

# **NAVIGATING THE PEDAGOGICAL, RELATIONAL AND MORAL ECONOMIES OF ASSESSMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF FEEDBACK**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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# Abstract

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Feedback is often viewed as the aspect of assessment most likely to increase learning, but this potential value is not always fulfilled in practice. This may be because understanding of feedback has become unclear. The literature (particularly policy literature) tends to position conceptions of feedback in dualistic and opposed terms, for example, teacher-centric versus learner-centric. It is a central premise of this study that feedback cannot be understood in binary terms; feedback is complex with differing nuanced conceptions. Furthermore, in opposition to models that present feedback as static, this thesis suggests feedback is dynamic, changeable, personal and varied. This study will therefore posit that we need a multi-dimensional model of feedback where conceptions are capable of co-existing and changing.

Developing a more nuanced understanding of feedback is particularly crucial for the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) sector; these students not only receive feedback as learners but give feedback to their pupils. Their dual role as both feedback donor and recipient makes them a particularly interesting group to study in terms of how their conceptions of feedback are formed. Using a broadly phenomenographic approach, the study tracked eight primary ITE students over three years to understand i) conceptions of feedback as a learner, ii) conceptions of feedback as a teacher and iii) the relationships between developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher. Analysis makes use of three economies (relational, pedagogical and moral) enabling meaning to be attributed to the variation of experiences and understanding between participants. Several themes are therefore identified including the significance of dialogue / relationships within feedback and the influence of performativity. The discussion also raises broad implications for practice, not just in ITE, where the study was carried out, but also for schools and Higher Education.

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# List of Abbreviations

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- AfL – Assessment for Learning (formative assessment)
- AoL – Assessment of Learning (summative assessment)
- HE – Higher Education
- ITE -Initial Teacher Education
- NQT- Newly Qualified Teacher
- NSS – National Student Satisfaction Survey
- Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
- SE- School Experience
- SE1- School Experience 1 (First School Experience within a Teacher Education Programme)
- SE2- School Experience 2 (Second School Experience within a Teacher Education Programme)
- SE3- School Experience 3 (Third School Experience within a Teacher Education Programme)
- TEF- Teaching Excellence Framework
- TGAT -Task Group on Assessment and Testing





# Chapter 1: Introduction

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### **1.1 Feedback, feedback everywhere...?**

In Coleridge's 1834 poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the phrase 'water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink' (Coleridge 2015) is used to illustrate the contradictions of a seaman surrounded by seawater but dying of thirst. This could equally be true of feedback in the twenty first century. We appear to be surrounded by feedback but we are not necessarily surrounded by meaningful feedback; of course, this begs the question, what is *meaningful* feedback? We are bombarded with messages requesting feedback about our purchases, experiences and interactions and repeatedly assured that others 'take your feedback seriously.' Every organisation seems interested in what we, as consumers in the widest sense, think. We are asked to rate our interactions with sellers on eBay, our experiences with staff in retail outlets and other organisations, the food we eat and the places we go (Williamson 2017). This gives a somewhat illusionary view of a world where feedback is constantly prioritised, engaged with, used to inform evaluations and improve experiences. However, as Ivey states in the novel *To The Bright Edge of the World*, 'It takes a kind of arrogance to think everything in the world can be measured and weighed with our scientific instruments' (Ivey 2017, p.2).

The underlying purpose of such feedback is not necessarily a consumer (or learner) centric model; gains are for the organisation in that they can be seen as consultative, democratic and as 'listeners.' Ultimately the gains or rewards are monetary or to prove improvement in performance. This rather quantitative and superficial view of feedback is exacerbated further by social media with its focus on giving and receiving feedback as 'likes.' There are links here to Charlie Brooker's satirical science fiction series *Black Mirror* where a series of dystopian images of the future, often with a technological basis, are portrayed. In the episode 'nosedive' (*Black Mirror: Nosedive* 2016), we are presented with a picture of a world where every human interaction is rated on scale of one to five. This is fed back to each individual via a mobile device and the aggregated score then becomes a badge for the person, i.e. you are a number three. Within the narrative, this score is used to ultimately determine the others they are then able to meet and interact with, the events they can attend, their career and other future interactions or possibilities (Sculos 2017). In this way, the feedback rating accounts for much more than life style (Bayrak no date) but signifies the person's past, present and future. Although positioned as

futuristic, it is questionably not dissimilar from the present day and is certainly relatable (Robinson 2016). As Williamson (2017) points out, 'whether you like it or not, a data-based version of yourself exists out there, scattered among different databases, as data points in massive torrents of big data' (p.xi).

The current use of the rather public space of social media as a platform for personal feedback encourages comparisons and ratings. People are judged by their number of friends and the 'likes' they receive for photographs or postings. Social media enables a plethora of statistics to be available to individuals and this enables and encourages them to be constantly 'pulse taking' (Ball 2013, p.215) arguably contributing to some of the recent worries about mental health (O'Reilly et al. 2018). This is not to say that this type of feedback is completely devoid of 'feed forward.' Social media holds at its centre the opportunity for users to receive ongoing feedback about their profile, actions or appearance and there is evidence to suggest that users of social media are already modifying their online presence based on the feedback (or 'likes') received (Valkenburg, and Schouten 2006). Self-esteem seems to be altered by the reinforcement processes encouraged within social media: the number of 'friendships', the feedback and the tone of the feedback received (typically a broad based like or dislike) (Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten 2006). However, this will inevitably encourage a rather mechanistic view of feedback based on low level validation rather than meaningful improvement. It is also questionable whether the consequence of this type of 'feedback' is a positive one.

It generally seems then that technological advances have meant that companies can gather and access feedback swiftly and efficiently, as well as use the term feedback as an indicator of interest and consumer care. However, the many opportunities to give feedback do not necessarily encourage a developed or nuanced view of feedback; in fact, they distort conceptions of feedback to a series of clicks supporting a reductionist and mechanistic view. Whether this is in fact feedback in its truest sense, is open to debate. This study therefore seeks to offer a fuller and more subtle view of feedback by offering differing conceptions beyond (but not excluding) the reductionist approach. This introduction will now go on to explore this contradiction further by referring to the underpinning neoliberal agenda, the education policy climate and its implications for feedback before justifying the relevance of this study as a whole.

## **1.2 The contextual roots of feedback as a measure of performance**

It is possible that the epidemic of rather superficial ‘feedback’ is a consequence of the neoliberal world it sits within. Connell (2013) defines neo-liberalism as broadly meaning ‘the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market’ (p.110). This is supported by others (Dean 2002; Cahill 2011; Cahill and Konings 2017). However, a definition solely focused on the free market rather over simplifies neoliberalism; it is more than an economic ideology. In fact Steger and Roy identify three interrelated dimension to neo-liberalism: ‘ideology, a mode of governance and a policy package’ (2010, p.11). Theoretically the ideological emphasis on the free market within neoliberalism should signify a movement away from state control, if indeed the free market and state are considered to be distinct domains (Davies 2018). Certainly, the outsourcing of historically considered public sector business (education, health etc.) could be viewed in this way. However, the movement to the private sector has also brought with it an ideal of competitiveness and explicitness (Davies 2018) which necessitates regulation, efficiency, benchmarking and accountability, all of which could be considered as a form of governmentality and policy. Arguably this has resulted in implicit state control within the free market. In other words, far from being freed from the state, neoliberalism has resulted in the extensive use of government practice within the public sector. Indeed, ‘business friendly governments and market-driven agendas have re-shaped all areas of public life’ (Connell 2013, p.99). As a result, neoliberalism has caused a rather omnipresent governmentality so that ‘it is difficult to grasp what makes this form of existence preferable to one directly shaped by the state’ (Dean 2002, p.193). Furthermore, as Metcalfe (2017) states, focussing too heavily on the logic ‘of the market, ‘strips away the things that make us human;’ neoliberalism ignores the variation and nuances of the human state.

If neoliberalism is a force that has ‘come to regulate all we practise and believe’ and is based upon the premise ‘that competition is the only legitimate organising principle for human activity’ (Metcalfe 2017), it stands to reason that feedback could be used as an instrument to inform regulation for competitive purposes, for example, the number of ‘likes’ in comparison to others, the proportion of happy customers in comparison to another store or the level of parental satisfaction in comparison to another school. In order to examine this further, it is first necessary

to explore the extent to which educational policy, and in particular school based policy, has been affected by the neoliberal agenda.

Tracking back through the last twenty years of educational policy presents a clear reminder of how the language of accountability and performance has become familiar territory. From as early as 1997 (Department for Education and Employment) the Excellence in Schools white paper makes reference to the use of performance comparisons to set targets for pupils. It is interesting to note that, at this stage, performativity was solely focused on pupil progress, a focus that was beginning to change by 2001 with the publication of the green paper 'Building on Success' (Department for Education and Employment 2001). Here we get the first reference to school accountability, although it is couched in flattery: 'more perhaps than any other, the teaching profession accepts accountability, is open to the contributions that others can make and is keen to seek out best practice' (Department for Education and Employment 2001, p.65). Later that year, within the Secondary paper 'Schools Achieving Success' (Department for Education and Skills 2001), there was another slight shift in policy; increased accountability was positioned as synonymous with autonomy. Although this appears somewhat contradictory, it indicates how accountability was beginning to be viewed both as a measure of success for parents, the community and inspectors and also a more palatable tool for empowering the monitoring of success under the guise of making informed choices. Of course, this could also be viewed as something of a smokescreen as it was now also becoming clear that accountability was really a form of panoptical surveillance (Webb, Briscoe and Mussman 2009); just as within a panoptic building, there is a sense of always being watched, observed and scrutinised even if this is not the case. Accountability provides the tools for the policy framework to be observed, judged and also to assist the preparation for judgment. Indeed, Ball (2003) argues that far from removing state control, performativity replaces it with another form of hidden regulation. This regulation actually attacks a teacher's sense of autonomy and judgement (Clarke and Sheridan 2017).

Accountability continued to be a central part of further policy reform (Department for Education and Skills 2005; Department for Children and Schools 2009; Department for Education 2010) with an ever increasing narrative around judgment, performance and transparency. For example, 'It is vital that schools should be accountable to parents for how well pupils do, and how taxpayers'

money is spent... Comparisons between different schools and local authority areas will drive higher performance and better value for money' (Department for Education 2010, p.13). The references to accountability to secure pupil progress present in 1997 (Department for Education and Employment 1997) were gradually replaced by the language of 'higher performance and better value for money' (Department for Education 2010, p.13). This has culminated in the more recent Education Excellence Everywhere (Department of Education 2016) that asserts that 'fair, robust, ambitious accountability is vital to monitor ... standards' (Department of Education 2016, p.104).

Although much of the performativity rhetoric claims that performativity is a tool to support autonomy (Department for Education and Skills 2001), it is arguably a distraction. For if performance is reliant on targets, statistics and other data, somebody or something needs to monitor, judge, compare and attribute value to these data sets (Ball 2003). Performativity and accountability can therefore be perceived as a form of policing. Ball (2003) further argues that performativity is a technology and, as a result, performativity can also encourage a technical or mechanistic approach to teaching (Ball 2000; Ball 2003; Taubman 2010; Clarke and Moore 2013; Clarke and Sheridan 2017). The Ofsted regime has reinforced this approach further through the 'imposition of disciplinary technologies' (Hall and Noyes 2009, p.850). Far from the promise of increased standards, within the rhetoric of educational policy (Department for Education and Skills 2001; Department for Education and Skills 2005; Department for Children and Schools 2009; Department of Education 2016), a reductive approach to teaching and learning has actually resulted in dubious returns (Alexander 2010) and a tick box approach to quality.

The impact of neo-liberalism and performativity has also been felt within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Higher Education, which have increasingly become a 'marketized system based on a combination of neo-liberal and neo-conservative approaches' (Childs and Menter 2013, p.93). Metrics such as the National Student Survey (NSS), as well as measures of employment, satisfaction and retention are now all powerful data sets that are used to judge the

standard within the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)<sup>1</sup>. For Initial Teacher Training, further accountability demands come from Ofsted and the grades achieved by students according to the Teacher Standards. A further consequence of a 'performative approach is ... the supposition that successful outcomes and appropriate actions on the part of the teacher can be predicted and indeed measured or assessed' (Menter 2010, p.25). All of these demands reinforce the meritocratic view that quality and success can be quantified, tracked and counted and that standards can continually rise.

### **1.3 The consequential re-conceptualisation of assessment and feedback?**

Given that assessment data is often key accountability evidence, the performativity culture has had a significant impact on the value attributed to assessment and the form it takes. The same is also true of feedback leading to a distortion of both practice and understanding. It is interesting to note that there is very little, if any, reference to feedback within the policy documents explored earlier and references to assessment are nearly always within the context of monitoring standards and promoting school improvement; this in itself is quite telling and represents how assessment has been reconceptualised by the neoliberal agenda, both in policy and also, through implied practice. Assessment and feedback have become tools for quantifying performance rather than tools to support learner progress.

An example of this is the focus on summative assessment; it is viewed as a measure and therefore potentially a burden rather than a useful instrument. Reflecting the tendency to dichotomise education policy and practice into, for instance, good versus bad, summative assessment is not necessarily viewed as having any formative possibilities for the benefits of learners (Jackel et al. 2017). The separation between formative and summative has led to unhelpful 'tensions between summative assessments used for school accountability in a performativity culture and that of classroom-based formative assessments' (Song and Koh 2010,

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<sup>1</sup> A national exercise for Higher Education introduced by the government in England which rates universities with the award of gold, silver or bronze (Office for Students 2018).



p.2). Could this tension mean that the accountability benefits of any assessment are always prioritised as they act as a tool for self-policing? Foucault identified ways (including self-policing) that institutions exert power or governmentality to 'control, govern and normalize individual and collective behaviour' (Anderson and Grinberg 1998, p.332) and thereby produce compliant and docile subjects (Besley 2009). The advantages of summative assessment as an accountability tool arguably lies in its power to influence individuals, groups and societies through implicit, and subsequently normalised, regulation and discipline (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000). This form of discipline will ultimately prioritise particular forms of assessment measures, practices and behaviours. Furthermore, the language of the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) does seem to encourage a view of assessment and feedback focused on accountability with the first substandard stating 'know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements' (DfE 2012, p.12). Of course, the very presence of standards, that can be met, or not, to indicate teacher performance, further supports a distortion reducing teaching, learning and, as a consequence, assessment and feedback to a simplistic or technical exercise (Clarke and Moore 2013; Hulme and Menter 2015).

Not only has the performativity culture changed the way teachers view feedback and assessment, it also significantly undermines potential learner agency. As Song and Koh state, measures are useful for policy makers but the 'student as an active user of assessment information is ignored' (2010, p.3). Bloxham (cited by Sambell 2011, p.12) makes a similar point in relation to Higher Education stating that feedback has become related to quality assurance and accountability for the purpose of the feedback giver, rather than the learner themselves. Feedback is therefore procedural and based on mistrust (McArthur 2018).

#### **1.4 Teaching, teachers and student teachers**

The unrelenting focus on measurement of standards and performance assumes that quality is always quantifiable (Raymond 2018). Judging effectiveness in such a way can also cause something of an identity crisis for some practitioners; the drive to follow policy into practice means that teachers are encouraged to judge their own worth on their ability to complete these

tasks. Even within official documentation, it has been recognised that teacher effectiveness has become judged by, for example, how much marking has been completed rather than how effective teaching and learning has been (Department of Education 2016). In summary, teachers are judged on the mechanics of their role and this is not the same as quality. Ball states that this is 'a recipe for ontological insecurity' as individuals constantly question if they have done enough to be good enough (2000, p.3). Teacher effectiveness therefore becomes synonymous with, and is judged by, teacher efficiency resulting in a degree of 'de-professionalisation' (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2009; Clarke and Phelan 2017).

Prioritising the mechanics and technicalities of teaching also has an impact on workload as the job list grows to accommodate more and more things that collectively validate performance and effectiveness. Thirty years ago, Apple's work identified the increasing demands of the teaching profession over twenty years of policy change (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2009; Apple 2013). Arguably the years that have followed his work have seen teacher workload accelerate substantially as performativity has taken a greater hold on policy. More recently issues with teacher workload around feedback and marking have reached a crisis point. In the same way that the earlier point identified how teacher effectiveness had become based on how many tasks had been completed, the similarly constant pressure to do 'more feedback' has developed in parallel to losing sight of what effective feedback actually means. This rather unhelpful change in focus resulted in the publication of the Department of Education's (2016) guidance 'Eliminating Unnecessary Workload around Marking.' The document acknowledged that marking had 'become disproportionately valued by schools and has become unnecessarily burdensome for teachers' (Department for Education 2016, p.5) and that feedback now served to demonstrate 'teacher performance or to satisfy the requirements of other, mainly adult, audiences' (Department for Education 2016, p.6) rather than to maximize learning progress. Although the workload document (Department of Education 2016) is clear to state that such mechanistic practice has never been policy, it does recognise that the inspection regime encouraged it, albeit implicitly. For example, when marking practice is a common target within inspection reports, other schools feel a pressure to alter their own practice, so it fits with what they perceive Ofsted to be looking for. The subsequent changed practice becomes valued and normalised by schools

only for the national guidance (either explicitly or implicitly) to change. There has essentially been a changing of the goalposts in relation to marking and feedback confusing matters further.

As such, the focus on performativity as part of the neo liberal agenda has caused the true meaning of assessment and feedback to become lost and has been replaced with mechanistic and superficial practice.

### **1.5 The significance of this study**

So far, this introduction has argued that we are living in contradictory times in terms of feedback. The contradiction is also present in the education context and is arguably in part due to the neoliberal agenda that has infiltrated policy and subsequent practice over the last twenty years. The consequences of the imbalance of performative value attributed to feedback are a teacher-centric approach, a distortion in underlying conceptions and a negative impact on teacher workload and retention. Furthermore, the performativity culture seems to be influencing teachers' ontological views and sense of autonomy. The context outlined above does appear rather toxic in nature and in itself justifies the research focus. Additionally, given the technological and performance based context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems pertinent to re-examine how we understand feedback and how this understanding is shaped by our experiences. As Carless et al. argues, 'what is required is a more fundamental reconceptualization of the feedback process' (2011, p.396). Within the current turbulent context, understanding feedback is even more important for student teachers. Given the significance of feedback in any competency based education (Schmulian and Coetzee 2019), student teachers have to respond to feedback themselves, and also as teachers who give high quality developmental feedback to their learners.

The potential value of feedback is well documented (Black and Wiliam 1998; Kahu 2008; Hattie 2009; Hattie and Clarke 2018; Jers and Wårnsby 2018) but the potential is not always met (Clarke 2003; Wiliam 2011; Molloy and Boud 2013; Johnson et al. 2016). As Clarke states, 'feedback is the central theme of formative assessment, yet it is the element most laden with a legacy of bad

practice and misguided views' (2003, p.3). One wonders whether the assertions about the value of feedback are perhaps exaggerated given the number of authors who state the contrary when it comes to reality (Clarke 2003; Wiliam 2011; Molloy and Boud 2013; Johnson et al. 2016). Alternatively, is it that the differential between the possible potential and the more probable realities of feedback are because our understanding of what effective feedback is, is unclear? Undoubtedly, the context already outlined has contributed to this uncertainty and the literature (particularly policy literature) tends to position conceptions of feedback in black and white opposition. However, it is a central premise of this study that feedback is not black and white and there is no inherent binary choice. Feedback is complex, very complex with many differing nuanced conceptions. Furthermore, unlike existing models of feedback that present feedback as static, this thesis presents feedback as dynamic, ever changing, personal and varied. This thesis will posit that there is no one model of feedback but many possible models that are capable of co-existing and being moved between by practitioners. These conceptions are not necessarily better or worse but merely different. Exploring the fluidity of conceptions should allow for a deeper, honest conversation that recognises that there is not only one way of understanding feedback.

The thesis also explores the relationships between understanding feedback as both a student and an emerging teacher and the key influences within this understanding. This will include examining how student teachers conceptualise 'feedback' and analysing how the practices within a university based Initial Teacher Education programme influence this understanding, both within taught modules and school placement. The potential impact of the research is wide, as the thesis is concerned with how student teachers conceptualise and engage with the feedback they receive and how student teachers conceptualise and use feedback to impact on the learning of the children they teach. Also, given the potential for misunderstandings and reductive notions of feedback, this is an area worthy of much more research and discussion within Initial Teacher Education. A critical discussion of the subject is necessary within the sector and its stakeholders if we are to avoid a perpetuation or acceleration of the current confusion. If Ball is correct in identifying ontological insecurity (Ball 2000) as a consequence of the performativity climate, encouraging teachers to examine their own conceptions of feedback appears even more relevant if they are to develop a sense of self as a practitioner. Furthermore, Day (2002) argues that

although experienced teachers may have been able to keep their identities intact during this period of turbulence, younger teachers are particularly susceptible to feeling the pressures of competency measures. As such, the focus on student teachers is even more relevant if they are to become reflective, autonomous and critical practitioners who remain in the profession long term.

Within any Initial Teacher Education programme, the students' engagement with, and understanding of, feedback is significant, not only to their own progress as a learner, but also to their emerging identity as a new teacher who will be responsible for giving feedback to the children in their care. Student teachers are in a unique position, experiencing feedback as both a learner and a teacher. As Lee and Schallert state, is a student teacher 'a student or a teacher, or both or neither, at different times?' (2016, p.72). This study is therefore interested in the duality of feedback for student teachers who conceptualise feedback both as a learner and as a teacher and any identified similarities and differences across these roles. Furthermore, the study is concerned with how these conceptions develop over time during the period of Initial Teacher Education study. There are therefore three research questions that have provided focus to the study:

- What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners?
- What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?
- What are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

## **1.6 Outline of the thesis**

Following the introduction, the thesis outlines the current and seminal literature in the field. This chapter is separated into three sections: contexts, teacher development and alternative faces of feedback. The contexts are the three contexts associated with the study: primary school education, Higher Education (HE) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Each of these sections will outline the perspectives within literature regarding feedback within each context and broadly

echoes the identified research questions, i.e. examining conceptions of feedback as a learner in HE, as a primary school teacher and as a student teacher. The second part of the chapter examines existing models of teacher development from pre-service onwards and as a result of continued professional development. Lastly the chapter deals with alternative faces of feedback that exist within the literature. These are not necessarily always associated with feedback but, as will be argued, can be applied with the premise that feedback can be understood in different ways. Faces of feedback will include feedback as identity, feedback as a relationship and feedback as motivation.

Following this, the epistemological and methodological approaches, decisions and strategies are justified within Chapter 3 (Research Design). Broadly speaking, a phenomenological approach has been used to explore the three research questions situated within a constructionist epistemology. In summary, eight participants were chosen and studied over a three year period using interviews as the main strategy. In addition, the research design chapter also outlines the data collection and analysis strategies as well as outlining the ethical dilemmas considered.

For analysis a phenomenographic outcome space has been used to identify themes. As part of an iterative approach, the areas highlighted by the outcome matrix have been grouped into three sections. These sections use a metaphor of economies: pedagogical economies, relational economies and moral economies. Subsequently the three distinct economies are the titles of the three analysis chapters that follow where variation in understanding, or *essences* of understanding, as a learner and teacher are explored. The pedagogical economy chapter explores how the explicit and implicit educational discourses<sup>2</sup> associated with assessment and feedback are evidenced in the variation of student teachers' experiences and understanding. The relational economy chapter is concerned with how relationships inform the different ways feedback is understood, including how verbal feedback influences understanding. Lastly the

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<sup>2</sup> The term discourse is used throughout the thesis to represent the educational narrative and is interpreted as 'a way of talking about and understanding the world, or an aspect of it' (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.1). The thesis also supports the view that discourses are social practice as people are involved in both making and interpreting these meanings and also that discourses strongly relate to policy contexts so can be a way of creating and mediating power and control (Jones 2013). Indeed as Sim (2011, p.245) states 'whenever the term discourse is mentioned..., we find Foucault's ghostly presence' so discourse is arguably related to the technologies of control discussed later

moral economy chapter explores how feedback can be viewed as a moral duty both in altruistic terms and as part of a measured professional duty. The economies chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) are therefore aligned to research questions 1 and 2: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners? and what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers? There is a further analysis chapter (Chapter 7) which focuses on two distinct participants and explores how understanding developed over time; this chapter therefore focuses on research question three: what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher? There are links within this chapter to models of teacher development, threshold concepts and disavowed knowledge as part of the analysis. The analysis chapters therefore go some way in exploring recommendations made by past studies, for example, Brown, Peterson and Yao (2016) called for future feedback research studies to deal with the nature of the connections between emotion, cognitive and conative aspects, to explore the relationships between the learner, feedback giver and the context and also look at understanding longitudinally. All of these recommendations are explored to some extent within this thesis.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the main findings from the three initial research questions as well as critically analysing the research process itself. Additional findings beyond the research questions are also discussed as well as identifying any overarching conclusions. The significance of the findings is explored and suggested implications for policy and practice in the three contexts studied (primary education, Higher Education and Initial Teacher Education) are identified. Lastly the conclusion recognises areas for future study before offering some personal reflections on the process of completing the study.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This introduction has argued that conceptions of feedback have become distorted over time and that the neoliberal agenda has contributed to this distortion. The chapter has also demonstrated how this has impacted on educational change, policy and practice over the last twenty years resulting in a rather dichotomous presentation of good and bad feedback. Given the further

contradictions between the potential and reality of feedback, the chapter has argued for a more nuanced understanding of feedback within the sector. This is particularly pertinent for student teachers given their unique position as a learner and teacher. The thesis will now go on to explore the existing literature in the field with particular reference to the three contexts studied (primary education, Higher Education and Initial Teacher Education), how teachers are understood (in the literature) to develop understanding and the varied understandings that could be applied to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of feedback.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review: Contexts, Teacher Development and Faces of Feedback

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## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines existing literature in the field related to feedback. The literature does recognise that there are some different ways of defining and conceptualising both assessment and feedback, but these models are often presented as rather polarised distinguishing between what is perceived as effective and ineffective (Taras 2008). Furthermore, the value attributed to these conceptions has altered as they have become part of policy and therefore practice; this is sometime rather transitory. It is a premise of this thesis that different conceptions or models of feedback are not necessarily better but simply different and represent the myriad of ways feedback can be experienced and understood; these understandings are often related to the context, the roles involved and the purpose of feedback. This Literature Review therefore considers both the separate contexts feedback occurs within and different possible understandings of feedback.

However, before this chapter examines the existing literature, it is important to offer some key definitions. As such, the chapter begins by defining both feedback and conceptions before situating feedback within the broader area of assessment to explore its underpinning and further illustrate the polarisation and value judgements associated with the subject. Following this, understanding of feedback in relation to the three contexts studied (primary education, Higher Education and Initial Teacher Education) is outlined referring to past and current thinking and also further acknowledging the dichotomous discourse surrounding the subject. The chapter then deals with teacher development and explores existing models of how student teachers, and teachers, develop over time. This section is therefore aligned to research question three, what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher? The last section of this chapter outlines alternative conceptions, broadly related to socio-relational and individual ontology, which the chapter will argue can be applied to feedback. As such the sections on contexts and concepts will relate to research questions 1 and 2: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners and what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?

