed questions to check learning during the revision session. The mock exam question was a formal assessment. If students received an A or B exam grade in the question they would take the first AS exam in January (otherwise it would be June).

**Other issues**

None.

Observation of Practitioner Page 2 of 2

**Discussion with tutor relating to specialist specific issues**

e.g. "What makes this subject, level, context different?"

What are the main challenges in this subject area?

What are the main challenges in this context? (e.g. workshop, work place, classroom, place of learning, age of learners, day release, full time etc.)

I discussed with x the decision to only put the students with grades A and B into the January AS exam. Apparently it is college policy for students to take all AS exam in June unless a strong case for an exception can be made. x personally would prefer all students to take the first AS exam in January.

**Own reflections and learning from this activity**

The issue of exam timing reminded me of discussions in unit 3 over the autonomy of individual teachers and the extent to which this is overshadowed by governmental and organisational policies. It also demonstrates the influence of financial considerations, as apparently this is the reason for the college's preference.

## Appendix 12 (ii): Extract from Ellie’s Teaching File

### Reflective journal entry: November 2008

Observation of Practitioner Page 1 of 2

#### OBSERVATION OF EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONER IN YOUR SPECIALIST CONTEXT

Always remember that you are a visitor in the classroom and be aware that you should act as a fellow professional at all times.

When observing the session you should make notes on the following:

Teacher: x	Class / course AS	Subject Law
Day & Time 3 <sup>rd</sup> November, 10.45am	No of students 17	Level 3

**Planning and Preparation** (e.g., Scheme of work, lesson plan, context )

x had prepared a brief lesson plan based on his overall scheme of work and materials prepared in previous years.

**Managing the Learning Environment** (e.g., health & safety issues, behaviour management)

x reminded the students to raise their hands if they wished to make a contribution during the initial class debate and final brainstorming session.

**Activities and use of resources related to subject** (variety of methods, differentiation, relevant and inclusive resources,)

After a general debate, x gave a power point presentation on influences on legislation. He then set the students an exercise on e-lawstudent.co.uk. The learning was reinforced by the use of a crossword. If requested, students were allowed to refer to the textbook during the crossword activity.

**Communication** (e.g., management of group and individuals in the specialist context)

The debate was well managed so that the majority of students contributed.

**Assessment and checking of learning** (e.g., methods used in class, feedback given)

The students had a question sheet for their work on e-law student. Some groups had to answer the odd numbers, others the even. All the answers were then discussed in a group plenary. The crossword answers were also gone over as a group.

**Other issues**

None.

**Discussion with tutor relating to specialist specific issues**

e.g. “What makes this subject, level, context different?”

What are the main challenges in this subject area?

What are the main challenges in this context? (e.g., workshop, work place, classroom, place of learning, age of learners, day release, full time etc)

We discussed the use of e-law student and x informed me that the students do not like using it. They have also learnt to “cut and paste” key words to find answers quickly without reading large parts of the text.

**Own reflections and learning from this activity**

As IT was rarely used when I was at college, I almost assumed that students would enjoy all IT activities, because for me they are such a novelty. This session emphasises the need to plan and prepare for use of IT and to make it engaging. My personal preference would be to find sites on the internet that have practical relevance, for example, the Court Service, Ministry of Justice, Bar Council, Parliament, etc, rather than A-level specific sites.

## Appendix 12 (iii): Extract from Ellie’s Teaching File

### Reflective journal entry: February 2009

Observation of Practitioner Page 1 of 2

#### OBSERVATION OF EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONER IN YOUR SPECIALIST CONTEXT

Always remember that you are a visitor in the classroom and be aware that you should act as a fellow professional at all times.

When observing the session you should make notes on the following:

Teacher x	Class / course E2E,	Subject Skills for Life
Day & Time 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2009, 9.30am – 12noon	No of students 13	Level Phase 1

**Planning and Preparation** (e.g. Scheme of work, lesson plan, context )

This was a diagnostic session which is the same for every new entrant on the programme. It consists of a computer programme which gives a large number of questions to test literacy and numeracy levels. There is no time limit and the students can continue the test in a subsequent session if required.

**Managing the Learning Environment** (e.g. health & safety issues, behaviour management)

The learners each worked on a separate computer and were provided with headphones to listen to the instructions. The learners could chose the colour of screen they found clearest in the test.

**Activities and use of resources related to subject** (variety of methods, differentiation, relevant and inclusive resources,)

The aim of the session was to complete the diagnostic test for skills for life. x provided supplementary documents as referred to in the questions themselves. When two learners completed this they went on to complete a “skillswise” test on the computer which focuses on personal and social skills (done to assist the tutor who deals with that side of the course). When one learner completed this he progressed to the “All about Me” activity – choosing 9 pictures to show his likes and writing about himself.

**Communication** (e.g. management of group and individuals in the specialist context)

x introduced herself at the start of the session and outlined the nature and purpose of the test. She acknowledged it was boring, but explained it was necessary. The nature of the session meant she could not assist learners during the session. At the end she said they had done well.

**Assessment and checking of learning** (e.g. methods used in class, feedback given)

This will take place following the session, based on the diagnostic results. x will take six of the areas highlighted as requiring work and these will form the basis of each learner’s individual learning plan for the next 6 weeks. She will then change these for other areas after that 6 weeks, still based on this original diagnostic.

**Other issues**

None.

**Discussion with tutor relating to specialist specific issues**

e.g. “What makes this subject, level, context different?”

What are the main challenges in this subject area?

What are the main challenges in this context? (eg workshop, work place, classroom, place of learning, age of learners, day release, full time etc)

We discussed the fact this was boring but necessary. We also discussed ideas for workshop sessions. Those that work are those related to the learners’ every day lives, e.g., comparing mobile phone tariffs to improve literacy.