## **2.2 Key Definitions**

Given the nature of this study, offering one definition of feedback is somewhat problematic. For if the thesis asserts that feedback is one thing, it would discount the definitions implied by the participants and the thesis has at its foundation a view that feedback can be understood (and therefore defined) in different ways. As a result, a particularly broad definition of feedback is offered here, one that does not discount others. Butler and Winnie describe feedback as:

information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies (1995, p.275).

Similarly, Brummer and Koston state that feedback is 'information regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding, provided by an agent' (2018, p.1258). Both definitions avoid any clear explanation regarding the source of the information, the form of information and what happens to the information. Using these definitions as the basis for this thesis is deliberate as they allow for variation in understanding and recognises how the meaning of feedback has changed over time (Dawson et al. 2018).

A perhaps more pertinent definition is how the thesis understands 'conceptions.' Here the thesis uses the explanation that 'conceptions are mental representations of phenomena in reality' (Brown, Peterson and Yao 2016, p.3). This is well aligned with the methodological basis of the study outlined in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3) that follows, i.e. understanding is informed by experience of a phenomenon, in this case the phenomenon of feedback. In other words, the study is examining the mental representations (or understandings) of feedback formed through experience.

### **2.3 Situating Feedback**

It is difficult to explore conceptions of feedback without situating these within assessment. This task has a historical as well as a conceptual dimension, as not only can assessment be seen as ‘a dangerously ambiguous concept’ (Broadfoot 1999, p.3), a study of the last few decades indicates that assessment consists of broadly *two* ambiguous and diametrically opposed concepts: assessment for learning, or formative assessment, and performativity. This section will outline these two broad conceptions of assessment before exploring how their uncomfortable co-existence has led to dubious practice, misconceptions and unhelpful, value laden polarisation for both assessment and feedback.

Although educational assessment has always existed (or at least as long as education has) it is within the last thirty years that it has grown to a ‘pervasive presence’ (Broadfoot 2007, p.19). In the United Kingdom, the Great Education Debate of the 1970s/80s saw the beginnings of a new educational discourse where ‘reasonable standards [and] expectations’ (Department of Education and Science 1980) started to be emphasised. 1988 marked one of the most substantial pieces of education legislation (Daugherty 2004) and not just because of the introduction of a National Curriculum. The act also marked the beginning of a statutory national system of pupil assessment which had far reaching consequences, not just for the education system, but also how that system was monitored, controlled and evidenced for the newly empowered stakeholders such as parents (Daugherty 2004). The introduction of league tables in 1992 and the many versions of progress measures that followed (value added in 2002, contextual value added in 2006, expected progress in 2011 and more recently progress 8 scores in 2016), combined with an increasingly high stakes inspection framework, resulted in assessment being used to identify under performance with far reaching consequences (Leckie and Goldstein 2017). Although these changes were part of UK education policy, similar reforms also took place worldwide (Verger, Fontdevila and Parcerisa 2019). As a result, over time assessment standards became no longer a standard to be reached but the standard to be exceeded if the school was to compete in this brave new world (Broadfoot 2007); a world where assessment was a measurable and comparable mark of competence either for a learner, teacher or school. Given the

performativity context outlined within the introduction, by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the UK arguably developed an education system that was:

not only as tightly controlled and centrally directed as any in the world ... but also a system that might appear ...to be infected by a kind of madness [because of the] rampant growth of a forest of assessment procedures which threatens to throttle the whole education system within a dense canopy of externally-imposed performance indicators. (Broadfoot 1999, p.3)

Since the 1980s then, assessment has morphed into a powerful tool for the 'quasi-market' of education (Leckie and Goldstein 2017, p.194) increasingly part of a 'dangerously powerful technology ...with little consideration of its consequences' (Broadfoot 2007, p.31).

The same period of time, saw the emergence of conflicting thinking within policy-making (Daugherty 2004). Alongside the increasing focus on neo-liberalism, free market and competition, there were also the beginnings of an alternative view of assessment; one that was formative, self-regulatory and learner focused. Broadfoot neatly summarises these two emerging views of assessment as 'performativity or empowerment?' (1999, p.2). In the early days, the two conceptions appear to have been more closely linked. The highly influential TGAT (Task Group on Assessment and Testing) report (Department of Education and Science) of 1987 recommends that assessment needs to 'be capable of comparison across classes and schools' (p.7) which certainly supports what was to become the performativity agenda. However two of the other recommendations sit within what is now understood to be a formative view of assessment: 'assessment results should give direct information about pupils' achievement in relation to objectives; should provide a basis for decisions about pupils' further learning needs' (Department of Education and Science 1987, p.7). The focus on a more formative view of assessment is perhaps not surprising given that the author, Paul Black, was one of the key creators of what is understood as formative assessment or assessment for learning.

As a model, formative assessment can be traced back to 'formative evaluation' proposed by Scriven (1967) and later adapted by Bloom (1969). However, it was Black and Wiliam's seminal

work 'Inside the Black Box' (1998), and the resulting Assessment Reform Group who significantly developed assessment for learning, both conceptually and in practice. Black and Wiliam suggested that 'assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs' (Black and Wiliam 1998, p.2). As such, assessment for learning was conceptualised as a consequence based process in that judgements about learning influenced future learning and teaching – assessment was a 'prerequisite for learning, rather than simply a measure of it' (Sambell 2013, p.380). Essentially formative assessment became understood as a crucial way of securing learner progress (McDowell, Sambell and Davison 2009). We can see evidence of this thinking within the TGAT report. Indeed, the first two principles of the report are that assessment should be 'formative, so that the positive achievements of a pupil may be recognised and discussed and the appropriate next steps may be planned' and 'diagnostic, through which learning difficulties may be scrutinised and classified so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be provided' (Department of Education and Science 1987, p.13). Despite the rather outdated language, the roots of formative assessment are plain to see.

However the translation of formative assessment into practice since then has often resulted in a systems or strategy based reinterpretation of the term by many (Torrance 2012), for example, lessons must begin by displaying an objective or written feedback must include particularly coloured highlighter pens. This could be because the move to formative assessment was battling with the arguably more powerful (or at least high stakes) move to performativity. In support, Marshall and Drummond (2006, p. 133) define the reinterpretation of formative assessment as practices that confirm to the 'letter' rather than the 'spirit' or principles of assessment for learning. Whilst it had been hoped that such strategies could act as a 'trojan horse' for a larger pedagogical (and 'spirit' based) shift in understanding (Kirton et al. 2007) formative assessment was, and is, often understood rather more mechanistically (Torrance 2012). Bennett (2011, p.6) similarly identifies these differing conceptions as either 'instrument' or 'process' but argues that the distinction is over simplified as 'process cannot somehow rescue unsuitable instrumentation, nor can instrumentation save an unsuitable process' (2011, p.7). In other words, given the status of formative assessment within the literature, it is somewhat disappointing that practice has sometimes lost sight of the principles.

Possibly as a result of the two broad conflicting developments in assessment, formative assessment, or Assessment for Learning (AfL) has also become positioned in clear opposition to summative assessment (Lau 2016) as essentially 'good' versus 'bad' assessment. As McDowell, Sambell and Davison (2009, p.57) state, Sadler's definition of formative assessment 'is very widely used and accepted as a basis for good practice.' Indeed Taras (2008, p.395) states that the 'current discourse emanating from assessment for learning portrays formative assessment as the ethical face of assessment.' However critics argue that despite its significant presence in education policy and practice, formative assessment is relatively under researched and indeed its effects have been 'over-sold' (Skovholt 2018, p.143). One wonders whether this wholesale uncritical taking on of formative assessment has in fact been a reaction to, or indeed a deflection from, the other competing voice of assessment: performativity. Although formative conceptions of assessment within both the primary sector and higher education have been influenced by the same seminal works, particularly Black and Wiliam (1998), it appears that 'multiple and conflicting conceptions' (Brown 2011, p.47) remain and these have subsequently resulted in misconceptions, or at least differing definitions (McDowell, Sambell and Davison 2009), of assessment (and feedback). In other words, when value judgments are attached to these conceptions, the resulting separation leads to further misinterpretation (Lau 2016). Valued principles are reinterpreted into strategies (Torrance 2007) enabling practice to change quickly in, line with policy imperatives, therefore reducing formative assessment to a 'shopping list of things to do which teachers could be trained to operationalise' (Boyle and Charles 2010, p.287) and a collection of tokenistic 'gimmicks' (Ward 2008). In summary, 'assessment illiteracy abounds' (Stiggins 2010 cited in Xu and Brown 2016, p.149) which means, the learning gains promised by the supporting research (Black and Wiliam 1998; Kirton et al. 2007; The Sutton Trust 2014) are not realised<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting at this point that although Black and Wiliam's (1998) work has had significant influence across the sector, the trustworthiness of the claims made regarding learning gains has been debated (Rakoczy et al. 2019) .



The impact of performativity is easier to spot. Education is now a world where university, school and individual improvement are now measured through performance marks and grades (Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon 2011). In Higher Education, providers are also judged according to the assessment questions within the National Student Survey (NSS). Interestingly the survey is rather contradictory pedagogically 'measuring the "quality" of assessment and feedback using a completely contrasting set of criteria that promotes a passive, transmission focused approach' (Pitt and Winstone 2017, p.30). Furthermore the loaded assessment processes and systems within education that need to be complied with are 'inconsistent with [the more formative] pedagogic criteria' (Ali, Ahmed and Rose 2017, p.246-7). Over the last forty years, assessment has become increasingly subject to a range of political influences that the teacher has no control over, but is judged by (Poskitt 2014), irrespective of the teacher's own educational philosophy; performance measures do not therefore appear to sit well with a formative approach. As a result, the growth of a culture focused on external performance testing, performance related pay and accountability has perpetuated the confusion between the value attached to formative and summative assessments; national assessment systems appear to be more valued by the system and have more significance (Harlen 2004; Black and Wiliam 2005; DeLuca et al. 2012). This might be explicitly, as recognised within the US (Darling-Hammond and McCloskey 2008) or, almost unconsciously, as the burden of statutory testing takes its toll. However, if concerns about meeting performativity expectations alter the value given to formative assessment, this in itself represents a further polarisation between formative and summative which is unhelpful. Brooks (2018) makes a wider point that within Higher Education, students are increasingly viewed as customers who are entitled to a good assessment experience; therefore providers need to keep to keep students satisfied and enrolled and need to compete with other providers using performance data. The same is true for the school sector where summative standards result in a league table position. The summative assessment standards achieved and the students' experience of assessment both carry high stakes. As Brooks states,

achieving a high and rising position in the rankings is now considered a legitimate (and perhaps the most important or even only) objective in its

own right rather than being merely a positive side effect of good performance on other, more specific indicators (2018, p.1118).

Of course, the tendency to both present and understand policy and practice as a value laden dichotomy, either good or bad (Lau 2016), is true not only for assessment and feedback but more widely for learning: behaviourism versus constructivism, summative versus formative, whole word reading versus phonics, fixed versus growth mindset. Rather than allowing for a developed understanding of the various definitions, and the nuances in between, the positioning of these ideas as mutually exclusive and disconnected (DeLuca et al. 2012) unintentionally results in the categorisation of pedagogy and practice as worthy or unworthy with nothing in-between. In terms of assessment this has resulted in a view that formative and summative assessment are particular and distinct practices rather than recognising that definitions are dependent on the context, process or consequence of the assessment. If the 'formative-ness' is related to the use of information for future teaching/learning, 'it follows that any assessment can be uniquely summative when the assessment stops at the judgement' (Taras 2009, p.58). Taras states that this dichotomy is 'self-destructive and self-defeating' (2005, p.476) resulting in a lower implementation of effective practices (DeLuca et al. 2012). Furthermore, learning/teaching/assessment divisions can multiply as one conception informs another; if a teacher buys into the polarised conception of learning, this will inform conceptions and practices of assessment and feedback (Marshall and Drummond 2006; Brown 2011) which then influence the role of the teacher and the learner within the classroom. For example, a teacher who locates a constructivist view of education as exclusively 'good' could logically only value self-regulating and independent learner behaviours (Marshall and Drummond 2006) who have an active (Murtagh 2014) role in the feedback process.

Despite the apparent influence of formative assessment in policy and practice, the simultaneous growth of performativity, and the ongoing divergence between the two ideas, has meant that the purposes, expectations and practice of assessment have become distorted; performance data, used for governance purposes, has become prioritised and ideas subsequently polarised. Given the changing understanding of assessment over the last twenty years, it is not surprising that feedback has also suffered from rather jarring contradictory conceptions. As Clarke states,

'feedback is the central theme of formative assessment, yet it is the element most laden with a legacy of bad practice and misguided views' (2003, p.3). As feedback has become to be viewed more formatively, it too has fallen victim to an over simplified, strategized approach that has befallen assessment for learning.

We can see the beginnings of formative understanding of feedback in Ramaprasad's seminal work of 1983. Borrowing an analogy from engineering, formative feedback was redefined as 'information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way' (Ramaprasad 1983, p.4). Within heating systems, feedback is 'the discrepancy between the current state and the desired state' and for it to be formative there needs to be 'a mechanism within the feedback loop to bring the current state closer to the desired state' (Wiliam 2011, p.121). This presents rather a mechanistic approach to feedback as something that will fix a gap in understanding. As Taras (2013) points out, the notion of gap also suggests a deficit when in fact it could merely be a 'difference of opinion' (p.31). Given the professional expectations to fix learning gaps and evidence 'good' practice quickly, formative feedback has also been recast into formulaic strategies such as the feedback sandwich (Boud and Molloy 2012a). This is compounded by an understanding that feedback exists 'independently of the environment it takes place in and that always functions in similar ways' thereby further encouraging an add-in one-size-fits-all approach (Esterhazy 2018, p.1303). Feedback is actually far more difficult and complex than appears (Wiliam 2011) and cannot be reduced to a generalised 'good' practice or strategy.

Reflecting some of the issues with assessment, although some literature rather uncritically (Crisp 2007) states that feedback is central to learning (Black and Wiliam 1998; Mutch 2003; Orrell 2006; Kahu 2008; Hattie 2009; Adcroft 2011; Jers and Wårnsby 2018; Hattie and Clarke 2018), other literature has also contradictorily recognised that potential for learning is, more often than not, not reached and makes very little difference (Clarke 2003; Crisp 2007; Wiliam 2011; Molloy and Boud 2013; Johnson et al. 2016). Furthermore, the National Student Survey has indicated for years that in Higher Education students are not satisfied with their feedback experience (Boud and Molloy 2012a; Sambell 2016; Brooks 2018; McArthur 2018; Steen-Utheim and Hopfenbeck 2019). It seems that there is a difficulty between the potential and the truth of feedback and

certainly there is 'considerable room for improvement' (Sambell 2016, p.1). Historically, a criticism has been that despite the perceived value of feedback, as a subject it was under researched (Yang and Carless 2013). However, the last decade has seen significant research interest in the area, albeit focused on particular sectors and disciplines of education and the use of specific approaches or strategies within these sectors or disciplines. So, is the picture any clearer now? Probably not, as literature now recognises that feedback is much more complex than previously thought. As Sadler states, 'at the risk of glossing over the complexities of what is known about feedback, the general picture is that the relationship between its form, timing and effectiveness is complex and variable, with no magic formulas' (Sadler 2010, p.536).

It is clear that there are differing conceptions and misconceptions of assessment arguably as a consequence of the two juggernauts of formative assessment and performativity that have altered both policy and practice across the sector. This has subsequently led to differing conceptions of feedback. The fact that these views often have values attached to them has compounded matters, resulting in an oversimplified polarisation of understanding about the nature, purpose and practice of assessment and feedback. As Adcroft argues, in relation to feedback 'there is a grey area between mythologies where it is not absolutely clear where one ends and another begins' (2011, p.416). Some of these are context specific so the thesis will now outline the contexts within the study.

## **2.4 The Three Contexts**

Different contexts support different conceptions of the feedback and the literature around three of these (Higher Education, Primary Education and Initial Teacher Education) will now be explored.

### **2.4.1 Higher Education**

The Higher Education context does not present a clear-cut view of feedback. Earlier conceptions of feedback within Higher Education were based on Ramaprasad's (1983) notion of feedback as closing a learning gap. Sadler (1989) developed this further arguing that an effective model of

feedback requires three conditions: an understanding of the next learning goal, an awareness of current learning and an understanding of the gap between the two and how to close it. The action of closing this gap was key; without it there is no consequence to the feedback and, as such, true formative feedback was not viewed as occurring. The engagement of the learner is significant within Sadler's model as the closure of the learning gap is dependent on 'conceptual change' that 'must evolve from the learner's pre-existent understanding' (Black and Wiliam 2014, p.28) Sadler's (1989) ideas therefore signified an important shift from the more acquisition 'teacher-centric' understanding of feedback, the view of feedback being delivered by a more knowledgeable other or feedback as 'telling' (Boud and Molloy 2012b, p.14). Placing the student at the centre of this process represented a pedagogical shift and a consequential change to the role of the teacher.

The role of the learner was further centralised in Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2004) theoretical model which synthesises feedback and self-regulated learning or 'learnacy' (Butler and Winne 1995). The learner holds the active role in the process as the student 'actively constructs his or her own understanding of feedback messages' (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004, p.201). This model of feedback could therefore be repositioned altogether as 'assessment as learning'<sup>4</sup> (Earl and Katz 2006) in that it is 'an active process of cognitive restructuring that occurs when individuals interact with new ideas' (Earl and Katz 2006, p.41); engaging with feedback develops 'learnacy' beyond the subject being studied. This seems to indicate that learnacy is perceived to be the crucial goal of feedback, or 'best' feedback.

Winstone (2018) extended this distinction by identifying two generalised paradigms of feedback in Higher Education: the old and new<sup>5</sup>. Here we see another example of value laden polarisation as 'new' can be interpreted as 'better' just as the opposed distinction between teacher versus

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the term assessment as learning is also used to describe assessment processes which masquerade as, rather than enhance, learning (Torrance 2007; McDowell, Sambell and Davison 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Similarly both Carless (2015) and Jørgensen (2019) identify two paradigms of feedback in Higher Education; feedback as information and feedback as process.

learner-centric may be ultimately unhelpful. The old paradigm is viewed as reflecting a 'teacher-centric,' transmissive model of feedback as telling. The new paradigm is defined as 'learner-centric' where the learner needs to not only undergo a 'conceptual change' in thinking (Black and Wiliam 2014, p.28) but also is an active decision maker identifying, engaging with and actioning feedback; the learner is an 'active agent' (Espasa and Martinez-Melo 2019, p.111). Evans supports this stating that 'the emphasis of feedback should be on supporting learners to drive feedback for themselves' (Evans 2016, p.5). The new paradigm is understood to be more sustainable (Boud and Molloy 2013) as it encourages a self-regulatory approach. Of course, just how central a learner can ever be in a top down education system is open to debate. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that despite the developing understanding, feedback practice remains resolutely transmissive and summative (Nicol 2010; Ali, Ahmed and Rose 2017; Winstone 2018). Molloy and Boud (2013) identify two nostrums that have contributed to the unremitting 'old' paradigm in Higher Education: all feedback is good feedback and with feedback, the more the merrier. The massification of Higher Education has also significantly influenced the way feedback is understood. Larger classes, closer scrutiny of quality processes and the impact of time/workload pressures have resulted in the potential for feed forward becoming incongruent with current assessment procedures (Ali, Ahmed and Rose 2017). Increased accountability has led to a reframing of feedback. Carless (2015) calls this double feedback duty where feedback is not only driving a pedagogical need for the learner but also meets the requirements of 'quality' surveillance processes. Once more, performativity is distorting the purpose and associated behaviours of feedback. As Winstone argues:

quality assurance are important dimensions of the higher education landscape yet the ways in which they are enacted may lead to risk aversion, unintentionally promulgating a feedback culture more closely aligned with the 'old paradigm' transmission-focused model (2018, p.23).

So feedback practice that is classified as 'good' may not necessarily be for the good of the student pedagogically. Furthermore, within the HE sector there is strong evidence that students are dissatisfied with their feedback experience. Yang and Carless (2013) and Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon (2011) argue that this is partly because students find the experience of

feedback in Higher Education less supportive than their pre-course school experience. Indeed, Thomas (2019) argues that the first experience of assessment in Higher Education is key to transition. Depressingly, student perceptions of feedback decrease as they progress across the three years of a standard undergraduate course (Ali, Ahmed and Rose 2017). The National Student Survey data supports this by identifying assessment and feedback as the least satisfactory aspect of the HE experience (Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon 2011; Yang and Carless 2013). This has led many HE institutions to conclude that students are not interested in feedback (Sambell, Gibson and Montgomery 2007) or are not clear about what constitutes feedback (Adcroft 2011) which in itself does imply rather a teacher-centric understanding where the learners have a deficit (Boud and Molloy 2012a). Arguably the survey is flawed itself as the feedback questions have remained relatively unchanged for some time and use language such as 'received' (Pitt and Winstone 2017) further reinforcing a teacher-centric view. Indeed, Brooks (2018) argues that students are not necessarily commenting on the fairness, timeliness or quality of the feedback but merely how positive it was. There is clearly a disconnect between the ideal of the 'new' paradigm and the realities of the 'old' paradigm within Higher Education.

#### **2.4.2 Primary Education**

The primary education discourse appears to agree that feedback is key to progress. In addition to the claims made by Black and Wiliam (1998), Hattie (2003) reported that feedback resulted in a significant effect size. This has been echoed by influential meta-analyses such as the Education Endowment Fund (The Sutton Trust 2014). Using Sadler's analogy of closing the gap, feedback is positioned as formative and leading to consequence (Hattie and Clarke 2018). However, this is not necessarily a consequence for the learner. Indeed Clarke states 'the most powerful form of feedback is that given to the teacher by the student' (2014, p.145); this is a key difference to the models represented in Higher Education where the gaps only appear to be for the learner. The reality of this in practice is more difficult to ascertain.

Much of the existing primary education feedback research tends to focus on the impact of strategies. However, although there is relatively little focus on teachers' conceptions of feedback (Brown 2011), and what there is often highlights a mismatch between espoused beliefs and actual practice (Dixon, Hawe and Parr 2011), an exploration of the existing literature does

establish certain other themes. Existing conceptions of feedback within the school sector tend to recognise (in espoused form at least) that both teacher and pupil have a role to play. The two roles are not necessarily equal though; literature frequently reinforces the view that feedback is a 'gift from teacher to pupil' (Hargreaves 2005, p.6) rather than pupil to pupil. It is the teacher who assumes ultimate responsibility. This is supported by the national Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) which include 'give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback' as a key requirement (DfE 2012, p.12). Feedback therefore seems to be constructed as having joint responsibilities but with teachers taking the key role in the fulfilment of these responsibilities. Atjonen (2014) extends this somewhat democratic view further by conceptualising feedback as a three-way process – pupils to teacher, teacher to pupils and pupil to pupil. Again, this may not necessarily be balanced with most of the feedback being one way -teacher to pupils.

Primary education focused literature appears to support the development of independent and self-directed learners (Kirton et al. 2007; Hargreaves 2013) through feedback (Butler and Winne 1995; Black and Wiliam 1998). However, many school based practices further reinforce the conception that the teacher is central and in control. Brown (2011) argues that teachers' conceptions are developed through their own experiences of the particular phenomenon. In other words, how teachers understand feedback, and the role they take, will depend on how they have experienced feedback as a learner. If their experiences have emphasised that the teacher has ultimate responsibility for feedback, this is the role they will inhabit as a student teacher. This therefore makes the feedback practices within Initial Teacher Education particularly significant. Developing a more learner-centric view of learning does require a developed understanding by the teacher. If the learner is to reach ownership of the process they will require careful training, support and scaffolding along this continuum (Brown Harris and Harnett 2012); too much support and their autonomy will be undermined, too little and they won't develop the appropriate autonomous skills (Hargreaves 2013). Gamlem and Munthe (2014) expand this further stating 'students may be unaware of its [metacognition] importance unless the processes are explicitly emphasized by teachers' (2014, p.78). The Teacher Standards support the view that the teacher is somehow responsible for learner independence and autonomy, stating that teachers need to 'encourage pupils to respond to the feedback' (DfE



2012, p.12). It is not difficult to see the confusion between a learner and teacher-centric model of feedback within the primary sector.

The primary sector also appears to recognise peer and self-evaluation as key strategy in development of a more self-regulatory model (Harlen 2004; Harris, Brown and Harnett 2015) particularly when coupled with the development of process driven feedback (Gamlem and Munthe 2014). Teachers who embrace this approach tend to conceptualise feedback as being more learner than teacher-centric (DeLuca et al. 2012). Their pedagogy recognises that the pupils are 'legitimate sources of feedback' (Brown, Harris and Harnett 2012, p.969). However, Brown also states that 'part of the challenge of implementing such practices is convincing students and other stakeholders that pupils can be effective assessors of their own work' (Brown, Harris and Harnett 2012, p.969) and the endorsement of the approach will be dependent on educational context. It may also be the case that not all settings buy into the learner-centric model as the singly most effective one. It may be that both teacher and learner-centric models are necessary within primary schools. It is also worth noting that given that a lot of literature positions 'best' feedback as learner-centric, there is little research into school pupils' perceptions of assessment. If the perceived ultimate goal of formative assessment and feedback is learning autonomy (Hargreaves 2013; Murtagh 2014), really it should be the learners themselves who determine whether or not it is effective.<sup>6</sup>

Peterson (2008) found that secondary aged children conceptualised feedback as a consequential process, but also that the likelihood of this feedback being used was dependent on whether the learner was performance orientated or not. In these fixed mindset cases (Dweck 2006), a 'good' performance resulted in a positive response to the feedback and a 'poor' performance caused the feedback to be viewed negatively and possibly ignored (Peterson and Irving 2008). This seems to indicate that the constructiveness or usefulness of feedback is indeed in the eye of the beholder as learners interpret feedback in different ways (Sambell and McDowell 1998). The implication is that the focus should not necessarily be on the feedback itself but on how it is

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<sup>6</sup> The fact that research tends to focus on the teacher's role within primary feedback reinforces a teacher-centric view of feedback.

received by the learner (Gamlem and Munthe 2014); we require 'new modes of pedagogy in which pupils have to be actively involved in the assessment process, which should improve their motivation, metacognitive skills, and self-esteem' (Atjonen 2014, p.244).

There is also evidence to suggest that primary school teachers also conceptualise feedback, particularly praise, as motivation (Murtagh 2014) although Brown's research (2012) indicates that this conception is in relation to learning rather than well-being (Harris, Brown and Harnett 2015). However, praise is not necessarily a good thing and is also open to differing understanding and ultimately practice. In fact teacher (and therefore extrinsic) praise could have a negative impact in that it would reduce the necessity for intrinsic motivation; this would further reinforce the view that the teacher is in control of the learning process (Murtagh 2014) and the children are passive. Furthermore, the nature of the praise can affect its potential impact. Generic and non-targeted praise is seen as ineffective (Hattie and Timperley 2007) but nevertheless appears to be favoured most with teachers (Burnett and Mandel 2010). Having said that, recognition of success by the teacher does seem to assist in the development of learner-teacher relationships (Skipper and Douglas 2015) particularly so when this recognition is related to the process rather than the person (Dweck 1999). Of course, recognition of success arguably needs to be countered by constructive feedback for improvement to avoid learners developing 'inflated and unrealistic understandings of their abilities' (Skipper and Douglas 2012, p.278). However, the discussion around praise is perhaps a distraction and arguably the real discussion should be on how to develop an effective pupil-teacher relationship that supports a self-directed response to feedback.