**Own reflections and learning from this activity**

The diagnostic itself was very rigorous and demanding. There was a 15 minute break, but the whole session was very intense for the learners. The skills for life element is seen as the “boring” bit of the course, perhaps because it is the only “academic” part. A lot of skills for life work is now embedded in other sessions. However, x suggested these are not always managed in a way which gives the most benefit, but can focus too much on the learners enjoying themselves. Getting this balance right seems to be the challenge regardless of the context in which learning is taking place.

## Appendix 12 (iv): Extract from Ellie's Teaching File

### Critical Incidents and Learning February 2009

#### Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PCET)

##### Critical Incidents and Learning in placement

*Guidance:* The purpose of this exercise is to support your development as a reflective practitioner. You should use this task as an opportunity to try out different ways of recording your reflections and applying different models of reflection.

Aim to complete at least one entry per week.

<b>Describe the incident or context</b>
A student in my Government and Politics AS Level class has appeared very disengaged over a number of sessions and I feel I have not yet been able to evolve a good working relationship with him. This has led to me considering a number of strategies in lessons, but also to me discussing the issue with his personal tutor.
<b>Analyse the reasons why/how this occurred</b>
Having spoken to my Mentor on several occasions, I suspect the student may prefer his method of teaching (less active student participation). It may also be to do with a lack of interest in the topic. It may also be influenced by the overall group dynamic as he sits with/socialises with another student who participates as little as possible.
<b>Theorise / reflect on the outcomes or choices emerging from this incident</b>
I have worried that in the past couple of sessions I have not given this student sufficient positive feedback for activities when he has participated. It is hard to remember this when you are feeling quite frustrated and exasperated. The alternative would perhaps be to be firmer/stricter, but I would not want to be viewed as "picking on" one member of a group which contains many strong characters.
<b>Develop an action / response for the future / evaluate the learning that you have gained from this</b>
I am making real attempts to give positive feedback and praise. I am being slightly firmer to ensure that the student does not simply sit back and not participate/disrupt others.  I have started moving the students into different groups/pairs for some activities and have found this can be helpful when the student is placed with more motivated team members.  There appears to be some activities the student does prefer, particularly those involving IT, and this is something to build into future sessions where possible.  I am discussing the issue with my Mentor on a regular basis to ensure an appropriate and cohesive approach is taken. My Mentor also has some concerns and therefore I have spoken to the student's personal tutor who is going to investigate his performance in other subjects and monitor the situation.



## **Appendix 13: Significant points drawn from the Case Studies**

(Teaching File: journal entries)

Adapted from *Avis, J., Bathmaker, A-M., and Parsons, J. (2001)* Reflections from a time log diary: towards an analysis of the labour process within further education, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 53 (1) 61-80. 14)

### **Case Study 1: Rita**

- The importance of creating a positive learning environment for learners. The position is indicative of related discourses concerning the ‘ethics of care and respect’ and learner empowerment (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004). Contradictory discourses arise when the trainees’ lived experiences disrupt ideas resting in social justice and access.
- Preferring the role of facilitator to teacher: the tensions produced by this preferred position reflect those raised by *Avis et al. (2001)*; *Young (2011)* and *Pykett, (2009)* when located within learner-focused relationships.
- Evidence of the emotional labour of teachers in supporting learners. The expenditure attached to such labour is articulated within the literature (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Colley, 2006).
- Concerns about the nature of learner assessment and the orientation of learners reflect those highlighted by *Ecclestone, (2000; 2007)* and *Torrance (2007)*. Knowledge value and selection becomes entwined within this discourse.
- Uncertainty regarding teacher identity: the lecturer identified as a salesperson reflects the characteristics of education in the market place (Ball, 2010; Tummons, 2007).

### **Case Study 1: Ellie**

- Preferred role of facilitator to teacher. Ellie perceptions of the facilitator role connect to assumptions regarding age group and learner autonomy. The finding of learner dependency rather than autonomy links to learner assessment: *see comment below*
- Assessment, learner orientation and dependency: a focus on testing, ‘teaching to the test’ and learner responses to assessment is recognised within the case study. These responses reflect those identified by *Ecclestone, (2000)*; *Pring, (2011)*; *Torrance, (2007)* and *Wenger et al., (2002)* and identified within the Nuffield Review (2006).

- Funding: initially unaware, this issue emerges as an area of tension for Ellie and her peers. This is reflected within the literature as follows:
  - i. Assessment and funding: the view that other issues impinge on debates concerning learning and assessment is raised by Ecclestone (2000:142). The author identifies funding, inspection and outcome-based assessment as related areas.
  - ii. In considering teacher education and formation, Loo (2007: 439) identifies factors ‘...that might impact on this complex process of becoming a teacher’. Models of funding feature in the list.
- Limited engagement with CPD. This issue reflects challenges to the development of the ‘learning professional (Guile and Lucas, 1999); to the role played by college Staff Development managers in supporting new teachers and/or delivering managerial objectives (Avis *et al.* 2002). The CPD of mentors is also of relevance here.

**Points ‘absent’ from either Case study:**

- References to the mistrust or trust of teachers. Apparent within political debates ( Avis, 2003; Morris, 2001; Wolf, 2011), the issue of professional trust does not emerge clearly within the Case Studies
- Teaching as a vocation
- Students expressed limited views about the role of vocational education and its place in a ‘knowledge’ society’ (Bathmaker, 2005: 97). Lack of awareness of the vocational context (Mutton, 2012) reverberates within trainees’ accounts but does not surface as a clear narrative within their discussions.