More recently there has been a further change in the primary sector. In response to issues relating to teacher retention and recruitment, Ofsted offered myth-busting guidance on marking and feedback stating:

Ofsted recognises that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment. However, Ofsted does not expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback (Ofsted 2018).

This followed the findings of the Teacher Workload report (Department for Education 2016) that made a link between the accountability agenda and the myth of more (and detailed) feedback as good practice (Winstone 2018). There appears to be somewhat of a cyclical nature in what is perceived to be good or bad practice over the years, and marking is a pertinent example. Changing the value of practice so frequently, and in such a polarised manner, does not support solid conceptions of learning, particularly when they are coupled with surveillance. Alderton (2019) argues the school assessment system has over-normalised certain values and behaviours allowing for the 'new regimes of truth' (p.1). These 'truths' are difficult to change as teachers often become embedded in the surveillance of the perceived normalised practice. In support, Alderton (2019) uses the example of the removal of assessment levels in 2016 and the subsequent school based imposition of locally written levels to fill the gap left.

As such, it is difficult to see how a change of direction from Ofsted will result in meaningful changes to understanding and values. Indeed, far from releasing feedback from the association with accountability, the Ofsted (2018) myth-busting statement has actually resulted in a curious contradiction. Schools are now judged (as part of the inspection process) on their response to the recommendations around teacher workload, including realistic marking and feedback; feedback is still an accountability measure but one almost by proxy. The accountability remains but the currency has altered. This time schools are not judged by the detail and quantity of marking but the 'reasonableness' of feedback practice in terms of teacher well-being. The discourse has subsequently changed again with feedback increasingly judged through the lens of workload rather than the lens of progress. A further example is the recommendation to only provide a summative grade (BBC 2016) rather than detailed comments despite evidence to the contrary about the pedagogical benefits (Elliott et al. 2016). Given that Ofsted is such a powerful presence in the sector (either directly or indirectly), recommendations are more often than not reinterpreted as good practice further distorting understanding within the primary sector.

### **2.4.3 Initial Teacher Education**

Within Initial Teacher Education, a developed understanding of learning, assessment and effective feedback is particularly important as student teachers will facilitate feedback with/to the children they teach. Not only do they need to give feedback in school, but they also

experience feedback as a learner so developed understanding of feedback within both these roles is important. Initial Teacher Education providers therefore need to recognise how these differing perspectives influence one another and develop. Arts, Jaspers and Joosten-ten Brinke (2016) highlight how significant teacher education is in the development of feedback stating that:

it is of eminent importance to ... reflect on the different types of feedback that are used and on their effectiveness. Moreover, it is worthwhile to reflect on the way of giving feedback with colleagues and with students, especially with students in teacher training institutes who have to be trained in providing feedback themselves (Arts, Jaspers and Joosten-ten Brinke 2016, p.171).

Given Arts, Jaspers and Joosten-ten Brinke's (2016) assertion, the dearth of feedback research for this group of students is somewhat alarming. Furthermore, the research that does exist does not really consider the unique position these students are in as both receivers and givers of feedback. There is literature in the field regarding how teachers move from pre-service to professional (many of which are explored within section 2.5 of this chapter) however this tends to be teacher development as a whole rather than specifically feedback. In addition, there are studies (Poskitt 2014; Xu and Brown 2016) that have explored the necessary features of assessment literacies needed within professional training programmes but these do not always make specific reference to feedback. Student teachers and feedback is generally a neglected and under researched area.

The research that does exist into the development of student teachers is often from outside the UK and looks at broader pedagogical understanding (Donche and Van Petegem 2009; Cheng, Tang and Cheng 2014) although, of course, feedback is positioned within this. Research also exists on the development of self-regulation (Endedijk et al. 2014) but this does not explicitly deal with the role of feedback within this and the dual role of the student teachers. There is little in the literature which looks at the unique position student teachers are in, how this develops and the fact that student teachers require a developed understanding of feedback as a learner and as a teacher. As Endedijk and Vermunt state, 'studies on how student teachers regulate their learning during teaching practice and on how they regulate learning from both theory and practice in parallel, are almost absent' (2014, p.1119).

Research also supports the point that teachers' epistemological conceptions are a product of the beliefs they develop as a student (Strijbos and Ufer 2019) implying that understandings (or indeed misunderstandings) are transferred and repeated. Carless and Boud (2018, p.1316) describe these beliefs as often 'limited absolutist.' However, Cheng, Cheng and Tan (2010) argue that student teachers see their educators as a role model they can learn from; modelling of behaviours by teacher educators can inform student teachers' own understanding and practice. Therefore, teacher education can impact student teacher beliefs irrespective of their pre-course experience. This further supports the contribution of the research project outlined within this thesis; experiences and understanding when learning to teach can inform experiences and understanding as a teacher.

Skovholt (2018) argues that student teachers are able to access explicit technical advice on how to give feedback but questions whether this is translated into practice. One particular strategy that has received considerable research attention is that of peer feedback. McNamara and Seery (2012) found that although summative assessments dominated Initial Teacher Education, peer feedback did support the development of reflective skills in student teachers. The 'reflective practitioner' is a dominant discourse (Moore 2004; Connell 2013) within ITE so research that suggests a link between peer feedback and reflection is significant. Indeed, Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel and van Merriënboer (2002) state that 'peer assessment tasks can be regarded as the learning exercises in which the assessment skills are practised' (p.444) implying that experiencing peer assessment as a learner will influence the practice of peer feedback as a teacher. Furthermore, as reflective practitioners, student teachers are encouraged to develop the skills and attributes linked to learnacy themselves. Van Dinther, Dochy et al. (2015, p.53) support this focus stating that 'for teacher educational institutes, creating possibilities for students to build a robust sense of teacher efficacy, is of utmost importance.' Endedijk (2014) supports this arguing that developing students' self-regulated learning is particularly important in professional programmes including ITE and medical education, encouraging an active approach to regulation i.e. assessment practice (largely feedback) is viewed as 'a powerful tool for reaching this goal' (van Dinther, Dochy and Segers 2015, p.53). This suggests that as effective learners, student teachers need to work towards self-regulation through feedback. However there is a crucial difference between student teachers and student practitioners from other disciplines which Van

Dinther (2015) fails to recognise; student teachers are also ultimately responsible for repeating the process with the children they teach.

Some would argue that Initial Teacher Education is rich in feedback opportunities given the combination of academic and placement assessments; this makes the lack of research even more peculiar. A key source of feedback within such programmes will be the school mentors who support student teachers on school placement<sup>7</sup>. Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) found that mentors identified 'provider of feedback' (p.275) as one of the most important aspects of their role. However, the paper also suggests that the role of mentor is conflicted between supporting student teachers (through feedback) and assessing performance as part of quality assurance (Kwan and Lopez-Real 2005). In addition, Hobson (2002) found that student teachers particularly valued concrete and specific feedback they could action quickly from their mentors. There are clearly opportunities for feedback within school placement but here too are differing conceptions of feedback also reflecting the competing discourses around performativity and assessment for learning.

Furthermore feedback (and assessment) is recognised as a priority within ITE. The Carter Review<sup>8</sup> (2015) identified both as major concerns for the sector. The report recommended feedback should be focused on student teacher outcomes, be goal orientated and encourage student teachers to engage with feedback independently and professionally. In terms of school pupils, the only reference is for student teachers to know 'how to give effective feedback and the next steps for progression' (Carter 2015, p.33). The report also acknowledges that Teacher Standard 6 (Assessment) is a weakness in student teacher outcomes; 'of all areas of ITT content, we believe the most significant improvements are needed on training for assessment' (Carter 2015, p.54-55). It seems strange that there is very little advice on how teacher educators could improve the feedback practice and understanding of the student teachers themselves. Hawe, Dixon and Watson (2008) concluded their feedback study (conducted in Australia) by identifying

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<sup>7</sup> Known as School Experience (SE)

<sup>8</sup> An independent review of the quality and effectiveness of initial teacher training in the United Kingdom

that if feedback in primary schools is to reach its potential, teachers (and presumably student teachers) 'will need sustained opportunities through professional learning to examine their understanding of feedback and their practice' (2008, p.56). Van Den Berg et al. (2013) support this further recognising that 'teachers' own practices and knowledge of' feedback practices is an 'area worthy of further study particularly teachers' knowledge, concerns, and beliefs with regard to the feedback they give' (2013, p.357). This further justifies this study as it examines student teacher experiences and understanding but the methodology also encourages participants to reflect upon their own experiences and understanding.

It is clear that within the conceptions of feedback presented in literature there are both parallels and differences dependent on context. These are largely presented in binary polarisation with the learner-centric model viewed as the goal. Before examining alternative ways that feedback can be conceptualised, the thesis will now explore how teachers develop, given research question three of the study: what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

## **2.5 Teacher Development**

Moving from student teacher to qualified and experienced teacher can be a long and challenging journey. On university centred routes, not only do student teachers have to make the transition to the world of Higher Education, they also have to develop as a teacher with all the associated skills and competencies. Feedback will be part of both roles. As has already been outlined in the early stages of this chapter, literature related to the development of student teacher assessment and feedback literacies is relatively absent so it seems pertinent to look at models of teacher development even though, as Lee and Schallert (2016) state, 'models focusing on pre-service teachers' learning to teach seem few' (p.72), models are fairly dated (although significant) and tend to deal with general changes in understanding and practice rather than focusing solely on assessment and feedback. Given the limited literature in relation to the development of student teachers (Donche and Van Petegem 2009; Lee and Schallert 2016), this discussion will therefore also refer to longer term teacher development and teacher development as part of continued

professional development activities of which there is also relevant literature. However, a word of caution is needed with these models as they tend to present a staged linear approach to learning. Given that the study takes a phenomenological approach where individuals learn through their own experience, the categorising of generic steps does not align well to this.

Some of the models of development attempt to place practice, belief and outcomes in a linear order. Although the order of these is viewed as significant (Guskey 2002) different models dispute what comes first. Earlier models of development tend to present a change in knowledge and belief first, followed by change in practice and lastly change in student learning outcomes (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002). Adaptations of this model have a slightly different order where change in practice comes first, followed by outcomes and lastly beliefs and attitudes (Guskey 2002) arguing that a true change in beliefs only comes about when teachers see an observable change in learner outcomes, i.e. 'they believe it works because they have seen it work' (Guskey 2002, p.384). However, this model is from 2002 when the neoliberal performativity agenda was at a relatively early stage. It is questionable whether it is the outcomes of the learner that necessarily make the difference now. For example, if a change in educational practice results in a change to the standards judged to be achieved by the *teacher* (arguably a form of outcome) maybe this outcome will cause a change in belief. It is certainly reasonable to see how a teacher could change an aspect of their practice, be praised by Ofsted, or as part of performance management process, and therefore change philosophy or belief, even superficially. A wider question therefore needs to be asked about how performativity distorts these models of change. Although 'new practices are likely to be abandoned... in the absence of any evidence of their positive effects' (Guskey 2002, p.387), performativity is perhaps encouraging the retention of practices without positive learner effect but with the rewards of meeting school policy or inspectorate requirements.

Similarly, Fuller's (1969) commonly cited model of early teacher development suggests a three stage model of development which moves from concerns about self, to tasks and finally to outcomes. This can be summarised as moving from inward hopes and fears about the self to outward hopes and fears about learners. This model evolved into the 1975 version which identified the three distinct phases as 'survival, mastery and resistant to change or consequence



orientated' (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p.68). Huberman's (1989) model also identified the early stage (survival stage) of student teacher development as being preoccupied with one's own competence before moving towards stabilisation where identity as a teacher is established. Clearly there are similarities between the two but, both models pre-date the accountability agenda now established within the education sector. How performativity measures impact on early views of competence, concerns about both teaching and learning and the settled later stages are unclear. There is also the possibility that judging teacher performance encourages the focus to remain inwards (the self) rather than moving outwards (the learner). Indeed Conway and Clark (2003), in reference to Fuller's (1969) model, argue that concerns about self cannot be such a distinct and separate stage as concern about pupils is also linked to teacher identity and self-worth.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) identified different ways that teachers change including: change as training, as adaptation, as personal development, as local reform, as systemic restructuring and as growth. Changes in educational policy could prompt many of these, for example change in training i.e. 'something that is done to teachers', change as local reform and change as systemic restructuring as 'teachers enact the "change policies" of the system' (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, p.948). However, these types of forced change may not necessarily result in change as growth where 'teachers are themselves learners who work in a learning community' (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, p.948). The rate and power of policy change and the associated surveillance further alters how teachers change and develop.

A further difficulty with many existing models is their linear representation of learning. Huberman (1992) did go on to acknowledge this as a criticism and claimed the process would be better viewed as cyclical rather than linear. As Taubman states:

perhaps rather than thinking of teacher development as unfolding along a continuum, where one accumulates skills and may finally achieve expertise, we should think about the journey of teaching in terms of deepening our own sense of who we are in relation to what we are doing and those we are teaching (2014, p.15).

Taubman goes on to reference Emerson (1909, p.155 cited in Taubman 2014, p.15) with 'our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning'; this seems a perfect analogy for the feedback cycle itself.

A corollary difficulty with such models is that they tend to assume a deficit model of learning i.e. the learner knows nothing at the start of the process. In contrast, Lee and Schallert (2016) found that existing beliefs have a significant influence on how student teachers engage with their student teacher programme. So although the terms 'novice' and 'expert' are often referred to in models of student development (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014; Brody and Hadar 2015), given that these students are already products of the education system it is questionable they can ever be seen as true novices; they will already have beliefs and values associated with teaching, learning, assessment and feedback based on their experiences (Ní Chróinín and O'Sullivan 2014). If, as Brody and Hadar (2015) suggest, an expert differs from a novice because of an 'intuitive grasp of situations based on a deep tacit understanding' (p.248) then who is to say that the tacit understanding cannot be developed through experiencing feedback through the role of learner rather than teacher; an expert in feedback is not necessarily an experienced teacher. Indeed Korthagen (2013) states, student teachers 'have themselves spent many years as students in schools, during which time they have developed their own beliefs about teaching' (p.81) and it is these beliefs that often remain even through a period of training. Lortie (1975) terms this the 'apprenticeship of observation,' where students develop a partial view of teaching through their experience as a learner (Borg 2004; Boyd et al. 2013;).

Van der Lans, Van de Grift and Van Veen (2017) argue that not only is it difficult to have one model of teacher development, because teachers all have individual differences, different aspects of teaching should also be viewed individually in terms of growing competence. They apply Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development (concerns about self -> tasks -> others i.e. outcomes) to different aspects of the role identifying 'which skill in teaching practices of one stage is a prerequisite to developing skill in the next stage' (van der Lans, van de Grift and van Veen 2017, p.48-49). Here a six stage permeable continuum lists climate, management, explanation, activation, learning strategies and differentiation in order. Whilst the model adds

sophistication to Fuller's (1969) earlier model, it does not explicitly reference assessment and/or feedback although arguably there is an implicit link to the listed areas of explanation, learning strategies and differentiation. Of course, this model also ignores the beliefs, skills and practices new teachers already have from their experience at school and it stands to reason that these will include feedback.

There are also development models related to understanding of assessment (Poskitt 2014) that move from non-awareness of effective practice through to integrating where good practice is unconsciously applied. This development is subject to 'multiple, dynamic influences' as assessment 'occurs in a political, economic, cultural, educational, and human context' (Poskitt 2014, p.542). The significance of these influences makes it difficult to argue that the development of assessment literacy is so staged as some models of teacher development suggest. In terms of feedback specifically, there are models of development but these are not focused on teachers (or student teachers) but usually learners (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014). In addition, the conceptual (often tiered) models of feedback within the literature (Boud and Molloy 2012b; McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014) carry an implicit associated model of learning. This is because the models suggest that conceptions of assessment and feedback are on a continuum towards a more developed or a 'better' understanding.

This section of the literature review has drawn upon literature in the field related to how teachers develop over time in order to inform the analysis of data in relation to research question 3 (Chapter 7) which asks: What are the relationships between the developing understanding of feedback as a student and a student teacher? The chapter will now go on to explore several different faces of feedback.

## **2.6 Different faces of feedback**

In order to move away from the dualistic discourse surrounding both assessment and feedback, eight alternative faces of feedback will be considered within the next part of the Literature Review. These are: monologism, dialogism, the imaginary, self-determination, self-regulation,

relationships, performance and agency. Some of these are well established theoretical models of feedback and others offer a new way of understanding feedback. This section of the Literature Review therefore aligns well to research questions 1 and 2: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners and what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers? The models will therefore inform the analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Each of these alternative models will now be discussed with the potential application to feedback identified.

### **2.6.1 Feedback as Transmission (Monologism)**

Monologism is a philosophy that is positioned in direct opposition to dialogism (Wegerif 2008). Defined as a 'single thought discourse' (Robinson 2011a), it represents one voice and one meaning that can be transmitted to others; a 'transcendental perspective' (Robinson 2011a). As such it is an 'information processing model of cognition' and a 'transfer model of communication' (Linell, 1990 cited in Linell 2007, p.14). Within monologism the construction of meaning takes place before rather than through communication. This one or 'true' meaning is then communicated for the listener or reader to assimilate. Cognition is therefore an individual process rather than a relational process with others and the environment (Linell 2007). The model implies that communication of meaning is linear and can simply be transmitted from one to another; the model does not recognise that meaning can be misinterpreted, ignored and misunderstood. So although monologism is positioned in opposition to dialogism (see section 2.6.2) it can still take place within discussion, particularly when we consider Bohm's (2013) analogy of discussion as ping-pong where ideas are batted between the two players with the intention of winning the game. In other words, discussion is focused on transferring an idea (or argument) from one to another. The distinction between monologism and dialogism is therefore perhaps not quite as polarised as first seen.

In relation to education, monologism represents a teacher- centric model where learners can be 'deprived of a voice' and who can forget to 'speak or even think about some issues except through the dominant culture's rationalizing mythologies' (Robinson 2011b, p.22). There are clearly strong parallels between monologism and feedback when it is viewed as transmission. Here feedback is the communication of the message from the teacher to the learner via the

medium of written or verbal feedback comments (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2001); it is essentially a receptive-transmission model. Sutton asserts that this is inadequate as 'decoding feedback is a complex process' where comments are 'rife with ambiguity and interpretive complexity' for both learner and teacher (2009, p3); this is particularly supported by literature on the effectiveness of written feedback (Brown, Evelyn et al. 2004; Brown, Evelyn and Glover 2005; Lee 2013). Verbal feedback seems less problematic potentially because, by its very nature, it is open to a more dialogic communication. However, it cannot be presumed that verbal feedback is never transmissive or indeed monologist; feedback policy and practice have until relatively recently remained 'obstinately focused on simple 'transmission' perspectives' (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004, p.1). The teacher-centric transmission model of feedback further reinforces the imbalance of power between learner and teacher with the teacher viewed as the knowledge holder. The learner is consequently passive awaiting the teacher's information; feedback is 'gift from teacher to pupil' (Hargreaves 2005) with the teacher holding ultimate responsibility. This assumes that the transmission of information is enough for learning to take place. However, others argue that this is not the case as learners have to engage with, analyse, question and connect to this information to learn from it (Nicol 2010).

If, as Sadler (1989) implies, the development of autonomous learning is the ultimate goal of feedback, it is unlikely that a transmissive approach will encourage the necessary development of independence, self-appraisal and self-direction amongst learners. Without learner autonomy, there could subsequently be an inability to make constructive use of feedback provided (Yang and Carless 2013) therefore the feedback would ultimately be void as learner understanding remains unchanged. However, it is also true that some aspects of feedback, for example correction, could be more suited to a monologist approach.

### **2.6.2 Feedback as Dialogue (Dialogism)**

The second face to be explored tends to be positioned at the other end of the spectrum of monologism i.e. dialogism. Although the terms dialogue and dialogic have become established part of 'effective' educational discourse (Wegerif 2008), their meaning has become somewhat tacit, unclear and open to different interpretations. Bakhtin's theoretical framework 'dialogism' (2010) is less understood in educational communities but does provide a way of understanding

some of the ideas around communication and learning. It is not interchangeable with dialogue/dialogic but is more 'a bundle, or combination, of theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action, communication and cognition' (Linell, 1990 cited in Linell 2007, p.6) including interaction, contexts and communicative construction. It is therefore much more than communication and conversation; indeed this connection can be oversimplified and become a distraction from its specific epistemological significance (Holquist 2002) as dialogism is concerned with how 'meaning is created and understood in spoken and written discourse' (Wegerif 2008, p.59). Moreover, dialogism not only has epistemological implications but ontological. Dialogism recognises that dialogue not only allows meaning to be created but allows us to become ourselves (Sutton 2009). It is concerned with both the nature of meaning and being.

Bakhtin proposes that although dialogue is significant, it is not the utterances and exchanges within the conversation alone that create meaning. Dialogism is a 'differential relation' where 'differences serve as the building blocks to simultaneity' (Holquist 2002, p.40). In other words, those engaged in the dialogue will have differences in meaning but through dialogue, create a new shared meaning. Similarly Bohm suggests 'meaning is not static- it is flowing... among us [and] from that a form of meaning which is shared' (Bohm 1996, p.40). Furthermore, dialogism is not necessarily through verbal communication so can be applied to both conversation and the reading of a text. The meaning is created between the two communicators whether speakers, readers or writers.

Dialogue is also often associated with effective feedback (Sutton 2009; Nicol 2010; Carless et al. 2011; Yang and Carless 2013; Adie, van der Kleij and Cumming 2018; Ajjawi and Boud 2018) as it encourages a process where meaning is constructed. Sutton (2009) goes further stating that it is dialogue that enables feedback to become feed forward. This does not necessarily mean a conversation around learning but a two way process that is adaptive, discursive, interactive and reflective (Laurillard 2013). However, Bakhtin's writing would suggest that there is an important distinction between verbally communicating feedback, in order that the learner constructs new meaning, and the co-construction of new relational meaning. Although communication is clearly important within feedback, the unique form of communication needed can be oversimplified

(Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2001) and be more of a top down model from teacher to pupil. Is it that the dialogic nature of feedback (or not) is judged on the ability for the learner to clarify meanings, expectations and understanding with the person giving feedback, not on the emergence of new meaning between both teacher and learner? True dialogic feedback would suggest equity between both contributors, not an efficient transmission of understanding from teacher to learner; whether this is realistic is questionable. Arguably the teacher will always hold the position of knowledge and power as they are both passing on feedback and passing judgement (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2001).

If a consequence of the power disparity between teacher and learner impacts on the potential for relational meaning, it is also possible that peer feedback is conducive to it. Peer feedback is recognised as an effective tool in the development of autonomous learning (Liu and Carless 2006) and can be attributed to self-efficacy (Evans 2013) and/or self-regulation, but within dialogism surely peer feedback is more than this; it is shared meaning making where new learning is constructed through the fusion of relational difference between the contributors. The relational aspect will be considered further in section 2.6.7 (Feedback as a Relationship).

### **2.6.3 Feedback as Empowerment (Self-Regulation)**

Self-regulation is concerned with the self's ability to 'actively monitor, take action and evaluate one's cognition, motivation and behaviour' (Altun and Erden 2013, p.2355). As it could be viewed as a person's ability to independently direct oneself, it could also be positioned as empowering. In the learning context, this means the ability to recognise goals and work towards them through the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Nicol and Milligan 2006). As such, self-regulation can provide the 'very basis for purposeful action' (Bandura 1991, p.248) or indeed the decision to take no action. Bandura conceptualises self-regulation as a series of cognitive processes: 1. self-observation (including dimensions of quality, quantity, originality,) 2. judgement (including personal standards, referential performances and valuation) and 3. self-reaction (including evaluative and tangible self-reactions or no self-reaction) (Bandura 1991). These are positioned causally with self-observation leading to judgement and then self-regulation i.e. the learner makes an observation about their performance resulting in a judgement being made and then a response made. Although logical,

this does seem to infer a rather fixed chronological approach where one cannot happen without the other and the sequence of events is always ordered in the same way. Bandura himself appeared to recognise that self-regulation is too complex to be 'captured in a mechanical or behaviouristic metaphor' (Phillips and Orton 1983, p.159) and also argued that although behaviour is determined by individuals, this is shaped through, not only cognitive processes, but also the environment in a reciprocal process (Bandura 1978). This is known as reciprocal determinism (Bandura 1978). It certainly seems reasonable to understand self-regulation as open to influence from external factors, including externally provided feedback. Arguably self-regulation could also be much more fluid and certainly cyclical. Butler and Winnie's (1995) later model of self-regulation does appear to be more developed with monitoring taking place continually with the inclusion of motivation and beliefs as a part of internal feedback. External feedback also has a role.

The mechanism of self-efficacy is also significant in self-regulation as it includes self-beliefs through which learners determine choices, aspirations, effort, perseverance, sense of competence and motivation (Bandura 1991). Self-efficacy is a sense of identity, capability and the 'expectancy of success' (Evans 2013, p.96); the perception of self-efficacy will therefore influence the ability to self-regulate and as such it is difficult to consider one without the other. Both self-efficacy and self-regulation are closely aligned with feedback. Indeed, Bandura's model of self-regulation seems to almost parallel Sadler's (1989) articulation of the feedback process itself: 1. an understanding of the goal 2. an understanding of current performance and 3. an action to close the gap between the two. Understanding the goal and the current performance may include Bandura's (1991) self-observation and judgement. Carless et al. go further and suggest that self-regulation is not only aligned with feedback but is 'the essence of sustainable feedback' (2011, p.7). Hattie supports this arguing that self-regulatory behaviour will lead to 'seeking, accepting, and accommodating feedback information' (2007, p.93-94) therefore developing an understanding of feedback beyond the context of any specific feedback.

If feedback is seen as self-regulation, the role of the learner is central. Self-regulation assumes that the learner has the same evaluative skills as the teacher; there is no knowledgeable other as such. This can be seen in Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2004) theoretical model which synthesises



both feedback and self-regulated learning or 'learnacy' (Butler and Winne 1995) placing the learner centrally. The learner holds the active role in the process as 'they are always actively involved in monitoring and regulating their own performance, both in relation to desired goals and in terms of the strategies used to reach these goals (Liu and Carless 2006). It is the learner who 'actively constructs his or her own understanding of feedback messages' (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004, p.201) rather than the learner simply taking on the feedback messages of the other. If feedback is understood as self-regulation, and therefore learner-centric, a consequence is that the role of the teacher alters too; teachers are not solely concerned with giving feedback but developing 'practices that have potential to promote autonomy in learning' (Black et al. 2006, p.119) and supporting the learner's capacity to 'judge themselves in similar situations' (Boud 2015, p.7). However, developing a learner-centric approach to feedback often requires the support of an 'other' to develop the necessary skills and dispositions. The teacher/educator therefore has a different responsibility to establish, model and scaffold the learner towards self-regulation. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that teachers need to make developing regulatory skills and behaviours in their students as a key focus. If self-regulation is the 'pivot upon which students' achievement turns' and is essential to learning and outcomes (Zumbrunn, Tadlock and Roberts 2011), one questions why there is so little attention paid to it within the standards discourse in schools and Higher Education. In addition, if as Carless and Boud (2018) suggest, the development of self-regulatory feedback behaviour 'emerges through observation, imitation, participation and dialogue' (p.1316) focus should be given to this within the core Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). Furthermore, Thoutenhoofd and Pirrie (2015) critique the focus on the individual within self-regulatory literature arguing that learning sits within social and cultural context. If this is the case, schools and Higher Education institutions clearly have a role in promoting a self-regulatory culture. For student teachers this is particularly important as 'teachers who take responsibility for assessment may be more effective classroom practitioners' (Brown, Peterson and Yao 2016, p.12); Initial Teacher Education therefore has a *duty* to encourage self-regulation as it will ultimately inform school practice. Indeed, Chung and Yuen (2011) assert that helping learners become more self-regulatory is one of the most important challenges for teachers.

Furthermore, although self-regulation is often viewed as the result of ‘effective’ feedback (Sadler 1989), students who are better at self-regulation are also more likely to use feedback to close the gap (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006). The relationship between self-regulation and feedback is somewhat of a chicken and egg situation – do those that self-regulate respond to feedback more effectively or does responding to feedback effectively develop self-regulation? It seems likely that both develop alongside each other.

#### **2.6.4 Feedback as Identity (the ideal ego and the ego ideal)**

The fourth face of feedback discussed is concerned with teacher identity. Menter (2010) defines professional identities as ‘in essence, how teachers see themselves and their work’ (p.29). The construction of this identity will therefore include perceptions from within the self but also perceptions of teaching constructed from outside, for example the Teachers’ Standards (DfE 2012). Clarke, Michell and Ellis (2017, p.116) summarise these competing influences as ‘outside in’ and ‘inside out.’ The formation of teacher identity will also include the negotiation of ‘multiple stories of what it is to be a teacher’ some realistic, some idealistic and some impossible to reach (Brown and England 2004, p.71). For student teachers, the formation is particularly fluid; not only does a sense of self generally become more consolidated in young adulthood (Michikyan, Dennis and Subrahmanyam 2015), student teachers are also navigating their own emergence into a new professional identity, moving from learner to teacher. As such student teachers ‘shuttle back and forth between the desires and demands of self and other as well as to creatively respond to, tension, paradox and ambiguity’ (Clarke, Michell and Ellis 2017, p.116).

Lacan’s (2001) ideas around ideal-ego and the ego-ideal are relevant here. Lacan felt that humans were ‘caught in a never-ending attempt to capture an understanding of his/her self in relation to the world in which he/she lives’ (Brown and England 2004, p.72). This grappling involves both the imaginary and the symbolic order (Hetrick 2010). The ideal-ego is situated in the imaginary and represents a fantasy ideal image of who a person would like to be (Dashtipour 2012). As such, student teachers hold an image of what a teacher is, or should be, but this image is an ideal; it is imaginary, perfect and flawless. This ideal image can be made from a collection of images gathered through experience, for example, our own teachers or representations of teachers in the media. As Hetrick states ‘the ideal-ego is constituted, in that the collection of

others [traits, appearances, actions] form the elements or parts of the self's ideal identity; they compose the ideal that the self would like to become, or how we see ourselves at any given moment' (2010, p.60).

The second related idea is the ego-ideal. This is situated in the symbolic register and represents the 'point of view of the perfect Others' (Hetrick 2010, p.63). The Others' views may be the ideas formed and circulated through policy and the accompanying discourse, for example, expected measures of performance and compliance against standards. The ego ideal is therefore often made up from alternative demands that may not sit well with the aspirations of the ideal ego (Clarke, Michell and Ellis 2017). As a consequence, not only is a student teacher driven 'to restore this impossible image of utopian wholeness' (Green 2011, p. 561), they also have to steer their way through the competing burdens of idealism presented by the policy context as the ideal ego and ego ideal are unlikely to be compatible. Indeed, how teachers respond to policy will be influenced by 'the extent to which teachers challenge and reconstruct their existing identities' (van Veen, Slegers and van de Ven 2005, p.917) and there is certainly evidence to support how performativity has impacted on 'teachers' identities, relationships and values' (Menter 2010, p.36; see also Lingard 2009). Indeed Ball (2003) has referred to teachers having had their soul carved away by the demands of performativity. One questions therefore if, for student teachers (and indeed teachers), there is a losing battle taking place between the imaginary ideal ego and the ego ideal presented through educational policy.

If we now consider this thesis, central to the study is the dual role of teacher and learner. Salifu and Agbenyega (2016) characterise teacher identity as 'the way teachers perceive themselves and the images they have about self' (p.61) so presumably the same could be true for learner identity. According to Lacan, the imaginary ideal ego could inform both identities in that the participants will have a desire to be like the imagined ideal of both a learner and teacher. As this study examines both teacher and learner experiences of the phenomenon of feedback (within the contexts of university and school,) identity will therefore vary. It is also entirely possible that an identity in one role, e.g. learner, will influence the imagined role of another e.g. teacher and vice versa. To illustrate further, as a learner one could expect teachers to behave in a certain way therefore the imagined identity one pursues as a teacher will be the same. Arguably feedback

could act as a vehicle for identity to be desired, chased, reinforced or even avoided. The seeking of identity could after all be polarised into 'heroes and villains' (Clarke and Sheridan 2017, p.194) as teachers seek to emulate, or resist, an imaginary or idealistic identity. Indeed 'early idealism' (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p.73) has been recognised as a stage of teacher development which is formed from expectations and experience of significant teachers.

Identity and Social Identity Theory support the idea of the self as reflexive and open to change based on the perceived identity of others or characteristics associated with groups (Stets and Burke 2000). These characteristics may in fact be interpreted as behaviours, and therefore, as such could include feedback practice. Stets and Burke (2000, p.225) state that identity is 'the categorisation of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance.' This effectively means that student teacher identity is formed by prior experiences of feedback as a learner (Lortie 1975), their interactions with teachers around feedback and also the feedback expectations detailed within the national Teacher Standards (DfE 2012); the ideal ego and the ego ideal could arguably both be formed through feedback. Feedback could act as a vehicle for signalling when the idealised identity is becoming closer or further away from reality. This could be the feedback a student teacher receives as a learner or a teacher (i.e. assignment feedback or feedback from a mentor about the quality of a lesson) or indeed whether the feedback the student teacher provides to a pupil has the desired (or imagined) effect.

### **2.6.5 Feedback as Motivation (Self-Determination)**

The next face of feedback discussed is self-determination theory, a framework for the study of human motivation. Self-determination theory asserts that motivation is not a 'singular construct' (Ryan and Deci 2000, p.69) but can be linked to varied experiences, behaviours, drive and results. Types of motivation are separated into autonomous (or intrinsic) motivation (linked to sense of self) and controlled (or extrinsic) motivation (which includes some form of external regulation or shaping of behaviours) (Deci and Ryan 2008)<sup>9</sup>. Both autonomous and controlled motivation

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<sup>9</sup> A lack of any motivation or intention is referred to as amotivation.

'energize and direct behaviour' (Deci and Ryan 2008, p.182) but result in different outcomes; autonomous motivation is the one often associated with the dispositions linked to effective learning (Claxton and Carr 2004; Nicol and Milligan 2006). Of course, as with other areas discussed within this thesis, self-determination theory does present rather a binary fixed model; motivation is either autonomous or controlled, with nothing in between. It is perhaps possible for controlled motivation to result in autonomous motivation. In addition, self-determination asserts that within motivation there are three innate psychological needs: relatedness (feeling understood and cared for), competence (feeling effective) and autonomy (feeling in control of own behaviours). Again, the fixed nature of the model does not really account for individual differences in experience and understanding.

As an area, motivation is well researched, often with reference to feedback although the literature in the field rarely focuses on student teachers. For example, Van-Dijk and Kluger (2004) explored how 'negative' feedback influenced the way Masters Business students regulated their learning and Nasimith and Lajoie (2017) looked at feedback and motivation specifically and explored how motivation influenced the engagement of medical students with feedback. For education, Salifu and Agbenyega (2016) made links between professional practice, motivation and identity although interestingly argued that pay was a significant motivator for teachers. This is not necessarily supported by other research which identifies autonomous motivation to teach is far more significant than external rewards (Watt et al. 2012).

In terms of feedback, Murtagh's (2014) work in education found that teachers perceived feedback to be a motivator for their pupils. Deci and Ryan (2002) also found that expected extrinsic rewards (a form of controlled or instrumental feedback) decreased autonomous motivation and continued engagement in the task/activity. In contrast, feedback in the form of positive verbal praise increases autonomous motivation and negative feedback undermines autonomous motivation (Deci and Ryan 2002). This is possibly because feedback has a direct influence on the learner's view of their own competence and therefore identity. If so, receiving feedback has the potential to fulfil or impede the innate need for competence identified within self-determination theory (Schüler, Sheldon and Fröhlich 2010). Koludrović and Ercegovac (2015, p.27) actually apply self-determination to Initial Teacher Education arguing that external

regulation includes those 'behaviours that an individual performs in order to gain some kind of award or to please others'. Student teachers need to evidence their ability to provide feedback to their pupils in order to receive the award of Qualified Teacher Status and also need to evidence their own development through the feedback they receive in order to demonstrate they have made worthy progress. Feedback could therefore be reinterpreted as a reward that encourages controlled motivation. As controlled motivation is considered to be the 'the least autonomous type of ...motivation' (Koludrović and Ercegovac 2015, p.27) within the self-determination continuum, it could influence autonomous understanding and behaviours.

Although Deci and Ryan (2002) reference the impact of 'positive' and 'negative' feedback on motivation, the notion of what constitutes positive or negative feedback is open to interpretation; positive feedback could be viewed as a good mark /grade or a well communicated next step. Indeed, the language of positive and negative is in itself part of the polarised discourse of education. Similarly, what is viewed as a reward is dependent on a conception of feedback and indeed assessment. A reward could be viewed as a commendation, mark or prize or a formative suggestion that is used to improve learning. In this instance, self-determination theory appears to view positive feedback as feedback that confirms a level of competence and negative feedback as feedback that reduces a sense of competence. The confusion between 'negative' and 'constructive' feedback is reframed by Jers and Wårnsby (2018) who 'avoid an everyday interpretation of the words positive and negative' with 'the terms 'affirmatory' and 'deficit-focused' to denote the feedback that confirms 'the students' choices and decisions, and the feedback pointing out situations when these choices and decisions were lacking respectively' (p.592). This is a more useful categorisation as it avoids the values and connotations of positive versus negative feedback, a further example of binary polarisation.

### **2.6.6 Feedback as Agency (Lack)**

There are also links to motivation within the next face of feedback- agency. This section will explore how agency can be associated with feedback and the relevance of Ruti's (2008) thinking on lack and agency. However, as will be discussed, this is not necessarily a neat alignment.

The notion of professional agency has received attention in recent years although actual empirical evidence is rather limited (Toom, Pyhältö and Rust 2015). In addition, the concept suffers from a lack of clarity and a clear definition (Eteläpelto et al. 2013; Edwards 2015). When considering the definitions that do exist, there are however identifiable themes: active-ness or action (Toom, Pyhältö and Rust 2015), initiative, independent and conscious decision or choice (Eteläpelto et al. 2013; Toom, Pyhältö and Rust 2015; Vähäsantanen 2015) and professionalism (professional attributes and dispositions) (Toom, Pyhältö and Rust 2015; Vähäsantanen 2015). Furthermore, agency is viewed as interwoven with identity (Buchanan 2015).

In relation to identity, Lacan's psychoanalytical theory identified the concept of 'lack' as part of the human psyche. This sense of lack informs desire, a desire that cannot fully be met as it is essentially a quest for something 'that offers the (impossible) promise of completion and harmony' (Green 2011, p.561) i.e. the imaginary. Ruti (2008) subsequently reinterpreted Lacan's work somewhat more positively. Whilst recognising the emphasis on lack and related notion of desire, Ruti positioned lack as the launch of potentially positive consequences such as 'creativity and agency' (Misson 2013, p.358). In other words, the sense of lack 'empowers the subject to claim for itself some of the agency of the signifier' (Ruti 2010, p.52) with the 'signifier' representing whatever gives form to the 'lack.' This desire may be what Ruti sees as authentic or socially prescribed and somewhat conforming (Ruti 2013). Professional agency can therefore be seen as a desire (either/or authentic or socially prescribed) to overcome the lack and move closer to the ideal professional imaginary identity. For it is the lack that gives 'space for future possibility... to transform, evolve, and grow in new directions' (Ruti 2006, p.13) towards the ideal teacher or learner.

Sadler (1989) stated that a key condition of feedback is to recognise a learning gap and action the closing of it. As such it is possible to identify a link between lack, agency and feedback. The lack is the gap in learning (whether dictated by the teacher or constructed by the learner,) the signifier the context of the learning and the agency the desire motivating the will to action closing the gap. It is the action and agency that are crucial if the feedback gap is to be closed; without it feedback does not have consequence and does not feed-forward. It is not enough for learners to 'know themselves' as learners; 'powerful learner agency' is required for the feedback process to

be fully utilized (Randall 1999, p.19). For Boud (2013), the recognition of agency (and the development of the associated dispositions) sits within his understanding of sustainable feedback i.e. a more developed, learner-centric model of feedback where learner capacities are built (feedback mark 2). There are therefore overlaps between self-regulatory sustainable behaviours and agency but with a subtle difference – it is the sense of lack, and the need to fill it, that drives self-regulation. In attempting to fill the lack, the learner is driven to achieve more, learn more effectively or to reach a certain level of competence. The form this lack takes could be tangible e.g. a particular mark/grade or a more individual sense of success.

If we consider a more egalitarian view of feedback, where both learner and teacher have a role to play, it is also possible to establish links between lack / agency and the role of the teacher. In this case the lack may be related to teacher competence and the drive to give more effective feedback in order to maximise learning gains or meet professional expectations (in other words, socially constructed and conforming desire). In this scenario, the signifier could be assessment scores, performance targets, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) grades or teaching standards. If so, the performativity agenda within the sector will contribute to the sense of lack. However, this is where there is a difficulty. The definitions of professional agency refer to the agent having the 'option and power to make a different choice.' (Eteläpelto et al. 2013, p.49). Is there really opportunity for different choices or are the choices dictated? Indeed, arguably the contemporary view of professionalism is now related to meeting standards, completing duties and essentially complying (Evetts 2009). This seems to reinforce the view of a professional as one who applies 'procedural skills and competence' but without true independent agency (Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011, p.817) where teachers can 'affect matters... make decisions and choices, and take stances' (Vähäsantanen 2015, p.2-3). One can see how the standards driven agenda has diluted and redefined the notion of a professional into a file of suitable evidence. Opportunities for more meaningful agency in this context will be limited.

Essentially, this section has argued that feedback can be viewed as attempting to resolve a 'lack' in achieving an identity. Lack can be reinterpreted as agency however this may actually be fairly formulaic and technical and given the current education climate therefore not particularly



transformative. Given that Lipponen & Kumpulainen (2011) established a link between student teacher agency and their subsequent promotion (or not) of pupil agency, it is questionable whether the current climate will result in an inter generation decline in agency.

### **2.6.7 Feedback as a Relationship (I-Thou)**

The next alternative face of feedback is feedback as a form of relationship. The discussion in this section draws on the theological work of Buber. Teaching and learning is sometimes viewed as a transaction but this does not necessarily only mean a transaction of knowledge. The human nature of teaching and learning can also involve a relatively personal transaction through the forming of a relationship (Jarvis 1995). If teaching and learning involves the formation of a relationship, the same must be true for assessment and feedback. This section will introduce the particular relationships identified by Martin Buber, consider how these apply to education and reflect on the implications for feedback.

Buber wrote extensively on the nature of human relationships and how they could be defined. Put simply, he identified two forms of relationship: I and It (the relationship between an object and person) and I and Thou (the relationship between person and person) (Beck 1992). However, this definition does not fully capture the nuances within Buber's argument and some of the difficulties pinning down the differences (Guilherme and Morgan 2009). Although the distinction between the two appears clear cut, the first (I-It) does not necessarily mean a relationship between a person and inanimate object. Rather, it refers to treating people as objects instead of full and equitable others, i.e. 'treats things, including other people, as objects to be used and experienced—they are means to ends' (Guilherme and Morgan 2009, p.566). The second relationship (I-Thou) indicates a fuller, more mutual and reciprocal relationship where one knows thou as a 'whole being' and is able to 'affirm him in his wholeness' (Buber 2013 p.92). For Buber, across all contexts and situations, relationships should strive to be I-Thou where individuals treat others as people (Buber 2013)

The model of an I-Thou relationship links well to education (although not necessarily in the neo-liberal era). Writing in the 1920s, Buber cites the I-Thou relationship as a characteristic of the genuine educator in recognising and realising the potential of the 'learner as a whole' (Buber

2013, p.92). However, Buber rejects dualism (Guilherme and Morgan 2009) so does not position I-Thou and I-It alongside other educational dichotomies such as teacher versus learner-centric. In fact, Buber argues that it is possible to move between I-It and I-Thou and that this movement is at the discretion of the educator rather than the learner. This is because, somewhat contradictorily, the I-Thou relationship is rather asymmetrical within the school setting (Guilherme and Morgan 2009) possibly due to the intrinsic power dynamics between teacher and learner. Furthermore, the existence of an I-Thou relationship within an educational setting could be key to the formation of teacher identity. MacMurray argues that 'the self is constituted by its relation to the other' (1961, cited in Jarvis 1995, p.29) therefore a mutual and genuine relationship with a pupils as humans could actually construct the educator's identity. In other words, fully understanding the learner forms the teacher.

Central to the I-Thou relationship, and particularly pertinent to an educational setting, is the use of dialogue. Not only is it a way of communicating and understanding, dialogue is crucial to treating others appropriately and humanely (Stern 2007) although, of course, this too is open to interpretation. However, classroom talk is not always dialogic (or indeed rooted in dialogism) and, in order to support an I-Thou relationship, talk needs to be balanced, reciprocal and genuine. A genuine dialogue implies care; in fact MacMurray describes 'caring interactions' (1964 cited in Beck 1992, p.456). But caring about a learner is not necessarily the same as knowing the learner as a whole and it is questionable whether this is either necessary or appropriate. Buber would argue that an I-Thou relationship includes both and so does the potential to educate:

The educator can only educate if he or she is able to build a relation based on true mutuality, on true dialogue with students, and this mutuality, this dialogue can only come to the fore if the student trusts the educator, if the student feels accepted, otherwise any attempt to educate will lead to rebellion and lack of interest (Guilherme and Morgan 2009, p.567).

Notions of one's 'truth' are interesting here but nevertheless Buber is suggesting that a learner needs to feel known and cared for if an I-Thou dialogue is to be present: these are also features relevant to conceptions of feedback.

It seems plausible that a mechanistic or superficial approach to feedback could be viewed as an I-It relationship. The difficulties within written feedback could be seen as encouraging this further given the often minimal genuine dialogue that takes place. Furthermore, teacher-centric feedback (with the educator in role of knowledgeable other, gifting feedback) is not constant with the egalitarian and mutual I-Thou relationship. This could be also true from the perspective of the learner who awaits the transfer of knowledge and thus reinforces an I-It relationship. Aligning a teacher-centric view of feedback to I-It does assume that philosophical notions of mutuality and equality can be translated or transferred into pedagogical concepts of knowledge and experience. In fact, Buber's I-Thou was about equality and mutuality in broadly, general human terms. If feedback enables the receiver of the feedback to feel known, cared for and valued, then this would seem to indicate an I-Thou relationship is possible and could ultimately be more effective for teaching and learning. There is evidence to support the idea that the quality of relationships influences perceptions and engagement in assessment and feedback (Crossman 2007; Pitt and Winstone 2018) so it seems reasonable to suggest that feedback and relationships are intertwined.

### **2.6.8 Feedback as Performance (Compliance)**

Lastly, this section will explore feedback as a performance referring to Foucauldian notions of knowledge, power, discipline and control. As discussed to some extent within the introduction, the neo-liberal performativity culture of the twenty first century makes Foucault's ideas more relevant than ever and is particularly pertinent to feedback policy and practice.

Foucault (1975) was concerned with the ways that institutions exert power to 'control, govern and normalize individual and collective behaviour' (Anderson and Grinberg 1998, p.332) in order to produce compliant subjects (Foucault 1975). As Ball states this is 'a continuum, which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation' (Ball 2013, p.128). Foucault identified various 'technologies' within governmentality; technologies of production, of sign systems, of power and of the self (Foucault and Faubion 2000). Although they are essentially hidden, these technologies considerably influence individuals, groups and societies through implicit, and subsequently normalised, regulation and discipline (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000). Schools are good examples of this. Policy is introduced nationally which necessitates a

change in behaviour; for example, changes to the inspection framework with reference to feedback causes changes to feedback practice in schools. This alters the discourse within the context as conversation, foci, priorities and practice become modified to suit the inspection changes. Value, or 'common sense,' (Anderson and Grinberg 1998, p.333) is attributed to the change and individual teachers become increasingly focused on (and even motivated by) the new priorities; their professional identity subsequently modifies. Eventually self-policing of the practice allows for the power and control to be both enforced from above and also managed and scrutinised from within. As Harland summarises (in reference to the inspection regime):

the exercise of continuing surveillance through the process of monitoring and evaluation means that those concerned also come to anticipate the response ... to their actions past, present, and future and therefore come to discipline themselves (1996, p.101 cited in Perryman et al. 2018, p.147).

Of course, within a school, the cascade of power and discipline is also continued down to the pupil. Just as teachers are 'educated' into particular practices, the pupils are also essentially modified by the regimes of the school (Perryman et al. 2018, p.147). Essentially those within the context absorb the rules, values and regulations of the context and effectively maintain this discipline themselves as a form of inner panoptic surveillance; the use of a range of different mechanisms and techniques 'are all actions which produce the individual as subjected to a set of procedures which come from outside of themselves but whose aim is the disciplining of the self by the self' (Mills 2003, p.43). Subjects are both controlled and controlling.

Critics of Foucault, find fault with the suggestion that subjects are powerless and passive in relation to the governmentality of the context (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000). However, certainly in Foucault's later work (1990), there is an indication of choice where subjects can choose to 'respond to, or resist these practices' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, p.127). There is therefore a suggestion that subjects are capable of challenging the power norms as they experience liberation of their true self (Besley 2009). Foucault (1990) identified this notion of choice as technologies of the self; forging an identity through self-formation i.e. knowing oneself and what is best for oneself (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000). Indeed Foucault argued that it was his intention 'to show people that they are freer than they feel' (Foucault 1988, p.9). Given

the recognised significance of teacher professional identity (Ball 2000; Sutherland, Howard and Markauskaite 2010; Timoštšuk and Ugaste 2010; Buchanan 2015), it seems pertinent to allow teachers opportunity to be aware of, reflect upon and critique the power norms they work within. Indeed, teachers can be viewed as 'key change agents with the capacity to embrace, accommodate or resist policy direction' (Baumfield et al. 2010, p.60) although it is probably naïve to suggest that they will be able to resist the influence of policy altogether. In fact it is a strange paradox that the accountability/ performativity culture both makes it more challenging to develop a strong teacher identity (Ball 2000; Buchanan 2015) but is also an aspect of governmentality that necessitates the development of teacher identity; 'If power acts upon us ... then that is where our resistance and struggle to be free should be focused' (Ball 2013, p.126).

There are strong parallels between Foucault's work and assessment and feedback. The use of summative assessment data as a tool of performativity allows for the normalisation of 'conformativity' and discipline as teachers begin to use the data to in effect discipline themselves (Perryman et al. 2018). For student teachers, the feedback they provide to the pupils is evidence of their performance in relation to Teacher Standard 6 (assessment) just as the performance they receive as learners in Higher Education is essentially evidence of the performance of the tutors who donated it. Indeed, as learners on a professional programme, feedback also provides evidence of how student teachers' targets have been met over time. In terms of broader formative assessment practice (including feedback), Allen argues that the discourse, in effect, promotes meritocracy which also serves a political aim to facilitate 'the manipulation of hope' (2014, p.234), i.e. feedback suggests that learners can always improve and 'close the learning gap,' while teachers too have an associated hope that they can make a difference. Allen (2014) goes further to suggest that feedback practices are essentially conditioning pupil behaviour. Indeed, self-regulation, often perceived as the ultimate goal of feedback, could be seen as a self-policing in the service of broader societal control and discipline. This prompts the question, is feedback more about compliance than empowering learners to take charge of their own learning journey?

This part of the Literature Review has identified eight differing faces that are not always applied to feedback but, as has been argued, allow feedback to be seen in a broader and less polarised sense.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored some of the recognised models of feedback within existing literature both generically and specifically related to the contexts studied. Initially the three contexts (Higher Education, primary education and Initial Teacher Education) were discussed in relation to how feedback is understood before the chapter examined the literature in reference to teacher development. The contextual discussion reflected the tendency within the education sector as a whole to position models, identities, roles and practice as a binary choice, either effective or ineffective, good versus bad. The chapter has therefore proposed alternative ways of understanding feedback. These have not been presented as effective or ineffective but merely different and more nuanced than polarised positioning can present. In this way, the chapter has recognised both existing and gaps in the literature in relation to the identified research questions and also highlighted how this study will contribute to existing knowledge.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

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### **3.1 Introduction**

So far this thesis has outlined how education policy, practice and discourse have influenced conceptions of assessment and feedback across differing contexts. It has also discussed how existing conceptions can be limited and polarised. As a response, and in line with the premise of the study that feedback can be understood in different ways, eight alternative faces of feedback have also been explored, some established and some very different from the standard feedback narrative. In addition, models of teacher development have been examined and critiqued. The thesis now continues to explain how the research was designed.

The chapter that follows would traditionally be referred to as the methodology. However, the term can be problematic, open to misinterpretation and is often used as a catch all term for very differing concepts e.g. epistemology, methodology, methods. For clarity, 'research design'<sup>10</sup> seems more appropriate given that the chapter will detail the epistemological, ethical, methodological and pragmatic decisions taken as part of this project as well as some of the practical considerations related to data collection and analysis. Four analytic strata will be used to structure this discussion: epistemology, theory, approach and strategy/method (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). In doing so, clear correlation has been ensured across the range of decisions involved in the research design. This is significant, for as Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) argue:

when designing and conducting research, one should work hard to develop principled alignments between and among epistemological positions, relevant theoretical frameworks, approaches to research, and strategies for collecting, analysing and interpreting data. (p.13)

Each section will subsequently inform the next section (or decision) with the epistemological position acting as the foundation to all that follows. Reference will also be made to the epistemological and methodological decisions taken by other researchers undertaking similar

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<sup>10</sup> Arguably, research design could also be problematic as it implies rather a fixed approach. Nevertheless, it is a more encompassing term to summarise what will follow in the chapter.

work in order to further justify and explain the research design. Furthermore, particular features of the analysis of the data will be explored before introducing a metaphor of economies which is used to inform the subsequent analysis chapters that follow. Finally, trustworthiness will be discussed. In doing so, it is hoped that the research design chapter will fulfil the purpose of providing a bridge from 'questions to reasonable answers' (Freebody 2003, p.68). In this thesis, the questions are:

1. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners?
2. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?
3. What are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

### **3.2 Epistemology**

The epistemological understanding of this research informs all the other methodological decisions that have been taken<sup>11</sup>. Darlaston-Jones (2007), argues that establishing epistemological foundations is 'critical in order for research to be truly meaningful' (p.1). Punch further implies the significance of epistemology stating it is 'the relationship between the researcher and reality' (2009, p.33); in other words, epistemology provides the foundation for the research design. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis offer a more generalised interpretation, stating that epistemology 'is concerned with knowledge and how people come to have knowledge' (2005, p.13). Epistemology is therefore the basis of knowledge. How knowledge is understood will subsequently inform how knowledge can be interpreted, accessed, collected, measured and analysed.

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<sup>11</sup> Epistemology is informed by the paradigm which Guba defines as a 'belief system...that guides action' (Guba 1990, p.17) or 'guides the investigator' (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p.105):

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) identify two broad, or 'grand' (p.14), epistemologies: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism proposes an objective world where objects carry inherent meaning, separate and independent from human ascribed meaning (Murphy 1997). However, for this study, constructionism is a more appropriate philosophical epistemology.

### **3.2.1 Constructionism**

Within constructionism, the human construction of meaning provides the basis of our knowledge. Meaning is not waiting to be discovered (as is suggested by an objectivist perspective,) it is constructed through one's engagement with, and interpretation of, reality (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Therefore, differing perspectives and cultural/social norms will encourage different constructions of meaning (Darlaston-Jones 2007), even through similar experiences of reality. Constructionism posits that there is not one truth, but many, all of which can be valid. This is an important distinction from the sole truth presented by objectivism. Constructionism therefore implies,

a variety of meanings that might be ascribed to any object or process, all of which may be both reasonable or functional given the perspective from which they are viewed or known (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005, p.14).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that reality, or the 'real' is individual to the person who constructed the reality. As a foundation for research, this means that there can be multiple constructions and interpretations of an experience for the participants. The same is true for the researcher. In this way a constructionist epistemology implies that researchers can never be totally objective as each researcher will each create their own knowledge of reality (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Darlaston-Jones 2007). Researchers construct their own differing truths as knowledge is always tentative and contingent (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).

The continuous construction and reconstruction of knowledge also means that knowledge is not 'an accurate representation of external reality' (Doolittle 2014, p.487) but that knowledge is constructed internally by engagement with experience, therefore there is no 'one' reality. However, the consequence of this interpretation of 'truth' could ultimately leave research open

to criticism regarding subjectivity and lack of rigour. This was certainly true in the past (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005) and will be discussed further within section 3.6 (trustworthiness).<sup>12</sup>

Constructionism often has a social dimension given that it situates knowledge within a social and cultural context. The next section will therefore discuss socio-constructionism.

### **3.2.2 Socio – Constructionism**

It is difficult to imagine any knowledge which would not be influenced to a greater or lesser extent by external factors. Indeed constructionism understands all knowledge as ‘contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings...and transmitted within an essentially social context’ (Crotty 1998, p.42); knowledge is developed through and from social experience, the social environment and social interdependence (Jha 2012; Amineh and Asl 2015). In other words, knowledge exists in a context when an individual is engaged in construction – ‘whether it’s a sand castle on the beach or a theory of the universe’ (Papert 1991, p.1 cited in Ackermann 2001, p.4) and this knowledge is developed and shared with others; it is socio-constructionist. This could be understood as the creation of a sharable product (Rob and Rob 2018) although the use of word ‘product’ can be misleading. Knowledge does not necessarily result in something concrete and tangible, nor does it necessitate physical ‘making.’ The product could be an expressed idea. It is perhaps better to understand the socio-constructionist epistemology as the idea that ‘reality is socially constructed by, and between, the persons who experience it...and that it is shaped by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context’ (Darlaston-Jones 2007, p.19). Jha (2012) neatly summarises this as ‘it is from our relationships with others that the world becomes filled with what we take to be real’ (p.171). Arguably for teachers (and student teachers) these interactions

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<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting at this stage that constructionism informs the constructivist learning theory. Rooted in Piagetian principles, constructivism is a pedagogy rather than an epistemology but, given the nature and context of this study, does have some relevance. Constructivism positions knowledge as active and the learner as central having an ‘active role in the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge is not simply transmitted but constructed by the learner based on their prior knowledge and experiences. There will be further implicit links made to constructivism within the analysis chapters that follow.

and relationships are informed by the pedagogical and professional discourses they are located within.

As with the constructionism, socio constructionism argues that there are different interpretations of experiences and different meanings and knowledge established. It sits within an interpretivist rather than positivist paradigm, so the investigator interprets meaning. There is therefore an inherent impossibility within constructionism (and socio-constructionism) of any notion of pure objectivity as by its very nature it is not an objectivist epistemology. Any criticism related to a lack of objectivity fails to realise this and essentially criticisms of constructionism are themselves merely other equally valid interpretations i.e. other versions of reality. In this way social constructionist based research 'is and should be a critical enterprise' (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.176).

This research study makes reference to a socio- constructionist epistemology in that the study is focused on participants who exist in a social context, who actively construct their own meaning through experience (often with others) and who are sharing the 'product' of their thinking, experience and reflections as part of the interview process. The broadly constructionist epistemology of the study has subsequently informed the next stratum to be discussed: theory.

### **3.3 Theory**

Theory, within this context, includes assumptions and assertions which are used to understand or examine concepts and processes (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Theories allow researchers to construct meaning and make sense of information and can result in the development of new theories.

There is often a blurring between epistemology and theory as one informs the other. This overlapping between the strata is also true when theory feeds into approach and will subsequently go on to inform some of the more pragmatic decisions within the strategies of the research design. In this case, a constructionist / socio-constructionist view of knowledge feeds into a phenomenological theoretical stance, which will in turn inform the next layer of

approaches and subsequently methods. This is not an 'exact fit' however and this section will explore some of the difficulties in placing phenomenology within a constructionist epistemology.

### **3.3.1 Phenomenology**

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005, p.15) define theory as something that 'combines abstract sets of assumptions and assertions used to interpret and sometimes explain psychological, social, cultural and historical processes and formations'. Phenomenology certainly fits this. It combines assumptions and assertions that are used to interpret lived experiences of a phenomena and is focused on describing the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell 2012; Brinkmann and Friesen 2018). As this study is centred on experiences and understanding of (the phenomenon of) feedback, it is well suited to phenomenology; it seeks to gain a better understanding of what this phenomenon (feedback) is like through describing how experiences are perceived by the participants (Lester 1999) and how these inform the construction of meaning. In this study participants constructed an understanding of feedback through the lens of their experiences of feedback as learner and teacher.

The phenomenological theory grew from the related work of the philosopher Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl understood that, 'it was necessary to try to describe as carefully and fully as possible how phenomena of different types appear in our experience,' (Hammersley 2014, p.9) as our experiences and understanding of them are inextricably interrelated. Central to this is the conscious engagement with the experience or 'intentionality of consciousness' (Creswell 2012, p.76); an understanding of the phenomena subsequently comes about through studying a participant's own individual perception of the experience (Lester 1999). In the context of this study, the researcher is seeking to identify the meaning attributed to the experience of feedback. As detailed later under 3.5 (strategies or method), artefacts can be used to re-engage with the experience explored. This allows for a researcher to access theory in use related to the actual experience; the artefacts ground the participant within the experience once more and reduce the risk of only accessing espoused theory. As such, participants actively return to their experiences of the phenomenon, returning them to 'the concrete' (Groenewald 2004, p.4). Indeed, Bjorbækmo et al. (2018) define phenomenology as the 'science of examples' (p.21) from experience so any phenomenological research needs to focus on the examples of experience.

Furthermore, phenomenology is focused 'on understanding from the perspective of the person or persons being studied' (Willis 2007, p.107) and, in the case of this study, it is the participants' understanding of feedback *through* experience.

Another feature of the phenomenological theory is that, although the individual experience is studied, it requires more than one participant as it centres on 'the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences' (Creswell 2012, p.76). Phenomenology is based upon shared experiences of a phenomenon allowing for generalisations to be made across these experiences. These comparisons hope to identify the 'essence' of these experiences across the participants, identifying aspects that are 'common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it was' (Moustakas 1994 cited in Roulston 2010, p.162). This raises an interesting epistemological dilemma as, if knowledge is understood as constructionist, all meanings attributed to experiences are valid as meaning is both subjective and individual. This in turn means that all the individuals studied will present a different meaning (even from the same experience) that will be valid, even if they differ from any common themes (or 'essence') emerging from the rest of the group. It also indicates that there could be no such thing as *an* essence but rather many 'essences,' each specific to the individual's construction of meaning and experience. A related criticism often made about phenomenology relates to the transferability of findings. Even with a wide participant group, studying individual experiences in such depth means that any direct correlations to the wider population need to be somewhat tentative (Lester 1999). It is arguable though that, given the epistemological basis, any phenomenological research seeks only to present an interpretation of an understanding of a phenomenon.

A further and more recent feature of phenomenology is the stance of the researcher. Some argue that the personal experiences, understanding and expectations of the researcher are 'bracketed' out of the study rather than denied existence (Creswell 2012, p.78) in an attempt to acknowledge that the researcher has their own understanding of the phenomenon and although these cannot be detached from the study (Groenewald 2004) bracketing attempts to reduce the influence of these understandings from the interpretations made by the researcher (Lester 1999). The extent to which any researcher can fully bracket themselves out however is open to debate. If we accept a constructionist view of knowledge, any researcher is also constructing individual

knowledge based on previous experiences and knowledge, particularly so when engaged in discussion with the participants. Bracketing all of this completely would block this construction. Indeed, phenomenologists are increasingly querying whether it is ever 'really possible to suspend what we think we already know' (Gelling 2010, p.2). Cresswell (2012) states that it is the meaning of bracketing that needs revisiting suggesting that shelving our understandings to promote reflective curiosity would be more appropriate. However, it is difficult to see how shelving is more possible than bracketing. We cannot return to a stage when something was not understood or experienced so a reflexive awareness of positionality is more appropriate. Within this thesis, (as the researcher) I have had a longstanding interest and experience of feedback within Higher Education, which is clearly relevant to the phenomena studied. These experiences will alter the values and interpretations made through identifying essences and truths related the phenomenon; undoubtedly some ideas will resonate with my own experiences and therefore be interpreted as valid. After all if 'every experience is situated in a horizon which encompasses earlier experiences, memories and schemas' (Brinkmann and Friesen 2018, p.592) this will be true for researchers as well as participants.

The difficulties around bracketing have in part led to the development of an alternative strand of phenomenology – interpretive (or hermeneutic) rather than descriptive phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Heidegger (1962) who argued that experience and understanding could not be isolated; researcher bracketing was an untenable notion and in fact researcher presuppositions should be embraced (Miles et al. 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology therefore differs from traditional descriptive phenomenology in that it assumes that the observer (researcher) *cannot* be fully separated from the phenomenon studied (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine and Sambrook 2010). The researcher is actively engaged in interpreting the experiences of the participants by 'searching for themes,' 'engaging with the data interpretively,' 'examine[ing] the text' and 'reflect[ing] on the content to discover something 'telling', something 'meaningful', something 'thematic' (Sloan and Bowe 2014, p.9). It is the hermeneutic branch of phenomenology that fits more neatly within the epistemology of this study and indeed the phenomenographic approach to analysis discussed later.



Lastly, an additional criticism related to phenomenology is the preference for member checking. This is when participants are given opportunity to check that the description of the experience matches the experience itself. This is primarily to avoid criticism related to academic rigour by ensuring interpretations are valid and faithful to the original experience (Gelling 2010). Nevertheless, member checking is also open to critique. If checking takes place too long after the event, the participants' understandings of the experience will potentially have been reconstructed given their ongoing engagement with the world around them. Also, member checking could lead to reinterpretation of experience causing further confusion (if one believes in a singular truth that is) and methodological conflict. There is potential for member checking to both reinforce and reduce rigour. This is discussed further within section 3.6 trustworthiness.

To conclude this section, a broadly interpretative phenomenological theory supports the research design of the project. However, before moving on, it is worth stating again that there are methodological tensions with the phenomenological theory as it essentially focuses on the identification of a generalised single 'essence.' This is problematic given the earlier post-structural discussion around socio-constructionism. The next section mediates this tension somewhat by describing the more distinct approach of phenomenography. As will be explored, phenomenography is concerned with variation rather than generalising and identifying a single 'truth.' Following an explanation of phenomenography, the chapter will go onto refer to the mini-cases (or participant stories) and the phenomenographic approach to analysis.

### **3.4 Approach**

Within the framework of the analytic strata used to structure this chapter, an approach includes loose structures, assumptions and techniques that move a theory towards practice (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Just as with the other strata, an approach is informed by what the research hopes to discover, the particular context and how the research is situated. The approach will then inform the more rigid templates categorised under method or strategy (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Within this thesis, a broadly phenomenographic approach has

been adopted. The following section will justify this approach and also refer to particular features of the analysis.

### **3.4.1 Phenomenography as a branch of phenomenology**

Developed by Marton, phenomenography is a specific approach related to phenomenology focused on how people 'experience, interpret, understand, apprehend or conceptualise various aspects of reality' (Marton 1981, p.178). It shares the premise that there are different ways to experience something (Marton and Pong 2005) and we can only understand reality (or realities) through experience. It therefore supports the non-dualist view that there are different ways to experience something and therefore different versions of reality (Feldon and Tofel-Grehl 2018; Osman 2018). Phenomenography is concerned with finding these different conceptions of an experience, identifying the relationships between these conceptions and thereby identify the 'critical features' (Entwistle 2009, p.96), including the different ways in which participants 'experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of phenomena in the world around them' (Marton 1986 cited in Khan 2014, p.34). Phenomenography therefore combines an inner and outer aspect: the socio-cultural and the psychological (Willis 2018). It is socio-cultural as it is rooted in experience and psychological as it involves the individual making meaning.

It is the focus on difference that makes phenomenography distinctive (Lin and Niu 2011) from the broader phenomenology. Whereas phenomenology is concerned with finding the essence of a phenomenon, phenomenography studies the variation of essences or traits, examining the qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Åkerlind 2012; Osman 2018; Willis 2018). Indeed, phenomenography is sometimes known as variation theory research (Åkerlind 2012; Osman 2018). Furthermore the 'essences' identified are not bound in time so the differences in essence may appear over time rather than being present concurrently. In this way, phenomenography is an approach suited to a longitudinal study (such as this thesis) and one focused on the development (or variation) of ideas. Also, phenomenography holds that participants can hold discrete, although related, conceptions which may influence the likelihood of other conceptions developing over time (Feldon and Tofel-Grehl 2018). Feldon and Tofel-

Grehl (2018) illustrate this with reference to how conceptions of teaching are often predicated by prior conceptions of learning; this seems particularly pertinent given the focus of the study.<sup>13</sup>

Another key distinction is that phenomenography positions both the researcher and the participant as constructors; both make meaning from the described experiences. As such, different researchers can propose different constructions, all of which could be equally valid. In this way, bracketing is no longer necessary or significant. Indeed, the underlying socio-constructionist epistemology suggests that research interpretations could be continually reconstructed by others. Acknowledging this does make phenomenography open to criticism in terms of reliability as any conclusions could be dismissed as entirely personal and subjective. However, phenomenography is interpretative so reliability is established by considering whether or not the conclusions are a reasonable and valid interpretation, not the *only* valid interpretation. The acknowledgment of the possibility of different interpretations poses 'no problem' for phenomenologists (Richardson 1999, p.62) for whom the position is merely more honest and transparent given a constructionist epistemology.

### 3.4.2 Phenomenographic Analysis

As part of phenomenography, there is an associated distinct approach to analysis. This follows an iterative process where transcripts are examined (and re-examined) to identify reasonable and logical relationships (Marton and Pong 2005; Goh 2013; Khan 2014) between differing understandings associated with the phenomenon. These relationships are then conceptualised as a structural set (Åkerlind 2012) represented within a hierarchical matrix, grid, map or other organisational device. This is known as a hypothetical outcome space (Lin and Niu 2011) and provides a metaphor (Willis 2018) for the collective experiences of the phenomenon by the group of participants at the time of the study (Åkerlind 2012). For the project discussed within this thesis, the outcome space sought to represent the variation in conceptions of feedback across a group of student teachers over a three year period. It is worth noting at this point that the use of the word *outcome* does not sit well within the epistemology that underpins phenomenology

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<sup>13</sup> See also Lortie's (1975) 'apprenticeship of observation,'

largely because of the associations to fixed learning outcomes within education. As Stoller (2015 p.318) states, learning outcomes can be 'antithetical to the development of deep learning' and are based upon a 'fixed and reified view of ends' (p.318) An outcome space should therefore not be viewed as identifying a fixed aim or outcome but illustrating the possible understandings that emerge from the data.

Outcome spaces describe the qualitative variation in two ways: the different categories of experience and the dimensions of these categories (Woollacott, Booth and Cameron 2014). Significantly (and in line with the principles of phenomenography), the categories should not represent the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon but an interpretation of the participants' experience (Khan 2014). This means that it is unlikely the participants will identify themselves directly as a category. The process could therefore be seen as denying 'the individual his or her voice' (Bowden 2000, p.16) raising the paradox that although the focus of phenomenology is on individual conceptions of meaning, individuals are ultimately removed through the merging of experiences within the analysis. However, phenomenography acknowledges that conclusions are based on the researcher's constructions developed through engaging with the participants and their experiences. It is not the intention, therefore, nor even 'possible for the researcher to 'be' that person' (Bowden 2000, p.16).

Moreover, given that an outcome space does not represent an individual's single understanding of a phenomenon but the variation (or essences) of understandings, a participant could move from 'one category to another on different occasions' (Marton, 1981, p.194 cited in Alsop and Tompsett 2006, p.245). This means that different understandings can be tracked over time (as is the case in Chapter 7 – two participant stories). These two aspects of categories are defined as the referential and the structural dimension; both are 'discovered' through the analysis and interpretation of data by the researcher. In simple terms, the referential aspect is known as the 'what' i.e. what is learned, (Harris 2011) and the structural aspect is the 'how' i.e. how it is learned or experienced (Webber and Johnston 2015).

Attempting to categorise varied understandings into such a logical form could be viewed as oversimplifying something quite complex. However, far from simplifying, the outcome space allows for a greater range of possibilities. Although structured around two aspects of understanding,

the outcome space actually proposes that there are many combinations and relationships within the degrees of these aspects. An outcome space should 'represent the full range of possible ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question,' (Åkerlind 2012, p.323) and this is certainly not simple. Indeed, as stated earlier, participants are unlikely to fit neatly into one description but will display a range of understandings linked to a range of categories.

The reference to 'limiting' or 'limited' categorisation of the outcome space within the literature (Marton and Booth 1997; Alsop and Tompsett 2006; Lin and Niu 2011; Khan 2014) can appear to be at odds with the epistemological foundation to phenomenography. Marton and Booth (1997, p.206) state that the analysis seeks to identify 'the limited number of distinctly different ways in which people are capable of experiencing.' Alsop and Tompsett (2006) develop this further by implying that although there are limited ways of understanding, there is no limitation on how this could be perceived by the participants. For the purpose of this study however, the notion of limiting has been applied to the choice of categories. In other words, the outcome space is used to represent *a* limited number of categories and experiences of the phenomenon (Lin and Niu 2011) not *the* limited number of categories; another researcher with a different group of participants at another time could find other possibilities.

The positioning of both the referential and structural variables as continua at each side of the outcome space could also imply that movement across the variables is not only hierarchical but developmental. Each continuum represents an ordering of approaches to learning (Richardson 1999) where a combination of the two more developed positions is considered best. However, particularly in the context of this study, an outcome space could equally be representations of 'difference' rather than 'better,' i.e. the combination of possible referential and structural variables just present various, but not necessarily superior, approaches to learning. For this study, the referential aspect relates to what is learned or understood in relation to feedback. By way of explanation, *what* conceptions of feedback exist. Although there are many possible ways feedback can be understood, phenomenographic research should be 'parsimonious, i.e. the main variations in experience should be presented by as few categories as possible' (Khan 2014, p.39). Consequently, for this thesis, referential conceptions have been limited to particular conceptions of feedback. These were identified as part of an iterative abductive process. In line with the

phenomenographic approach, the outcome matrix is therefore used to identify variation in understanding developed through the experience of being a learner and teacher. These variations in conceptions are explored in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The study also explores *how* the conceptions of feedback are developed through experience. The dual role of learner and teacher is a key characteristic of the participants studied; these roles (and associated contexts of university and school) are *how* the understanding of feedback develops. The roles and contexts therefore provide the structural aspect to the analysis.

Mapping the data gathered onto the outcome matrix over the longitudinal period of the study allows for conceptions to be both interpreted and also tracked over time. Changes in understanding across the three years of the study are specifically explored in relation to the two participant stories in Chapter 7. As such, using an outcome matrix over time also allows for the identification of threshold concepts and disavowed knowledge.

#### **3.4.2.1 Threshold Concepts**

The term threshold concepts was first coined by Meyer and Land to describe concepts that are 'central to achieving mastery of a subject (Neve, Wearn and Collett 2016, p.851). Not only are they deemed to be central, threshold concepts are arguably actually pivotal and critical for developed disciplinary knowledge (Timmerman et al. 2013; Gosselin et al. 2016). Meyer and Land (2003, p.1) describe threshold concepts as 'portals' which open up 'new ways of thinking' significant to future learning. Without these, learning will stagnate and will not reach the necessary depth or mastery and the learner cannot fully progress (Nicola-Richmond et al. 2017).

Defining exactly what makes a threshold concept is rather problematic. Although Meyer and Land (2005) identify a number of key features, these are not straightforward. The first is that the concept must be transformative i.e. it brings about a real shift in understanding. Secondly, it should be irreversible in that the learning of the concepts cannot be unlearned. The third feature is connectiveness as it allows for interrelated connections to be made. Fourthly, it should be bounded to the discipline itself and lastly it should have a degree of troublesome knowledge (Perkins 1999) e.g. be somewhat counterintuitive, uncomfortable or goes against common sense (Cousin 2006). The difficulty with all of these features is that they could apply to other learning

and concepts and also that the features are somewhat contradictory. For example, is learning ever truly bounded to a discipline and, if so, how can connectiveness also be fully present? Certainly, learning experiences are contextualised within subjects and disciplines, but learning is not necessarily so linear and specific that understanding does not make links across disciplines? Furthermore the language around these definitions is fairly tentative e.g. probably, possibly etc. (Wilkinson 2014) which presents somewhat of an oxymoron i.e. the definitions are not in themselves definitive but 'fuzzy' (Townsend, Hofer and Brunetti 2015).

In addition, the very notion of identified threshold concepts can be epistemologically problematic. If we adopt a constructionist epistemology, it would also be true that learners will have threshold concepts individual to them and the identification of these would be highly personal without necessarily aligning to a set of generic criteria. Conceivably the only person capable of defining the key threshold concept is the actual individual as their experiences and understandings will guide what is threshold and what is not (Townsend, Hofer and Brunetti 2015). A threshold concept for one person may be totally different to another given that learning, and indeed transformation, is highly individual (Nicola-Richmond et al. 2017). In other words, 'whose threshold concepts' (Wilkinson 2014) are driving the narrative and is any attempt by a researcher to define them merely a 'reflection of power and privilege' (Wilkinson 2014)? However, the study within this thesis does not seek to understand the threshold concepts inherent in developing an understanding of feedback but some of the possible threshold concepts around this developing understanding (from the standpoint of participant and researcher). This aligns better with phenomenographic identification of the 'essences' of a phenomenon rather than the single 'essence' or truth. As Wilkinson states, care needs to be taken not to reduce 'all our students to a single idealised student who learns in a particular way' (Wilkinson 2014).

Perkins' notion of troublesome knowledge (1999) (listed as a characteristic of threshold concepts) is also worth exploring further. It assumes troublesome knowledge is merely focused on *intellectual growth* but in fact the same could be true for professional or skill based growth. Perkins (1999) elaborates troublesome knowledge into six differing areas: ritual knowledge, inert knowledge, conceptually difficult knowledge, alien knowledge, tacit knowledge and troublesome

language. There is another possible form of troublesome knowledge pertinent to this study, knowledge which causes an uncomfortable exploration and rebuilding of learner identity. This is linked to three emerging additional characteristics of threshold concepts: reconstitution, discourse and liminality (Nicola-Richmond et al. 2017). *Reconstitution* supposes that ‘grasping the meaning of a threshold concept should involve a shift in the identity of the learner (Nicola-Richmond et al. 2017, p.2) and a shift in identity would be the most troublesome and uncomfortable knowledge of all to process. In Lacanian terms this could represent the conflict between the ‘concrete reality’ and the ‘abstract ideality’ of oneself (Ruti 2008, p. 91). Confronting this potential gulf between our ideal and the reality of who we are would undoubtedly result in an ‘identity shift...entail [ing] troublesome, unsafe journeys’ (Cousin 2006, p.1).

This study has used the outcome matrix to not only identify essences of understanding but also changes in understanding over time (Chapter 7) and interpreting any threshold concepts is part of this analysis. Analysis of the data has also allowed for the identification of another dimension to understanding: disavowed knowledge.

#### ***3.4.2.2 Disavowed Knowledge***

The verb disavow means to disown or disclaim and this forms the basis of disavowed knowledge. Developed by Taubman (2012), disavowed knowledge is essentially something that contradictorily is both known and denied at the same time: a ‘form of double consciousness in which we simultaneously see and don’t see, remember and forget, acknowledge and deny’ (Clarke 2018, p.4). The paradox within this is described by Britzman (2013) as a ‘thorny’ one as it ‘signifies both social amnesia and psychical reality’ (p.3). Denying what is known does seem somewhat nonsensical<sup>14</sup>. The examples Taubman (2012) uses seem to suggest more pretence than denial, for example, I do not want to engage with this or will pretend I don’t know it. The reality is it is difficult to un-know something but you can choose to ignore or pretend you don’t know it.

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, there are parallels here to the notion of bracketing out experiences and understanding within pure phenomenology.



Typically, knowledge that becomes disavowed is threatening or destabilising and undermines previously held comfortable knowledge (Taubman 2012). Crossing threshold concepts (Meyer, Jan and Land 2003) similarly includes knowledge that is 'troublesome' (Perkins 1999), uncomfortable or counterintuitive (Cousin 2006), but here the challenge is grappled with and assimilated. With disavowed knowledge the troublesome aspect means it is ignored or denied. The subject effectively responds with 'I know this is true, but I refuse to believe it' (Britzman 2013, p.3) or maybe I know this is true but I can't really process or handle it now because there will be an emotional consequence. Scherff used the term disavowal to describe the 'pain and loss' (2008, p.1322) novice teachers felt when faced the conflict between their pre-teaching ideals and the realities of the job and this seems to support some of the teacher development models outlined within the Literature Review (Fuller 1969; Huberman 1989). Pain and loss are strong emotions, so disavowing could be a form of emotional self-preservation. Part of the reason the knowledge is so challenging, is that it could also be a threat to one's 'sense of unity, sameness or one-ness' (Taubman 2012) i.e. a threat to identity. Taubman describes this as de-centering (2012).

Is it that the performativity culture rife within the education system encourages disavowed knowledge? Progress markers, professional standards and performance goals form ideals which act as 'hollow markers' (Taubman 2012, p.21). Their perceived value and importance can trump other personal values. This can be uncomfortable, de-centering and in conflict with professional philosophy and identity. Indeed, if this conflict is too uncomfortable, the previously held values become disavowed.

### **3.4.3 Participant Stories**

Chapter 7 of the thesis is centred on two individual stories of student teacher development in response to the research question, what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

Although Chapters 4, 5 and 6 also analyse the specific participants, these are done so to identify variations of essences across the collective group, rather than focusing on the participants as unique individual cases or the group of participants as generalised cases; as has been outlined

within this chapter, conceptions of feedback (and other phenomena) are understood to be individual rather than generalised within the constructionist perspective.

Chapter 7 therefore presents two mini-cases as discrete examples of how student teachers develop their understanding. Analysing two differing participant stories allows for some further identification of variation: not only 'essences' but the development of 'essences.'

These participant stories are not presented as case studies as such (although there are certainly some commonalities.) Indeed, the term 'case studies' is itself problematic given that it can confusingly viewed as both a method and a methodological approach (Thomas 2010; Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift 2014;) and hence why it is avoided here. Given the basis of this study, there are also epistemological and methodological difficulties with presenting a case study that is representative of a wider cohort. The mini-cases explored within this thesis are presented as two possible ways of how understanding can develop. Stake (1995) states that case studies are designed to catch 'the complexities of a single case' (p.xi) by focussing on one entity and studying it in detail (Thomas 2010) to understand a specific issue (Kratt 2019) but in this study, the 'specific issue' is only at an individual level rather than more general to the undergraduate programme the individual is part of. Furthermore Creswell (2012) positions case studies and phenomenology as two different approaches within qualitative inquiry, although there is evidence that both can co-exist within the same methodological space (Flyvbjerg 2006) and indeed there are numerous published phenomenological case studies (Sumsion 2002; Van der Mescht 2004; Nielsen 2006; Woollacott, Booth and Cameron 2014) where common meanings are identified from several individuals (Creswell 2012). However, phenomenographic case studies are rarer as phenomenography is centred on variation in understanding rather than generalised essences across a group.

For this study, two respondents have been selected as mini-cases (or participant stories) (Chapter 7). This is not an attempt to make generalisations across all the participants or indeed similar groups of student teachers but to embody two quite different understandings of feedback among those who participated in the study. Chapter 7 therefore illustrates how feedback understanding can develop differently across two individuals. The chapter does not offer stories that are necessarily representative of others but are illustrative examples of possible routes of teacher

development. The two mini-cases (or stories) are exemplars to illustrate variation further and, as such, add to the robustness and richness of the study. The inclusion of these within the study therefore supports the phenomenological theory and also aligns with the phenomenographic approach used throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

#### **3.4.4 Reference to Discourse**

The analysis within Chapter 4 makes significant reference to ‘discourse,’ and, as such discourse is afforded wordage here. As discussed earlier, discourse is defined as ‘a way of talking about and understanding the world, or an aspect of it’ (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.1). Discourse therefore relates to communication in ‘the medium of language’ orally, in written form or even symbolically (Johnstone 2018, p.2). However, discourse is more than language and many discourses can exist in any specific context at different levels, for example, political, cultural, societal, (Scott and Waagsaether 2018) organisational. In this study, the focus is educational discourse associated with feedback. By ‘educational discourse,’ it is pertinent to distinguish between Gee’s discourse (lower case d) and Discourse (upper case D) (Gee 2004; Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b). The first, refers to language in use whereas the second (Discourse) is how language can ‘enact specifically socially recognisable identities engaged in specific socially recognisable activities’ (Gee 2015a, p.166). In other words, ‘Discourse is a much broader view of how language combines with: action; practice; identity; societal, cultural and professional norms and conventions (Gee 2015b). In this way, educational discourse may refer to policy documents as well as enacted practices. Furthermore, Sim states ‘whenever the term discourse is mentioned..., we find Foucault’s ghostly presence’ as any consideration of discourse can also reveal notions of power and control. In other words, discourse is used as a form of power and exists in both the narratives and practices of any given context. Indeed, it is the value attributed to particular discourses that gives them power and therefore increases the likelihood of them dominating how we understand (Bishop 2018). The use of discourse within the analysis is therefore not just a study of language but a study of what language/discourse does : ‘the politics of meaning that arises using language, the way in which it affects people’s understanding and cognition, and the way in which it distributes power to some and less to others’ (Scott and Waagsaether 2018, p.6).

Discourse has particular relevance to this study in that the participants, by nature of their study, will have been exposed to some of the existing discourses associated with assessment and feedback. This is unavoidable given the prevalence of the standards driven discourse that informs the practices on school placement and the focus of academic study. As such, discourse may inform the 'essences' identified within phenomenographic analysis, so it is important discourse is recognised within the methodological approach.

Whilst the reference to discourse within the analysis chapters is not 'discourse analysis,' analysis does include a comparison between and across the educational feedback discourse and the data. This is particularly the case in Chapter 4. The educational discourse has informed the approach to research design and analysis of data and it is hoped that by identifying and making comparative reference to these powerful discourses, there is potential for both critique and challenge (Bishop 2018).

To conclude, a phenomenological approach has been adopted for this study as it is centred on how feedback is understood by different participants thereby identifying variations of essences. In addition, the inclusion of two participant stories enable two mini-cases to be studied over time which includes recognising disavowed knowledge and threshold concepts. The methodological strategies and methods which now follow support the epistemology, theory and approach already discussed.

### **3.5 Strategies or Method**

The approach taken by the research informs the strategies or methods used. These are categorised as the 'specific practices and procedures that researchers deploy to collect and analyse data and report their findings' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005, p.18). Interviews were used as the prime strategy although these were enhanced further by the use of prompts.

There is a variety of published research into feedback and scrutinising these highlights common strategies but also the caveats to consider in future plans. This section will explain why the strategies have been selected by making close reference to other research in the field including:

higher and primary education, the development of feedback and understanding related to other areas of learning. Although some studies make use of quantitative data, largely questionnaires (Glover and Brown 2006; Price et al. 2010; Löffström and Poom-Valickis 2013), it is acknowledged that this is somewhat limiting when examining feelings and beliefs; a more mixed approach is preferred (Richardson 1996; Kane, Sandretto and Heath 2002; Krause and Coates 2008). This is particularly so in studies that examine change in understanding over time as 'only longitudinal interviews can portray the range of experiences of these students, and the emotional work they undertake as they 'come to know' the rules of their new learning environment' (Christie. et al. 2008, p.579). As a result, qualitative strategies are more frequently used either as the sole method or to supplement quantitative data. Within this, the most common data collection methods are semi-structured interviews and observation / videoing of practice although there is also some use of more unusual forms such as metaphor (Bullough and Stokes 1994; Löffström and Poom-Valickis 2013) or drawing analysis (Brown and Wang 2013).

This section of the chapter will now outline all the elements within the method or strategies of the study including: how sampling took place, the participants, interviews, use of prompts, ethical considerations, data generation and analysis.

### **3.5.1 Sampling**

The recruitment of the participants was largely through convenience sampling in that the participants were easily accessible, available, willing and members of the target population within the researcher's department (Teddlie and Yu 2007; Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016). After seeking volunteers, all those who expressed an interest in the project were recruited. This kind of sampling does assume that the group recruited is homogenous and representative of the wider group so that the same results would be obtained with another, randomly selected group (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016). For that reason, convenience sampling is sometimes viewed as less rigorous (Marshall 1996). There is also an associated difficulty in that only those with an interest in the subject will apply. However, methodologically this study is not seeking to find the one 'truth' but rather different individual truths, or essences of experience, and as such does not seek to generalise across the wider group.

Convenience sampling means recruitment was not on the basis of the characteristics of the wider group. In this case, the original six female and two male participants, although appearing unbalanced does actually reflect the wider student population in Initial Teacher Education. Other characteristics were not similar though; there were a higher number of students who had come to university via an alternative route (or as a mature student) than would have been expected. There was also a degree of purposive sampling because of the deliberate choice of participants as typical of the area studied (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016). Tongco (2007) states that purposive sampling is most appropriate when a particular culture, setting or society necessitates choosing from this group and for this study, only first year Initial Teacher Education (ITE) student teachers were appropriate. Limiting selection to these groups did not necessarily indicate bias but allowed for more relevant quality data (Tongco 2007).

### **3.5.2 Participants**

The project participants were students on a three-year undergraduate primary education degree. Participants were recruited during semester one of the first year of the degree and remained with the project until completion of their third and final year. As such, they engaged with the research for three years; a longitudinal study was necessary in order to track changes its conceptions of feedback over the three years of the degree. Eight students were initially recruited and these were each interviewed on two occasions per year. Seven students completed the study. An overview of the participants can be found in Table 1 overleaf.

Respondent	M/F	Route into HE	Participation in each data point?	Choice of artefact for data points 1,3, and 5	Videod lesson or alternative artefact for data points 2,4 and 6
Jenny	F	A Levels	6 of 6	1.Written feedback from school placement  3.Written feedback from assignment  5. School based feedback approach	2. Video  4. Video  6. Video
Lottie	F	FE Level 3 qualification and time in employment	5 of 6 before leaving the programme	1.Written feedback from school placement  3.Written feedback from assignment  5. Interview did not take place	2. Video not possible so feedback from lesson appraisal presented  4. Video  6. Video not possible so discussed school feedback policy
Anthony	M	FE qualification, time in employment and access course and	2 of 6 before leaving the programme	1. Written feedback from presentation	2. Video

Daisy	F	A Levels	6 of 6	1. Written feedback from presentation  3. Written feedback from assignment  5. No artefact presented but reported a feedback event	2. Video  4. Video  6. Video
Nick	M	A Levels then FE Level 3 qualification	6 of 6	1. Written feedback from presentation  3. Written feedback from assignment  5. No artefact presented but reported a verbal feedback event	2. Video  4. Video  6. Video  not possible so school marking policy presented
Evie	F	A Levels	6 of 6	1. Video of verbal peer feedback during practical university session  3. Written feedback from assignment  5. No artefact presented but reported a	2. Video  4. Video  6. Video not possible so school feedback event reported



				feedback event	
Lilly	F	A Levels	6 of 6	1.Example of pupil self-assessment  3.Written feedback from assignment  5. Example of children’s work	2. Video not possible so lesson plan presented  4. Video  6. Video
Eleanor	F	Employment and then access course	6 of 6	1.written feedback from school placement  3.Written feedback from assignment  5. No artefact presented but reported a verbal feedback event	2. Video  4. Video not possible so discussed a particular lesson from placement  6. Video not possible so presented a series of lesson plans

Table 1 Overview of Participants



### 3.5.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews have long been considered the prime data source for phenomenographic research (Åkerlind 2018) and consequently similar projects have used interviewing as the principal data collection strategy to examine participants' understanding of the phenomena studied (Christie et al. 2008; Treglia 2008; Cree et al. 2009; Burnett and Mandel 2010; Price et al. 2010; Tett et al. 2012; Brown and Wang 2013; Hargreaves, 2013; Cheng, Tang and Cheng 2014; McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014). The interviews act as 'focused conversations' (DeMarrais 2004, p.52) and probe participants' descriptions (of the experiences) using open questions, prompts and follow up or clarification questions. The goal is 'to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant' and 'this can only be accomplished when the qualitative interview is open ended enough for the participant to provide a depth of knowledge on the research topic' (DeMarrais 2004, p.52). Furthermore, the openness of these interviews allows the researcher to really focus allowing for developed dialogue as necessary to eliminate any assumptions (Willis 2018). As a result, opportunistic questions should emerge as the interview progresses and the researcher seeks to probe, clarify and explore further, revealing the participant's understanding. Such depth of discussion could in fact lead to the development of new conceptions (Marton and Pong 2005). Some of these will occur spontaneously, as participants reflect upon the experiences and their understanding of the experiences, others are scaffolded through the questions asked by the researcher. However, there is a word of caution here as the discussion could unnaturally influence the interpretations of the experiences offered by the interviewees, which in turn distort the interpretation of the interviewer. The open ended nature of the interviews does though allow the participant to select the aspects of the subject or phenomenon they want to discuss. This in itself is an important source of data as it reveals an aspect of what the individual considers to be relevant (Marton 1986 cited in Bowden 2000).

Clearly the questions asked are crucial as they need encourage deeper elaboration and explanation seeking to encourage the participant to 'reflect on what they have expressed, to explain their understanding more fully and to reveal their way of understanding the phenomenon' (Bowden 2000, p.10). It is worth stating that the open ended nature of the

interview does not mean the interviews are without structure; the questions need to be basically planned but also used flexibly as needed. Phenomenographic interviews are not, as been suggested in the past (Richardson 1999), informal chats and do not have a loose immersive ethnographic style. Unless questions are considered there is a risk that the two aspects of phenomenography's 'relational focus' (Prosser, Bowden and Walsh 2000, p.34) will be missed. Questions need to explore understanding of the area studied (in this case feedback) and also the experiences that underpin these understandings (in this case the learning or teaching experiences).

### **3.5.4 Use of prompts**

In existing literature, interviews are often enhanced with another data source, either as a prompt for the interview discussions, or as part of a mixed method. Videoing or observation is a frequent methodological choice (Marshall and Drummond 2006; Hargreaves 2013; van den Bergh, Ros and Beijaard 2013) which supports Kane, Sandretto and Heath's (2002) conclusion that actual practice, or theories in use, should be evaluated alongside espoused theories. Not only does this increase the likelihood of the full picture being represented, but also the potential contradictions between theory and practice can be insightful for the researcher (Kane, Sandretto and Heath 2002). Furthermore, the use of prompts has an additional advantage for studies situated within a phenomenological theory and phenomenographic approach as they encourage the participant to re-engage with the actual experience. The prompt bounds the participant to a particular occasion thus allowing their memory and subsequent exploration more vivid and reliable. This could simply be asking the participant to recall a recent experience of feedback to encourage 'a focus on the phenomenon' (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014, p.4) but an alternative is to use videoing as a prompt. This method has been used to good effect in similar related studies to explore participant experiences in the classroom, ask direct questions about what was happening and unpick the meaning attached to these experiences (Hargreaves 2013). Marshall and Drummond (2006) highlight an additional advantage in that videoing allows for re-watching and as such 'increases the reliability of the analysis because behaviours can be interpreted, discussed and re-interpreted with reference to the primary data' (Marshall and Drummond 2006, p.136). However, the studies just referred to assign the selection of clips for watching and discussion to the researcher, albeit in consultation with the participant. This could be viewed as

methodologically compromising in that meaning (and value) has already been attributed by the researcher through the very selection, not necessarily reflecting the understanding of the participant and indeed the premise of constructionist phenomenological theory centred on individual constructions of meaning. For the study discussed here, the participants were charged with selecting a clip.

An alternative to video as an interview prompt is the use of an artefact such as a marked piece of work (Treglia 2008), written reflection (Deakin 2007), image (Brown and Wang 2013) or metaphor (Bullough and Stokes 1994; Löffström and Poom-Valickis 2013) as a focus for analysis. These allow a degree of flexibility for the participant (who selects their own artefact) but still seeks to unpick understanding of an experience or phenomenon. Even so some of these approaches could be viewed as potentially challenging for the participant and may require further explanation and support by the researcher if something suitable is to be generated (Bullough and Stokes 1994). This again could result in participants being unnecessarily influenced by what they feel they should present, or say, rather than what they understand, compromising both the trustworthiness and, in the case of this study, the broader epistemological foundations.

For the reasons outlined, interviews were selected as the prime strategy for this study with self-selected videos and artefacts used as stimuli. The chapter will now outline the ethical considerations within these strategies.

### **3.5.5 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations permeated all stages of the research process: design, collection of data and subsequent analysis. In line with established good practice (Denscombe 2010; Creswell 2012), ethical approval was granted before the research commenced. This was via the University's ethics committee who applied the agreed research ethics terms of reference (see appendices 10.3 and 10.4). The BERA (British Educational Research Association 2011) guidelines were also used to inform ethical decisions although as Horman (1991, p.36 cited in Wilson. 2012, p. 100) points out, 'the notions of an ethical code does not easily fit the conditions which apply in social research.' Nevertheless, given the qualitative nature of the project, and its consequent link

to sensitive beliefs and experiences in people's lives, ethical concerns and potential risks needed to be recognised and mitigated (Punch 2009; Seidman 2013;).

Punch (2009) identifies the following ethical issues in educational research: harm, consent, deception, privacy/confidentiality of data and these will be used to structure this section. However, before discussing the specific ethical concerns considered, it is worth noting the position of myself as an established member of staff in the institution studied holding both leadership and teaching responsibilities; I was known to the participants. Furthermore, I already had an interest in the subject (feedback) and had been involved in giving, receiving, advising on and researching feedback for a number of years both within ITE and the primary sector.

#### ***3.5.5.1 Harm***

Although there was no potential physical harm to the participants within the project, the group studied could be seen as vulnerable in other ways (Seidman 2013). Participants could have felt at risk given the position and status of myself within the programme studied. The imbalance of power could also have been compounded by confusion around the differing roles of professional and researcher and the relationship between them (Atkins and Wallace 2012). On the other hand, the positionality of myself, as the researcher, could also be viewed as advantageous in that researching from within the programme would allow for 'greater understanding as well a less objectivity' (Punch 2009, p.45). An additional and related consideration was the timing of data collection, particularly the practice-based element during School Experience (SE). This is an already challenging part of any Initial Teacher Training programme, not only in terms of the assessment of the student teacher, but also the relationships within the school and the securing of a placement.

To mitigate these concerns, it was made clear to participants that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the project and a 'value free' stance employed. Data collection would not influence either academic or school based assessments as it would take place after these judgments had been made. In addition, participants were not recruited from the researcher's academic tutor group or School Experience group to avoid any blurring of roles. Given the somewhat 'charged' context of an assessed school placement, it was also clarified that if, at any

point, placement was compromised by the project, an alternative data route would be instigated. For example, if securing the filming of the lesson put the student teacher at risk, a lesson plan and notes would be used as a substitute prompt for the practice based interview (see participant volunteer email and information sheet within appendices 10.4 and 10.5).

### ***3.5.5.2 Informed consent***

As a guiding principle, informed consent was understood as ‘the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway’ (British Educational Research Association 2011, p.5). With this in mind, possible participants were provided with an information sheet (appendix 10.5) detailing all aspects of the project in clear and transparent language (Check and Schutt 2011) before consent was sought. Consent was not viewed as a one off event (especially given the longitudinal nature of the project) but rather an ongoing negotiation (Punch 2009) and this was made clear to all participants and revisited throughout the project. As Atkins and Wallace highlight, ‘making consent as informed as possible demonstrates respect for individuals’ autonomy since they are able to make a more objective personal decision about the implications of participating and also...about withdrawing’ (2012, p.32).

Headteacher consent was also required for the filming of the student teacher in school. As a secondary gatekeeper, this consent also referred to parental consent given that the pupils were under 18. A further information sheet was subsequently provided detailing the project (see appendices 10.7 and 10.8). However, whilst ‘opting in’ is usually the preferred route for consent (Thomas 2010), within this study, an implied consent was used for parents. There were several reasons for this:

- gaining informed consent from the class of children would have resulted in additional administration for the host school and as such increased risk for the student teacher in securing and continuing with the placement;
- an ‘opting in’ strategy could result in some children having to be removed from the lesson and accommodated elsewhere in the school if forms were not returned. This would raise another ethical concern in that the research would disrupt and impact on teaching time

(Hopkins 2014). Consequently, the placement, as well as the children's education, could be compromised;

- the purpose of videoing the lesson was as a prompt for the interviews; it was not a data source in itself;
- the focus of the video was the student teacher not the children who were bystanders rather than participants.

For these reasons, implied consent was selected.

### ***3.5.5.3 Deception***

Given my professional role, coercion was an additional concern. To avoid this, possible participants were initially contacted by programme administrators via email (see appendix 10.4). A follow up information sheet was then provided detailing the data collection methods, commitment, right to withdrawal and roles/responsibilities. I was mindful of operating in 'an open and honest manner' (Denscombe 2010, p.335) throughout so ensured clarity at all stages of the project regarding the purpose and nature of the study (Creswell 2012) and the roles of researcher and participant.

### ***3.5.5.4 Privacy and confidentiality of data***

In line with BERA's guidelines (British Educational Research Association 2011) concerns around confidentiality and the storage of data were identified before the project and procedures put in place to mitigate against these and ensure it was handled in a 'fair and lawful manner' (Denscombe 2010, p.344). It was confirmed that the confidentiality and anonymity of all the contributors (including the schools) would be preserved throughout the collection, analysis and dissemination of the project; pseudonyms were used throughout. Data storage and disposal procedures were also established and included within the initial informed consent process.

Personal data from the research participants were kept to a minimum. Only computers with up-to-date anti-virus software were used and data were regularly backed up on the university networked drive (via password protected encrypted storage). Research data were not retained beyond the duration of the project. The filming and storage of the students in practice added an



additional ethical dimension. A transparent process was established to determine when cameras would be collected, how they would be securely stored and when they would be returned to dispose of the digital data in a secure manner; this was also shared with all participants. Please see appendix 10.6 which outlines the lesson video process.

This section has outlined and justified the ethical considerations related to the methodology. The chapter will now discuss the interview schedule, data generation points and the analysis strategies.

### **3.5.6 The Interview Schedule**

The schedule was designed with reference to Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) model of research and interview questions. In order to allow space for the interviewer to act reflexively to the emerging data, probing and clarifying experiences and understandings, a semi-structured interview was used. As a result, the schedule was used as a flexible framework with suggested questions (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) as well as prompts rather than a tight script. This allowed for a certain amount of leeway (Bryman 2012) i.e. opportunity to respond to and pursue comments made by the participants, thus supporting Seidman's principles for interviewing (2013). In addition, a flexible interview schedule recognises that it is not only the quality of the questions that are important but also the reaction of the interviewer, whether it be a further question, a pause or to seek clarification (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

In essence, the interview schedule consisted of three broad groups of questions related to the original research questions:

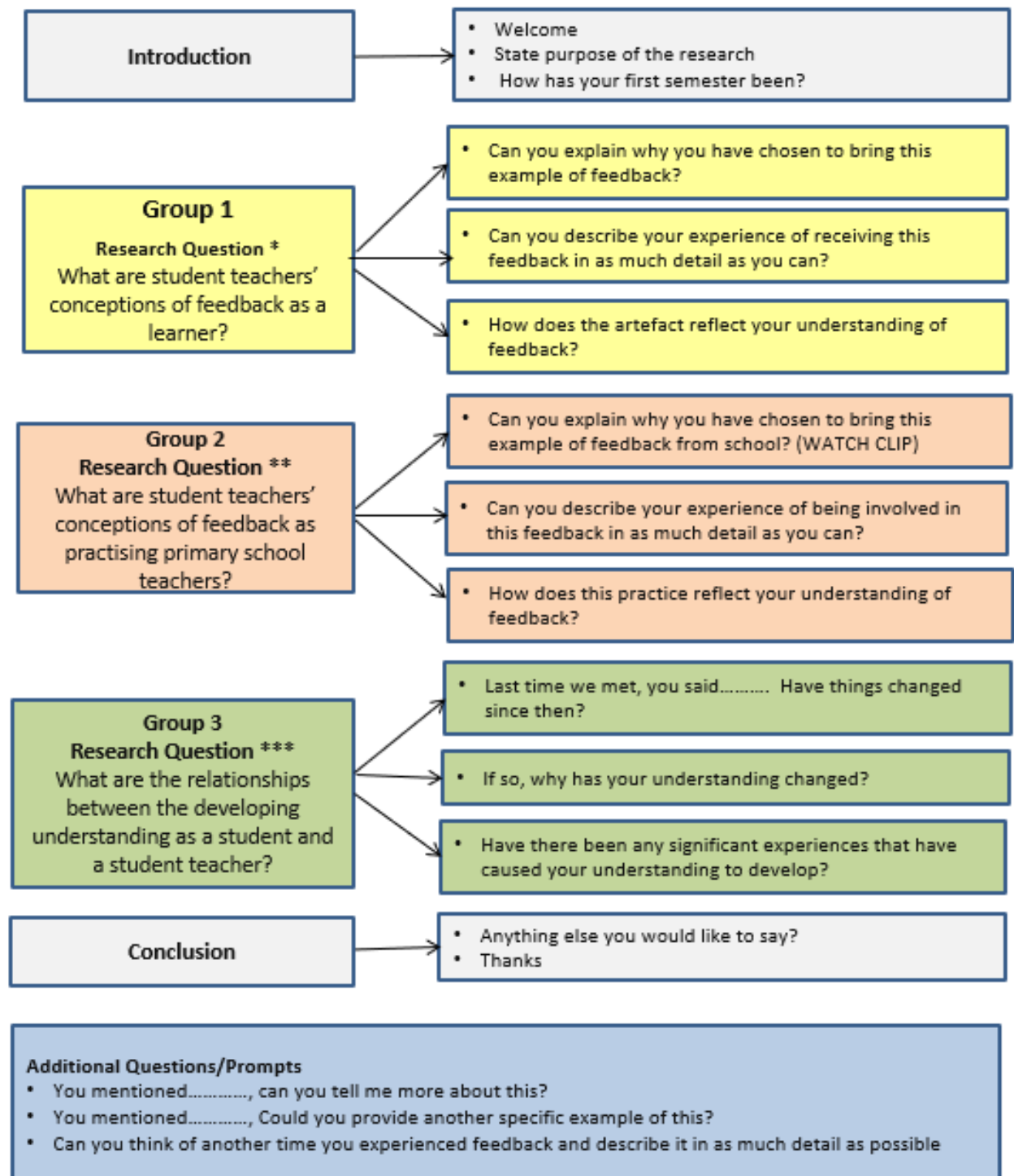
1. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners?
2. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?
3. What are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

Question group 1 was associated with the student teacher as a learner and therefore took place at data collection points 1, 3 and 5 which were positioned at a time of academic assessment and

feedback. Group 2 was associated with the role of teacher and therefore took place in data collection points 2, 4 and 6 which were scheduled after assessment and feedback during school placement. Group 3 questions were associated with developing understanding and therefore were explored across all data collection points. See also 3.7 and appendices 10.1 and 10.2.

Once the schedule was in place in draft form, a short pilot project took place. The pilot consisted of two interviews, one interview focused on conceptions as a learner (therefore reflecting data points 1, 3 and 5) and another interview focused on conceptions as a teacher (therefore reflecting data points 2, 4 and 6). This resulted in some minor tweaking of the draft questions and the inclusion of a reminder of the focus and purpose of the research (DeMarrais 2004) as well as an introductory warm-up question to put the participants at ease.

The interview questions were asked 'thematically' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p.131) with reference to the research questions in order to support the subsequent analysis. The questions themselves were broadly introductory, direct and structuring but with opportunity for probing, specifying and interpreting (Kvale 1996) within the follow up questions. Use was also made of Roulston's interview prompts (2010). A copy of the interview schedule can be found overleaf and in the appendices (10.1).



\* = Data Point 1    \*\* = Data point 2    \*\*\*= Data Point 1 + 2

Figure 1 Interview Schedule

### 3.5.7 Data Generation Points

There were two data generation points during each of the three years, totalling six in all (see figure 2 and within appendices 10.2). Data generation point one was at the end of semester one which was an academic assessment period. This consisted of an interview using an artefact selected by each participant as the prompt. The second data collection point was at the end of semester 2 following SE (School Experience). This was also an interview but using a videoed lesson of each participant as the prompt. Interviews took place in an office on campus during a mutually convenient time.

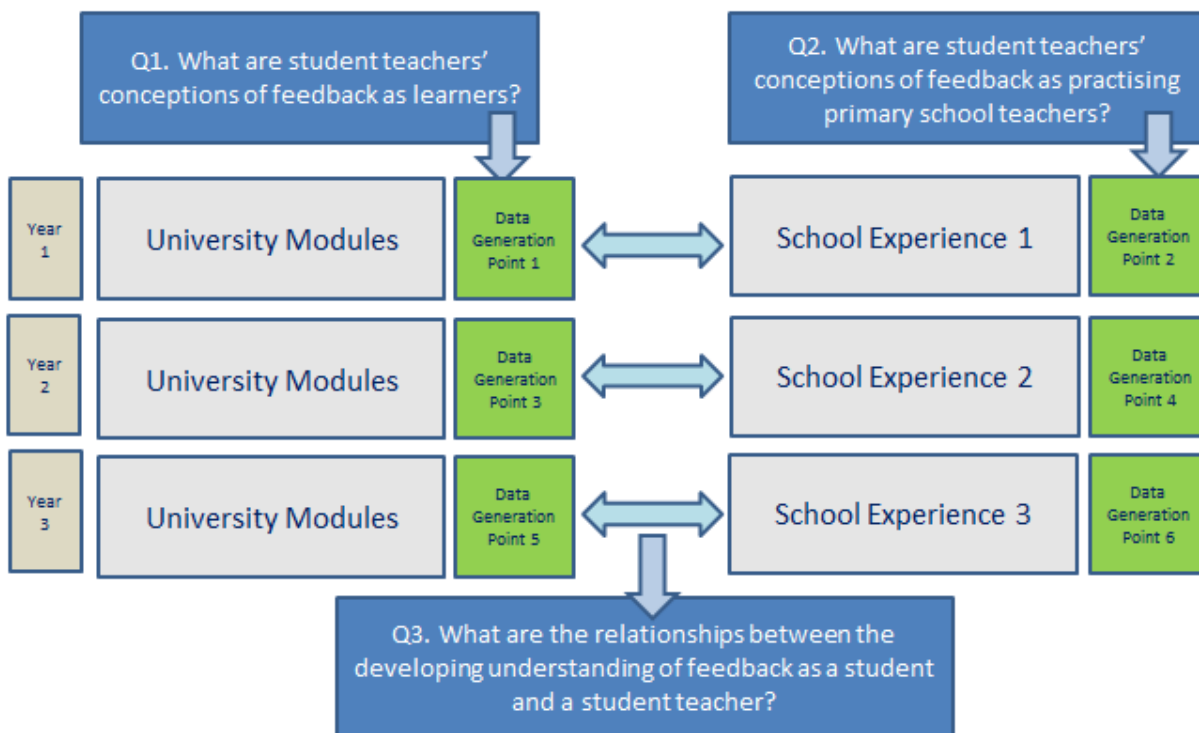


Figure 2 Data Generation Points

### 3.5.8 Analysis

An abductive approach was applied to the analysis which differs from inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive tends to start from the data or evidence considered to be relevant to a hypothesis whereas deductive is more top down working from 'generalisations to particulars or from hypothesis to evidence' (Koffi 2016). Abductive is a much more fluid, iterative and recursive process where there is a constant shuttling between the data and theoretical understandings; it is a 'continuous process of conjecturing about the world that is shaped by the solutions [or evidence] a researcher has' (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, p.172). Abductive reasoning therefore scaffolds the creation of hypothesis (Mirza et al. 2014) by inferencing from the data 'and double-checking these inferences with more data' (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, p.168). Hypotheses are grounded in the data in an ongoing manner so the researcher is in close touch with the 'voices [that] provided the data' (Bryman 2012, p.394). Data and theory are therefore processed in an integrated and justified manner to establish new ideas (Mirza et al. 2014). These ideas may then be further modified as new findings, or indeed new theoretical understandings, come to light (Dubois and Gadde 2002). As such abductive analysis could be summarised as a 'fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality' (Dubois and Gadde 2002, p.559).

Within this study, analysis was therefore an iterative process (Marton and Pong 2005; Goh 2013; Khan 2014). The first stage of the analysis included an initial consideration of the interview transcripts where key questions, ideas and possible conceptions were identified. The second stage was a more sophisticated analysis where key annotated comments were mapped onto the outcome matrix for each participant. Comparison across these matrices further allowed for themes to be identified; this was not however to necessarily identify collective themes given that phenomenography is concerned with variation. At the same time, theoretical understandings were accessed, analysed and then subsequently revisited, prompted and signposted by the growing data set. Both the empirical data and theory acted as a 'fruitful cross-fertilization' (Dubois and Gadde 2002, p.559) of new combinations and relationships. Analysis was therefore both abductive and iterative. Themes emerged from the data but were influenced by the

ongoing accessing of theoretical ideas which in turn resulted in a revisiting of earlier data or indeed theories; each informed the other and vice versa.

As both the data and theory grew, the outcome matrix needed to be modified and as such, earlier transcripts (and readings) were then returned to for further reading and re-reading. Indeed, over the three years, the matrix was altered five times with new referential aspects added and earlier ones removed as new conceptions began to be evidenced and the differing roles of learner and teacher influenced one another or remain distinct. Examples of the these can be found within the appendices (10.9). The final version of the outcome space is below.

		Referential Aspects (What is learned)								
		Feedback as transmission (Monologism)	Feedback as dialogue (Dialogism)	Feedback as a relationship (I – Thou Relation)	Feedback as motivation (Self-Determination)	Feedback as agency (Lack)	Feedback as empowerment (Self-Regulation)	Feedback as identity (The imaginary)	Feedback as performance (Technologies of control)	
Structural Aspects (What is learned)	As a learner									
	As a teacher									

Figure 3 Outcome Matrix

Each of the analysis chapters do not always reference each participant or indeed every interview. This was deliberate for epistemological and methodological reasons as any forcing of the analysis, or suggestion that every participant had the same essences of feedback within their understanding was avoided. Instead, each chapter references examples from the interviews that reveal particular themes related the discussion. Having said this, over the complete thesis all participants were referenced at some point. A breakdown of how and when participant interviews were used can be found within the appendices (Appendix 10.10 Participant/Analysis Reference Matrix).

### 3.5.9 A metaphor of economies

The last part of this section will detail and justify the thematic structure used as a secondary analysis. Using a metaphor of economies, it was possible to identify three overarching themes within the data: pedagogical economies, relational economies and moral economies. These three economies emerged from the data as part of the iterative process and are used to structure the analysis chapters that follow this one.

Although the idea of economies as a thematic structure may appear at odds with the epistemological principles underpinning such an interpretivist piece of work, economies do in fact provide a useful analogy rooted in the work of Bourdieu. Indeed, analogies and metaphors are a common tool used within feedback literature. Chapter 2 has already outlined how metaphors are used. For example, the feedback triangle (Yang and Carless 2013), feedback as a loop (Askew and Lodge 2000; Mislevy 2012), 'feedback as telling' (Boud and Molloy 2012b, p.14), feedback as a gift (Askew and Lodge 2000; Hargreaves 2005), feedback as a dialogue (Nicol 2010; Carless et al. 2011), feedback as ping-pong (Askew and Lodge 2000) feedback as talk (Ajjawi and Boud 2018), feedback as a consequence (Hattie and Timperley 2007), feedback as a Trojan horse (Kirton et al. 2007) or feedback as an 'elaborate dance' (Dennis et al. 2018, p.93). Just as the existing literature outlined earlier attempts to conceptualise feedback in a variety of ways (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014), the dimensions of the outcome matrix used (and the variation within) also allowed for identification of different understandings of feedback.

The notion of economies beyond economics is closely aligned with Bourdieu's understanding of capital (Chico 2011). Here Bourdieu uses an economic analogy to explore how cultural and social meanings are used to distribute resources, often unequally (Lewis, Waldron and Fiske 1992). In this context, capital refers to 'generalised resources' which can 'assume monetary and non-monetary as well as tangible and intangible forms' (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995, p.862). Although there is reference to monetary and non-monetary forms, Bourdieu argues that both can produce different forms of profit and that all forms of capital can be converted into economic

gain (Tittenbrun 2016). All of Bourdieu's forms of capital are therefore closely linked to economics, power and class (Siisiainen 2003). Generally writings on Bourdieu identify three specific forms of capital: economic, social and cultural (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Zembylas 2007), others list 'symbolic' as a separate rather than shared capital (Chepp 2013) but Bourdieu himself lists many other possible forms including technological and juridical (Bourdieu 2005). Limiting the number of potential capitals does seem to be unnecessary, particularly given that capital only has meaning within a specific social structure (Zembylas 2007) and associated practices (known as *habitas*) and this is open to change over time. There is also the difficulty with overlap, for example, the ethical capital that exists in an academic context could equally sit within social, cultural or even a moral capital. Arguably, the number of capitals should not be restricted to a definitive list. Interestingly, Lewis (1992) and Tittenbrun (2016) also point out that Bourdieu focuses too heavily on economic capital as a source of division and inequity and this in itself represents rather a capitalist view where non-economic capital has less worth.

Bourdieu's use of the economic metaphor to describe cultural and societal capital that people can invest in, accumulate and distribute (Lewis, Waldron and Fiske 1992) can be taken further. Economics, in the financial sense, is concerned with the accumulation and exchange of money and materials and the actions around this. If we expand the definition of materials to include both tangible and intangible resources, values and knowledge, it is possible to see how these too can be exchanged and saved. For example, a libidinal economy would be one where desire is distributed (Wilderson 2010 cited in Chico 2011). Essentially anything that can be traded, shared or accumulated can be seen as an economy (Chico 2011); knowledge or understanding can therefore have the economy metaphor applied as well as the associated values.

To summarise, the term economies is used to represent the principles and processes that characterise the production, accumulation and exchange of ideas. For the purposes of analysis within this thesis, as part of the abductive analysis, three economies were identified: relational, pedagogical and moral. By exploring the interview transcripts, it was possible to identify comments that implied conceptions related to the three economies. The economies are therefore the foundation of the analysis of the thesis findings and inform the conceptual model identified towards the end of the thesis. Each economy will be explored further within each of the analysis Chapters (4, 5 and 6). The model overleaf demonstrates the different parts of the



analysis process for these three chapters. Note the particular reference to discourse within Chapter 4 where educational discourse contributes to the analysis of pedagogical economies.

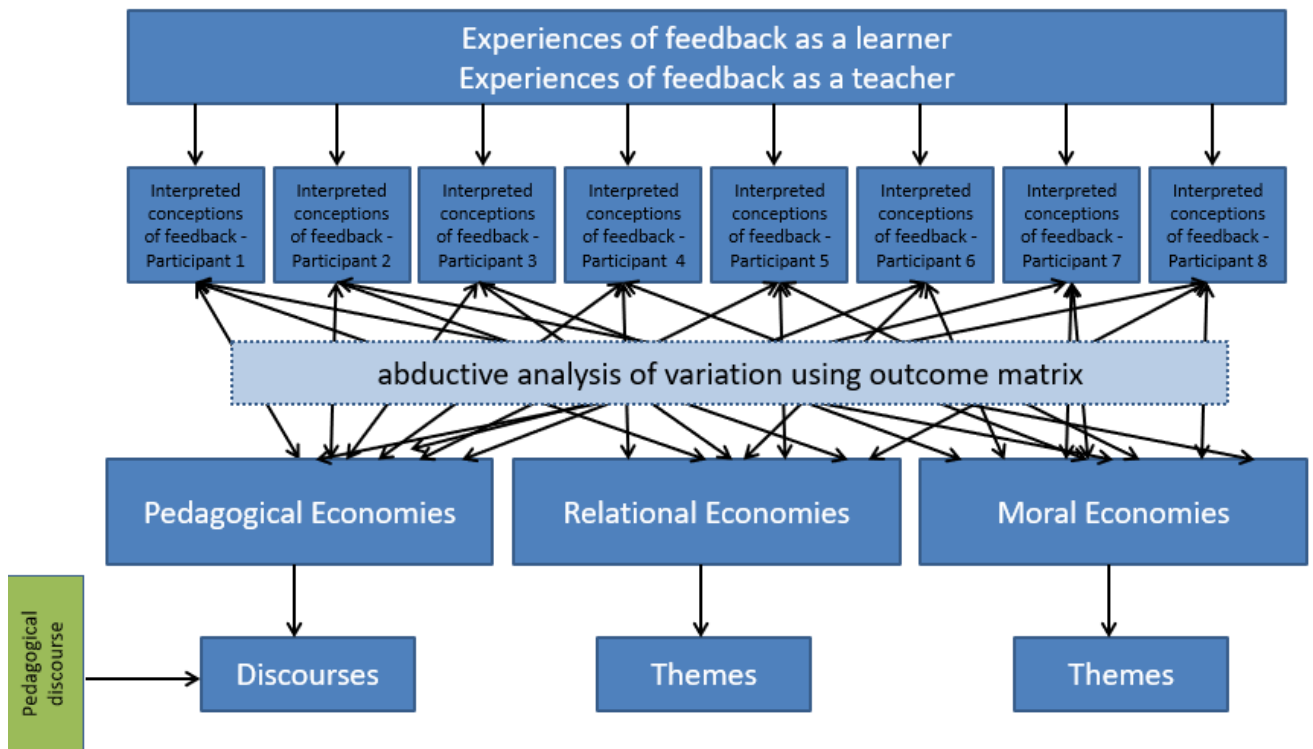


Figure 4 The Analysis Process

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

Finally, in order to establish the trustworthiness of research design, Guba's four criteria (1981) will be used to frame discussion. These are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton 2004). Guba's terms are seen as adhering more naturally to qualitative research (Creswell 2012) and given that the focus of the study is social / behavioural phenomena, open to different realities and interpretations (Guba 1981), this understanding of trustworthiness is appropriate. Guba's terms reframe the more positivist (objectivist) concepts of: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity and support the need for phenomenological research to be 'well-grounded and well supported' (Creswell 2012, p.259).

### 3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is related to the 'logic and internal consistency of the [research] argument' (Punch 2009, p.315). In other words, does the research (methodology, data collection, analysis and conclusions) match the intention of the research? Shenton (2004) identifies a number of factors associated with credibility, many of which can be applied to this thesis. Firstly, the research methods were carefully chosen with reference to similar successful studies ensuring they are well established. There was also a 'development of early familiarity' (Shenton 2004, p.65) with the participating culture due to the established position of the researcher within the university context. The existing relationship between researcher and participant enabled trust between the two; this was further built through the longitudinal nature of the study, although caution was also needed to avoid over familiarity. Although Shenton (2004) also recommends random sampling of participants, it was not necessary in this thesis due to the small numbers involved.

A key aspect of credibility is that it allows for findings to be viewed from more than one perspective (Denscombe 2010). This usually means the combined use of more than one method<sup>15</sup> (Punch 2009) but can equally be within methods, between sources and between researchers. In this study, credibility is assured by the number of participants and the fact that interviews were multiple and took place over an extended period of time. In doing so, the 'accuracy and stability' of interviewees' views over time was traced (Roulston 2010, p.87) and 'a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behaviour of those under scrutiny was constructed based on the contributions of a range of people' (Shenton 2004, p.66).

Additional considerations related to credibility within the thesis include the use of 'tactics to ensure honesty' (Shenton 2004, p.68); all participants were given opportunity to refuse information or withdraw at any point. During interviews it was also reiterated that there were no right or wrong answers (Shenton 2004) and that participants could speak freely. There were also

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<sup>15</sup> The term triangulation is deliberately avoided here. Triangles are themselves rigid shapes, so epistemologically do seem represent the seeking of a collective truth between the three vertices or edges of the shape. This does not sit well with the epistemological and methodological basis of this study.

opportunities for findings, or at least initial interpretations, to be checked with the participants themselves (Roulston 2010) when verbal summaries of the interviews were shared and clarified periodically. This ongoing discussion allowed for member checking. However, this too needed to be treated with care as the members, or participants, were not in the 'privileged position of being sole commentators on their actions' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007, p.202); the researcher's commentary arguably adds to the trustworthiness. Lastly, credibility was furthered by the use of researcher peer scrutiny during the time the study took place enabling ongoing reflectivity regarding the research design. This was primarily through conference and other presentations.

### **3.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with demonstrating that findings can be transferred to a wider group (Shenton 2004). Transferability is a form of external validation that can be problematic for any research focused on particular situations and contexts (Punch 2009). Given the constructionist epistemological stance of this study, it would be inappropriate to suggest that understandings of the phenomenon experienced by the participants can be generalised to others. The participants' understanding of the phenomenon (feedback) is an internal construction and is not necessarily an 'accurate representation of external reality' (Doolittle 2014, p.487); the thesis does not seek to find 'one' reality. Indeed, Shenton (2004) and Wainwright (1997) argue that the notion of being able to produce transferable results from this type of qualitative research is questionable.

It is however reasonable to suggest that these individual meanings, although unique, are of interest in their own right (Denscombe 2010) and also that even individual meanings are, at the very least, an example from a wider group; as such there could be transferable outcomes (Shenton 2004) that may resonate in other contexts. After all, the research design was aligned with what the participants would normally be experiencing as part of any ITE programme; the research did not reflect an artificial situation. Nevertheless, any claims need to be somewhat cautious.

It is therefore difficult for a researcher to establish how transferable findings are although, those who engage with the research can make a judgement in relation to their own context (Collier-

Reed, Ingerman and Berglund 2009). If the contexts are similar enough, it could be that findings would also be similar (Guba 1981). To assist with this, contextual information has been presented within the Literature Review allowing readers to assess how transferable claims may be.

In phenomenological research, transferability is certainly an area of difficulty. However, as Collier-Reed et al. (2009) state, trustworthiness 'is developed through consideration of where the boundaries are' while 'still retaining the relevance of the research outcome and staying true to the methodological underpinning' (p.12).

### **3.6.3 Dependability**

Dependability relates to reliability i.e. whether or not the same results would be obtained if the research was to be repeated in similar circumstances (Shenton 2004; Morrow 2005). As with transferability, this does cause tensions for the phenomenological researcher given the constructionist epistemology and therefore the concept of different individual realities at specific times (Guba 1981; Shenton 2004). As such, the term dependability is more appropriate than reliability for qualitative studies. Dependability is closely related to credibility as allowances for one will also serve the other (Shenton 2004).

The thesis discussed here makes use of different sources and the longitudinal nature necessitates a repetition of methods over time. The choice of artefacts and video within the methodology of this study also support dependability and credibility. By using both as interview prompts, discussions were more likely to be grounded in theory in use rather than espoused theory. In addition, these methods were initially scrutinised as part of a pilot project. Lastly, within this thesis, the methodological decisions have been justified in terms of design, implementation and operation (Shenton 2004) and an audit trail of research activities, emerging themes and data summaries have been kept for examination as necessary (Morrow 2005).

### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability includes the extent of researcher bias and subjectivity. However it does seem more or less impossible for qualitative research to be entirely objective given the need for the researcher to interpret the data (Denscombe 2010) and the human nature of the research

(Shenton 2004). Furthermore, the constructionist epistemology that underpins much qualitative research acknowledges that not only do participants have individual constructions of knowledge, so does the researcher and these cannot be suspended (Gelling 2010). This is particularly pertinent to phenomenology in that is viewed as interpretive and does not seek to find the one valid interpretation of the phenomenon but possible interpretations.

In relation to phenomenological research (and this thesis,) 'bracketing' out of the researcher's experiences, understanding and expectations (Creswell 2012) is suggested as one way to mitigate subjectivity. However, as has been discussed, the extent to which this is ever truly possible is open to debate given the constructionist epistemology. This study is aligned to hermeneutic phenomenology and, as such, does not consider bracketing to be reasonable or relevant. The thesis does though acknowledge (rather than deny or delete) the position of the researcher. Being clear about the beliefs of the researcher (Shenton 2004) further supports the view that the researcher's understanding cannot be separated from the study itself (Groenewald 2004). As Denscombe states 'the role of self in qualitative research is important' and to 'ignore it would be ill-advised.' (2010, p.303).

Of course, as with the other strategies, there will be significant overlap across the aspects of trustworthiness. Use of video and artefacts, audit trails and member checking will all support confirmability as well as other credibility, reliability and transferability.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the epistemological and methodological decisions and approaches that have informed the research. Using Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' (2005) analytic strata, epistemology, theory, approach, strategy and method have all been outlined and justified. Alongside this the decisions related to data collection and analysis have been shared including some of the ethical considerations. Finally, the degree of trustworthiness of the research has been analysed with reference to Guba's four criteria (1981).

The economies' thematic structure has also been introduced (the economies emerged from the data.) Each of the selected economies are now used to inform the first three analysis chapters: pedagogical, relational and moral which follow next. By interpreting the comments made by the participants in reference to their experiences of feedback, differing conceptions (or essences) associated with pedagogical, relational and moral economies are identified. The chapters that follow explore what these are and the variation between them across participants. Part of the variation includes whether conceptions were related to being a teacher, learner or both. As the economies (and indeed conceptions) are not necessarily discrete, there are occasions when examples from interviews are referred to more than once across the chapters.



# Chapter 4: Analysis 1 - Pedagogical Economies

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## **4.1 Introduction**

This analysis chapter deploys the economies metaphor outlined in earlier chapters by considering pedagogical economies. Variations of conceptions (or essences) within these pedagogical economies will be explored as part of the phenomenographic research approach. These variations have been identified through the use of the outcome matrix justified within the methodology and, within this chapter, are in reference to the first two research questions: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as a learner, and what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers? There will also be references to pedagogical themes explored within Chapter 7- Participant Stories. However, Chapter 7 is concerned with the development of understanding over time, rather than solely variation in essences of understanding, and deals with the third question: what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?

The economies metaphor represents feedback as a capital or symbolic resource that can be accumulated, exchanged and potentially result in gains. Pedagogical economies can therefore be seen as a currency of ideas or conceptions associated with learning and teaching. These can be developed over time, exchanged with others and often adapted for differing contexts. This is because, just as a currency is associated with a particular country, pedagogical economies are associated with a particular education context, environment or habitus. Too and Too (2000) argue that teaching and learning can be viewed as a commodity, and effectively an exchange between teacher and learner, representing it as a give and take scenario: 'the teacher gives something of value- a body of knowledge, a set of skills, a way of thinking, of living, and so on-in return for which the student renders some kind of payment, perhaps a salary, a gift or gratitude' (p.7). Luke (2010) illustrates this in reference to literacy education identifying it as not only a cultural exchange but increasingly a commodity exchange carrying 'rewards that are often inaccessible and invisible' (Luke 2010, p.68). For student teachers, not only does the metaphor of a commodity exchange carry the symbolic reward of success, but exchanges take place in multiple ways: tutor and student teacher, mentor and student teacher, class teacher and student teacher, student teacher and student teacher and lastly student teacher and pupil. This can be

expanded even further to include the student teachers' pre-course experiences of learning, all of which are likely to include ideas about further pedagogic exchange. Learning about learning is likely to have involved multiple exchanges over time.

The pedagogical economies are therefore relevant to *what* is exchanged e.g. learning, but also *how* it is exchanged. As the introduction discussed, neo-liberalism has encouraged a consumer led, target based approach to any market, including education. Changes in Higher Education over the last decade or so illustrate this powerfully with reference to fees, credit value and outcomes. Here we see the trappings of an economic metaphor attributed to pedagogy, as learning of itself, does not necessarily need to be seen as quantifiable or accountable, although of course they are inexplicitly linked in today's context. Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) argue that the performativity agenda has colonized economic reasoning to learning and therefore using an economic metaphor could be viewed as particularly contentious given that educational policy, practice and interventions can be conceptualised in terms of efficiency, outcomes and essentially value for money. However, this chapter is using the metaphor as a critical conscious tool rather than arguing for a business based economic approach to learning. As Ball states 'education policy is increasingly thought about...within the context of the 'pressures' and requirements of globalisation and within a particular framework of political rationality' resulting in 'global policy speak' which effects the 'flow of policy discourse' (Ball 2017, p.2). Furthermore, as Thompson (2015) states, this approach is increasingly conceptualising learning as a 'product[s]' that 'carry cost-benefit considerations' (p.660). This in turn leads to an evolving economic conceptualisation of learning and education. Pedagogy can therefore be viewed, judged and measured in economic terms and it can also be read in terms of an economic metaphor.

This chapter explore how feedback can be conceptualised through a pedagogical economic lens and also examines the variation of understanding evident between the participants. Furthermore, as outlined in the methodology, this chapter will include a comparison between and across educational discourse and the data in order to outline themes.<sup>16</sup> This approach is

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<sup>16</sup> It is pertinent to remember how Gee (2015b) distinguished between discourse (lower case d) and Discourse (upper case D) to represent firstly language in use and secondly the social norms, roles, identities, actions, practices and

particular to this analysis chapter. The reason for this is that pedagogical ideas are highly likely to have been influenced by the educational discourses the student teachers will have, by necessity, been exposed to within Initial Teacher Education. The other economies (moral and relational) may also have been exchanged within the programme but these are likely to have been much more implicit. Pedagogical theory, practice and policy are all explicitly covered within both academic and practice based content on an ITE programme, so it is a little naïve to pretend otherwise. For this reason, the chapter will essentially examine the pedagogical ideas (as a currency in the sense of economies) and how these relate to educational discourses around feedback. These discourses are the themes used to structure the following discussion. Firstly, the chapter will discuss how pedagogical discourse is associated with feedback.

## **4.2 Pedagogical Discourse and Feedback**

In order to explore the areas outlined, this chapter will refer to some of the existing pedagogical discourses around feedback. Using these discourses is significant for this chapter given that the participants cannot avoid pedagogical discourses as student teachers engaged in a teacher education programme. It is highly likely that such exposure has influenced their own understanding of how feedback and pedagogy interrelate. To be clear though, this chapter is not necessarily buying into the discourses referred to but rather using them for comparative purposes.

Pedagogical discourse is defined as ‘the operation of a set of principles by which persons are apprenticed into ways of working valued in a culture’ (Christie 1995, p.221). Those apprenticed ‘both participate in the construction of the discourse... [and] are shaped by it’ (Christie 1995, p.221). In other words, pedagogical discourse is much more than language in use but refers to Discourse with a capital D (Gee 2015b). Bernstein (2004) theorised pedagogical discourse as the production (and reproduction) of what is seen as legitimate, normalised, and often tacit,

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conventions that the language exists within. Although the lower case spelling is used within this chapter, it represents both discourse and Discourse.

knowledge which is privileged by those who are perceived to have power (Bernstein 2004; see also Winter and Linehan 2014). If we apply this to teacher education, certain pedagogical discourses will be legitimised as they are held by those in power (mentors and tutors) who therefore influence the reproduction of the discourses within the student teachers. In addition, other forms of power exist, within legislation, standards and inspection criteria. These will further reinforce what is viewed as pedagogically appropriate and valued. Indeed, the legitimisation of discourses means they become currency to be valued and exchanged within the economic metaphor. Student teachers are shaped by the current discourses around feedback in terms of their thinking and practice. They will accumulate, exchange and trade the values, professional norms, policies and practices associated with the discourses and subsequently add to the discourse. Furthermore, given the pedagogical focus of teacher educators, part of the content of student teachers' education is highly likely to include exploration and reflection in relation to these discourses. These understandings will be further reinforced within placement, where a translation of these discourses into practice is further expected and therefore legitimized and normalised.

It is highly unlikely that student teachers' understanding of feedback will exist in a vacuum in relation to the accepted pedagogical discourses within Initial Teacher Education. For this reason, the following chapter will seek to explore links between the interview data / outcome matrix and 'accepted' pedagogical discourses of feedback. The term accepted is used loosely here as discourses are moveable and sometimes transient. Furthermore, the notion of a pedagogical discourse usually suggests a 'right approach' to learning; a discourse rather than multiple discourses, a further example of the often binary choices presented as good or bad practice. Views of learning and feedback need not be so distinct and fixed; practice can reveal more than one discourse or indeed move between them. This section will therefore also highlight examples of multiple discourses inhabited/espoused by participants, as will the case study chapter which discusses how conceptions change over time. The data has therefore been analysed and aligned with particular existing discourses around feedback: feedback as a deficit, feedback as a gift, feedback as a cycle, feedback as opening the door, feedback as learnacy and feedback as an acronym.

### **4.3 Discourse 1- Feedback as a Deficit**

The first theme that emerged from the data aligned with the discourse: feedback as deficit, or, to be more exact, feedback to close a perceived deficit in the learner. Although sometimes implicit, several participants suggested that the role of feedback was to 'fix' or close a gap in learning; this was both in their role as learner and teacher. Sometimes the terms goals or steps were used but essentially these were referring to a deficit that needed to be remedied.

As a learner, Lilly stated that she felt the purpose of feedback was related to progression so the targets were very important. Here we can see value being attributed to a particular discourse. Lilly uses the word weakness to imply the deficit identified and also stated that engaging with the identified deficit made the difference; gaps in learning are weaknesses that require fixing by both learner and teacher.

*Lilly: I think it is a key aspect within progression because I think if I was to hand in that piece of work and I were to get no feedback back, and then I went to hand in another piece of work, I wouldn't have known where to kind of improve because I'd have no indication on where my strengths were or where my weaknesses lie, and so how am I meant to kind of progress forward? (Interview 3)*

Lilly recognises what Hattie states are the key feedback questions 'where am I going, how am I going, where to next' (2009, p.177; see also, Sadler 1989). Both sources link to the discourse of 'closing the gap' which developed from the work of Ramaprasad (1983). Given that closing the gap is a metaphor borrowed from engineering heating systems where feedback is 'the discrepancy between the current state and the desired state,' and is only relevant if there is 'a mechanism within the feedback loop to bring the current state closer to the desired state' (William 2011, p.121), there is already a problematic disconnect with reducing something as complex as feedback to a mechanical procedure. It assumes that feedback is part of a linear process; once feedback is provided, the learning step is completed and the learner is ready for the next stage of learning. As will be explored in this and other chapters, feedback is far from linear but is dynamic, fluid with predicted and unpredicted consequences. Another potential difficulty is that more often than not the deficit (or gap) is identified by another, therefore

implicitly supporting a teacher-centric view of feedback. Deficits identified by the learner may well be more relevant.

Evie's comments suggest that she understood the purpose of feedback as identifying a weakness or lack. Her experience of feedback as a learner in an international setting was frustrating as it did not highlight the next step. This indicates how pedagogical economies are socially and culturally situated; different contexts accumulate, distribute, value and exchange different pedagogical discourses.

*Evie: we didn't receive any feedback until it was submitted, in which we got a short sort of few sentences of verbal feedback with our grade saying 'we like that you, we thought it was an interesting topic and your writing was cohesive as a group' but it wasn't extensive at all...we didn't get anything to sort of work towards,...it was generally fair feedback, what you did well, what you could've, which areas let you down basically, but again it wasn't sort of next steps... so it was less maybe like developmental.(Interview 5)*

Similarly, when Evie described her experience as a teacher, she stated:

*Evie: then I also think it's important that the children know where they are and how they can improve, because that's so frustrating to want to be progressing but not knowing how to sort of, how to get there next. (Interview 5)*

In both of her roles, Evie implies the learners are reliant on the teacher/tutor identifying both the gap and action, rather than the learner doing it themselves. This is in contrast to much of the literature that applies Ramaprasad (1983) and Sadler's (1989) gap analogy to the learner i.e. the learner identifies and closes the gap (Clarke 2003; Hattie and Clarke 2018; Savvidou 2018). Zhang and Zheng (2018) propose a slightly different model where responsibilities are shared between learner and teacher: teachers identify the deficit, provide feedback to the learner and then encourage learners to close the gap. This better represents the conceptions expressed by Evie and other participants when they describe their actions as a teacher. Having said this, maybe the distinction between teacher versus learner-centricity in relation to the deficit is another of the false oppositions exemplified within the introduction, for example, teacher-centricity = bad, learner-centricity = good. The positioning of conceptions as a dichotomy is not always helpful.

Indeed, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that the most effective feedback has both teacher and learner goals in agreement.

The identification of the teacher's role within the idea of deficit may be a consequence of the way that 'closing the gap' has become central to educational policy over the last fifteen years. In economic terms (metaphorically at least,) this has become a valued currency repeatedly exchanged through policy and practice. Understanding feedback as closing a learning gap has had significant influence across both the Higher Education and school sectors (Clarke 2003; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Hattie 2009; Wiliam 2011; Clarke 2014; Evans 2016; Hattie and Clarke 2018) but, more than this, the notion of closing a broader achievement gap has infiltrated and become invested into wider educational policy and practice. Schools are encouraged to identify and close the gap between different groups of learners and are judged (by Ofsted) on their ability to do so (Laws 2013; Rea, Hill and Dunford 2013; Wilson 2014; Andrews, Robinson and Hutchinson 2017); closing the gap has value and indeed can be profited from. In this way, the deficit discourse has grown beyond feedback to become central to a teacher's and school's purpose and is seen as a measure of effectiveness. As part of this, identified published strategies support the notion that the deficit is fixable and within the power of the teacher/school (Sharples et al. 2011). This ignores some of the social and political bases for the 'deficit' also reducing the problem to a series of strategies. The policy rhetoric supports the view that learning is focused on identifying and fixing deficits in learners with key strategies embodying a simplified, quick fix approach. This is a further example of how pedagogical economies are traded or transferred across, or between, sectors and from principles to practicalities.

In contrast to Evie, Nick was a participant who demonstrated a critical awareness of the deficit discourse proposed within this section. As a teacher, Nick did imply a deficit but was more specific about the size of the identified learning gap needed for feedback to be effective. He critiqued school policy that encouraged teachers to identify all areas that needed improving as he felt this was not pedagogically appropriate. He suggests the need for the gap to be within Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (McLeaod 2012); 'close [ing] the gap between what he or she can already do unaided and the higher demands of a particular ... task' (Chung and Yuen 2011, p.23-24). His critique can also be applied to the discourse of schools fixing wider achievement gaps.



*Nick: But like, to get a solid page of orange [highlighting to indicate errors] just can't be beneficial for anyone. And it doesn't pinpoint the most key elements. .... And we have to like follow the set line of progression and what's the next steps and things. But it gives, as a teacher, it gives you that opportunity to build those building blocks and if you're going to target absolutely everything.... it's too far ahead for them to even understand. (Interview 5)*

William (2011) supports Nick's comments by stating that goals need to be 'within reach' but also with a 'degree of challenge' (p.150). If the deficit selected is beyond learner reach, students are likely to disengage. Nick implies this when he refers to the page of highlighted errors. Similarly, Lottie stated that as a teacher, '*you just pick out one thing it is small manageable target for them to achieve within the week or a day*' (Interview 4). Of course, if the teacher (rather than learner) identifies the gap, no matter how appropriate it is, it is possibly less likely to be engaged with anyway. Indeed, using a Lacanian perspective, the deficit model represents a form of 'lack' a where subjects strive to achieve the unobtainable; an illusionary promise (Clarke 2015) which is cause of anxiety in itself. The likelihood of achievement would therefore correlate with the consequential anxiety. In summary, identifying a deficit, or gap, reinforces an ideal which carries value and currency. The teacher's role as the one who pinpoints the deficit is effectively a vehicle for exchanging this ideal of a learner.

A teacher-centric model of feedback is also apparent within the second discourse: feedback as a gift.

#### **4.4 Discourse 2- Feedback as a Gift**

Askew and Lodge (2000) acknowledge that conceptualising feedback as a gift tends to be the dominant discourse in education. Unsurprisingly then, there is more evidence of this discourse than any other in the data collected, particularly during the early stages of the project. Daisy was fairly explicit in her view of the teacher as a bestower of the gift of feedback. As a learner, within the context of university, Daisy saw the teacher's (or tutor's) role as one of direction; the teacher was the one who *knew* and this knowledge was *gifted* to the one who did not know.

*Daisy: I think most of the feedback role was with the tutor here because he was more knowledgeable than me on the basis of this, so he could tell me what I needed to do, and what I'd done so far (Interview 3)*

Her comments are supported by Evans (2013) who associates gifting feedback with the teacher as expert who passes on information to a passive recipient, largely through telling or correction. Daisy also implied she had a similar view within the school context, when she was in the role of the teacher. She used this to illustrate why peer feedback was challenging for her because she did not feel more knowledgeable. Her comments further imply that feedback was gifted from the knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable. Gifting is itself an exchange with economic connotations.

*Daisy: Because in a teaching situation I am the expert, so I know the correct answer in most cases, especially because I've done Key Stage One, they haven't really asked me many things that I don't know the answer to. So, like when I'm doing maths questions I can give them feedback knowing that I know the answer. Whereas in a peer situation I don't know the best way so it's more difficult to tell people what to do. (Interview 5)*

Daisy supports a view of learning as transmission which Esterhazy (2018) argues is prevalent in education. Transmission implies that knowledge is exchanged from one to another, reflecting the analogy of feedback as a gift and indeed the metaphor of a pedagogical economy. If feedback as a gift is as prevalent as Esterhazy (2018) states, then Daisy would have experienced a transmissive approach in her pre-course schooling; Carless argues students' preferences (and indeed conceptions) of feedback are often because of their previous experience where they have developed 'limited absolutist beliefs about knowledge' (Carless and Boud 2018, p.1316) supporting Lortie (1975). The same appears to be true of Daisy. The gift is a discourse that she has invested in because the conception has been distributed across education sectors and her experiences of them.

There is further evidence of feedback as giving from other participants. Indeed, Lilly uses the term '*the process of giving*' to describe feedback (Interview 6) which seems to fully represent feedback as a gift. Lottie described how she was responsible for identifying one area of

improvement 'I just pick out one thing to improve and I do that every day of the week if I can or if they've improved I pick something else for them to improve on' (Interview 4).

As a teacher, Eleanor also revealed a transmissive view of feedback but by the end of the project she had reflected upon this and recognised some of the issues with conceptualising feedback this way. Her understanding had become more nuanced.

*Eleanor: I think what I've realised is, I maybe took it for granted that if you put feedback in a book for a Year 2 or any student, as long as you wrote it in a language they could understand, they would get it. But, I'd be disinclined now to put feedback in any books unless I was writing it next to the child and saying, 'Right, in the next lesson you need to do this. I'm putting this here to remind you.'* (Interview 6)

This implies that Eleanor originally viewed the giving of feedback as more valuable than the receiving of feedback by the pupils. She is describing a model of feedback where the teacher knows what the other needs to do as if it is a prescription issued by an expert, or a currency transferred between accounts. The tutor effectively prescribes what to do and checks the students have done it.

Although there is still evidence that Eleanor still conceptualised feedback as a gift (in that it is the teacher's message that needs to be conveyed clearly), she is also now implying a view that takes greater account of how the learner interprets and acts upon the feedback. In this way, Eleanor's emerging understanding does not fully reflect the 'gift' model as there is a difference between the 'learner and what is to be learned' (Askew and Lodge 2000, p.5). Eleanor is both gifting the feedback and is also aware that the learner is not necessarily passive. She has reflected on the connotations of feedback as a gift in that the implied teacher-centricity results in a degree of complacency i.e. there is nothing wrong with the feedback, it is how it is received that is the problem. As Molloy and Boud put it, 'if only students would listen more attentively then all would be well' (2013, p.15). Encouragingly, Eleanor's understanding of feedback as a gift has become more nuanced.

As Chapter 5 will discuss, receiving feedback can carry an emotional dimension. Evie discussed how she felt as a learner when she received, what she perceived to be, negative feedback from her mentor.

*Evie: [I am thinking] 'Oh god no don't tell me.' Yeah definitely, and I think I'd say...I'd jump in before they said anything and say, 'look I'm really sorry it was not planned well enough, I know that'. (Interview 3)*

This is an interesting account of how she felt in that she described how she would be apologetic to the mentor and how she ideally wanted to avoid hearing the feedback altogether. The emotionally loaded nature of Evie's comments imply that not only would the mentor transfer knowledge (albeit knowledge that Evie had already recognised) but also that the mentor held power in the relationship. The implicit teacher-centricity within the 'gifting' of feedback encourages and endorses a differential in power between teacher and learner and, as such, it is therefore logical that feedback carries much more emotional weight. If we continue this argument, it stands to reason that if feedback is perceived as a gift, the judgment of the knowledgeable and powerful teacher is much more likely to affect the identity and self-perception of the learner who is viewed to be passive and inexperienced. In support, Askew and Lodge (2000) recognise that within the gift discourse, there is little recognition of social and emotional factors and that communication is largely one way. Evie is implying that she was waiting in judgment for the knowledgeable other to pass sentence. She wanted to admit her crime early to limit the discussion.

The third discourse is based on formative and cyclical feedback.

### **4.5 Discourse 3 – Feedback as a Cycle**

As teachers, many of the participants indicated an understanding of feedback as a consequence based cycle, reflecting some of the meaning of formative assessment outlined in the Literature Review. As a teacher, Eleanor conceptualized feedback as a joint dialogue where gaps were identified and closed in an ongoing cyclical (or looped) manner. She felt that the learner had to have a voice in this process.

*Eleanor: it's about ... taking the time to make sure that the feedback has been understood, and also exactly what the next step should be, and involving the learner in those next steps so that they come up with a plan... You come up with a plan together rather than just going 'right there you go, there's your feedback, crack on'... it's more dialogic. .... it's a cycle..... like a hamster wheel (Interview 3).*

Lilly too used a similar metaphor to describe feedback towards the end of the project

*Lilly: it's not... about that linear progress. It's more ... a continuum, that circle or a triangle or whatever you want to do, it's just like a continuous thing, like a ball that won't stop rolling sort of thing (Interview 6).*

Many of the participants unpicked the cycle by linking feedback to action, in other words, feedback needed to have a consequence. These comments were often developed from the deficit notion of next steps or targets whereby a gap was identified but it was necessary that this was actioned before another gap could be chosen. As such, feedback led to action which led to feedback; feedback was a cycle. Although literature often presents single models of feedback, here we see that the 'gap' and 'cycle' conceptions existed alongside each other.

As a learner, Daisy felt that written comments were more useful than a mark because they indicated next steps. She implied that using the information to feed forward was the key purpose of feedback.

*Daisy: I think you should use it to inform future because otherwise there's no real point in getting it if you don't use it (Interview 3)*

Lilly was also clear that the purpose of feedback was related to progression so the targets were very important. She clarified this by saying that the learner's interaction with the targets /identified gaps was the key aspect.

*Lilly: I think that is not the feedback that enables the progression, it is like your interaction with it. (Interview 3)*

Both Lilly and Daisy are conceptualising feedback as formative with the consequential action being a significant part of the cyclical process. This may represent a learner-centric model of feedback, but actioning feedback could also be a consequence of teacher-centric models of

feedback as a gift or telling as well. Although if, as Carless and Boud (2018) suggest, a learner-centric model encourages the learner to direct learning, make sense of the feedback and actually construct knowledge then it is reasonable to conclude that a teacher directed feedback cycle will not be as successful.

It is the presence of action that allows feedback to be seen as a cycle. Without it, feedback is a linear process resulting in merely 'dangling data' (Sadler 1989, p.121) with no consequence. The conceptualisation of feedback as a cyclical consequence based process is a strong feature of the formative assessment discourse (William 2006) prevalent in education. Key educationalists within this discourse claim that feedback only serves its purpose if it is a circular process that includes change. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006, p.213) state that the feedback cycle should 'help students to recognise the next steps in learning and how to take them, both during production and in relation to the next [learning].' Hattie (2009) agrees describing the subsequent action from feedback as key, while Kahu (2008), citing Gibbs and Simpson (2004), affirm 'feedback must be attended to' (p.192). Indeed, some would argue that it is the action that makes feedback feedback (Ramaprasad 1983; Sadler 1989; Boud and Molloy 2013; Esterhazy 2018) as it allows the cycle to be closed before it can start again (Reinholz 2016).

As a teacher, Nick stated that he valued verbal feedback as it allowed for more immediate action or consequence.

*Nick: I think on a Friday in particular if you're wanting them to respond to your marking it needs to be verbal then and there because come the Monday sometimes they're like I don't remember what the learning objective was for that lesson. (Interview 2)*

Evie too discussed how, as a teacher, it was important for feedback to be immediate implying the closure of the cycle. She implied that this needed to be as soon as possible and before further misconceptions arose. For this reason, she gave a lot of feedback mid lesson to the children.

*Evie: it doesn't serve much purpose to wait to the end of the lesson because I want the work to be good, kind of by the end of the lesson ... it is better to give that sort of feedback immediately so that they could make the corrections themselves then and there. (Interview 2)*

This again represents a formative cyclical view of feedback with an emphasis on immediate action. Evie's comments also echo Hattie and Clarke's assertion that 'feedback thrives on errors and misconceptions' (2018, p.5). Evie was effectively observing errors and misconceptions and using feedback to resolve these as soon as possible before moving on; learning and indeed feedback were taking place in cycles. Lilly was also keen to emphasise the formative action that had resulted from feedback she had given to pupils in school.

*Lilly: it's showing how the use of feedback there had enabled the child to revisit and improve upon a mistake...About actually acting upon feedback to actually make an improvement (Interview 5)*

Daisy went further articulating how she felt feedback fed into action which then provided further feedback. Here she explicitly stated that feedback was circular and never ending process.

*Daisy: it's just a bit of a waste of your time if you spent all this time marking these books and then not actually getting anything from it so....*

*...I think like a circle, you know like the recycling symbol with the arrows...Yes because they would, the piece of work or whatever they're doing would be at the top and then feedback would be moving round but then also feedback into either the same piece of work to edit it or a new one, so it's sort of like a cycle.*

*Interviewer: So does that cycle stop?*

*Daisy I don't think so because even though say we moved on [to another lesson] it's the same, just the same cycle. (Interview 6)*

Towards the end of the project there was an indication of Nick's critical thinking in terms of school practice which he felt did not support a formative view of feedback.

*Nick: We'd have marking sessions after school every day till about six o'clock where we're just sit and mark together and discuss where we're going to take this child and things like that. You're like surely there's something off here, surely, we should be saying this is what the class needs and then going in-depth of how we're going to plan and build that knowledge when actually, they're just like right onto the next thing. (Interview 4)*

For Nick, teachers can give lip service to the feedback cycle by applying it superficially, at speed and without the necessary action. Nick argues that to complete the cycle fully, targets need to be addressed fully and in depth. Hattie and Clarke (2018) would agree that student work provides feedback for teachers arguing that it provides an influential model for the learners; 'teachers who react to feedback about their teaching show the students the power of feedback. They show they have listened, and thus changed, modified or re-taught' (Hattie and Clarke 2018, p.169). Here we see the economic metaphor again as the value of feedback itself is transferred through the modelling of legitimised practice.

Eleanor implied a conception well aligned to Hattie and Clarke's (2018) view that the cycle is dynamic and enabled both learners and teachers to gain from the process by evaluating performance and actioning next steps.

*Eleanor It is that planning and assessment loop, but there are loops back... I don't know whether they'd go within the circle....so a loop from one point in the cycle from the pupil. You almost need a circle within a circle with links between, I suppose. but then, you're also feeding back at that point to them, and they've also got to feed across from your teaching at the beginning. Yeah, it is complicated, but it doesn't feel complicated when it works. It just feels like a flow, I suppose. (Interview 6)*

Eleanor's understanding is supported by Askew and Lodge (2000) who describe 'loops connecting the participants' (p.7). According to Eleanor, the learner also constructs feedback for the teacher and this was useful to her when she was in the teacher role. Hattie (2009) argues that pupil to teacher feedback is actually the most useful feedback in the classroom, as it 'helps make learning visible' (p.174). For Eleanor, the feedback cycles were fluid and complex going from learner to teacher and teacher to learner representing an ongoing trading of feedback and action between everyone in exchange.

There was little variation amongst the participants regarding the feedback cycle. All of them conceptualised effective feedback as feedback that is actioned (Sadler 1989; Wiliam 2011; Clarke 2014) in order to form a cycle. Given the prevalence of the formative assessment discourse, this is not surprising. Indeed, three of the four subsections of Teacher Standard (TS) 6: Monitoring



and Assessment (DfE 2012) imply a cyclical process where ‘formative assessment is used’ to ‘set targets, and plan subsequent lessons’ and teachers need to ‘encourage pupils to respond’ to feedback’ (p.12). TS6 is a Standard that student teachers will need to evidence if they are to achieve Qualified Teacher Status. The linking of a feedback (and assessment) cycle discourse to what is essentially a performativity measure makes the discourse very likely to be transferred to understanding and practice. After all, if you do not ‘buy into’ the discourse, even superficially, you do not qualify as a teacher. Metaphorically, the formative discourse is a powerful part of pedagogical economies capable of resulting in professional profit or penalty. A further complication of the formative cycle being implicit within the Standards is that it reinforces a teacher-centric view of feedback. The Standard implies it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure the cycle is completed, not the learner’s and the standards agenda ensures that it is teachers, not learners, who are judged on how formative feedback is. This gives the discourse further value for the teacher. Furthermore, the feedback cycle model implies never ending ‘on-going improvement’ (Wiliam 2006, p.283). Of course, it is questionable whether never ending improvement is possible, given that improvement is often judged by performance standards. There are echoes here of Michael Gove’s much ridiculed statement that all schools should exceed the national average (Parliament House of Commons 2012). Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the participants were supportive of the feedback as a cycle discourse and indicated that, as teachers, they accepted they were responsible for this whilst also showing recognition of the learner’s role in the completion of the cycle. This partly links to the next discourse to be discussed: feedback as opening the door.

#### **4.6 Discourse 4 – Feedback as Opening the Door (Scaffolding)**

Several participants described a model of feedback where the teacher had a responsibility to support the learner in both the receiving and engaging with feedback. As a learner, Lilly described a model of feedback where the tutor opened the door for the learner, i.e. scaffolded them towards completing the feedback cycle.

*Lilly: ...like the feedback is there but then like that marker has open[ed] the door but then you have to like walk through it.... so the marker, so*

*the person, like the teacher figure has put on a role in kind of creating that feedback, making it specific, making sure it is not disheartening ... (Interview 3).*

Similarly, Nick articulated a model of feedback where the teacher's responsibility was to scaffold the learner's engagement with the feedback in order that the learner could complete their role in engaging with the feedback.

*Nick: I think it lies in both hands because there's only so much that a teacher can do. I think it's important that the teacher gives positive and constructive feedback to children. ... it's important to encourage them to engage (Interview 1).*

Both of these examples appear, at first sight anyway, to align with the scaffolding learning discourse rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. Here an 'other' provides 'temporary supporting structures to assist learners to develop new understandings, new concepts, and new abilities' (Hammond and Gibbons 2005, p.8; see also Malik 2017) within the learner's zone of proximal development (Malik 2017). Crucially, just as scaffolding is withdrawn from a building when it can stand independently, so should scaffolding be withdrawn when the learner can tackle the task, concept or understanding independently (Hammond and Gibbons 2005). Scaffolding should therefore assist the learner in becoming autonomous. Additionally Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon (2011) and Boud and Molloy (2013) both state that feedback is a tool for scaffolding learner dispositions such as self-regulated learning and as such position feedback as a learner-centric scaffolding process. However, neither Nick nor Lilly are implying such a learner-centric model, as the scaffolding is concerned with the learner responding to the teacher's feedback rather than learning how to regulate themselves.

Beaumont, O'Doherty and Shannon claim that students see feedback as effective when feedback is:

guidance that provides not only a ...judgement of performance, but support through opportunities for a discussion which identifies areas of improvement and scaffolds the student to help achieve higher grades (2011, p.674).

Such a model of feedback as a mechanism to scaffold learning is not wholly learner-centric as the teacher remains in control. We can infer similar conceptions within Anthony's comments.

*Anthony: I think both to be honest; they're [the learners] primarily responsible but you as the teacher have to be responsible as well to make sure that they are doing it ... So it's just you need to be constantly on it to make sure they're doing it and it's your responsibility to make sure you're checking that they're doing it and if not you need to then step in and find out why not and make sure that they do it (Interview 1).*

Anthony felt that teachers had a responsibility to ensure that children responded to feedback but implied this was to check rather than encourage independence; the teachers choose the feedback and then monitor the completion of the feedback cycle rather than a learner-centric model, where learning is co-constructed between learner and teacher. Anthony's comments do not fully support the Vygotskian point of view and so represent a part-exchange or transfer within the economies. He is describing a model of knowledge that is constructed by the teacher, transferred to the learner and then regulated and accounted for by the teacher. For Anthony, the scaffolding was to make transmission more effective. Verenikina (2004, p.5) states that scaffolding discourse has evolved to become 'an umbrella term for any kind of teacher support' and is often merely 'a form of direct instruction' acting in opposition to co-construction of knowledge within student-centred activities (p.5). It can be argued that this evolution is what is being evidenced by the participants who imply that scaffolding the learners is a form of valued compliance; the teacher's role is one of transaction using feedback to ensure the 'currency' is transferred, and responded to, by the learner.

Furthermore, the participants valued dialogue as a scaffolding feedback strategy. This was evident in Nick's description of giving verbal feedback.

*Nick: So, I was just trying to explain it to the child and they just weren't understanding ... I sat down and I talked through the feedback with the child so it meant that they were getting verbal feedback and ...say let's just chat about your work sort of thing they became more receptive to understanding what I was trying to say. (Interview 4)*

Although Nick is implying the new understanding was rather enforced, and led by the teacher, he recognises the role of oral language in allowing the knowledge to be received. Comments made by Lilly (as both learner and teacher) support this further.

*Lilly: (as a learner) I think it's because you're like interacting with the person, like you can see their manner, their facial expression. I don't know. It's like it has more than just yourself reading it. You can ask questions, you can gain that immediate kind of acknowledgment of something if you're unsure of... ... I would much rather have had a conversation with someone as a feedback .... I can piece it together a bit more ... That helps you to gain a deeper understanding than than like if you get written feedback, definitely (Interview 4).*

*Lilly: (as a teacher) if they've [the children] shown not secure understanding at all within their work, they need to have like that again, like that two-way thing but you can only get that during a face-to-face conversation with someone (Interview 4).*

These comments imply another link feedback as scaffolding. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) and Hammond and Gibbons (2005) argue that language has a crucial role in scaffolding. The participants support this in two ways.

Firstly, the participants suggest that verbal feedback allows for clarity of the feedback as it provides opportunity to rephrase or respond to further questions. In other words language scaffolds the learner's understanding of the feedback message. Feedback messages can be difficult to interpret and understand (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Hattie and Clarke 2018) so learners do need to actively construct their own understanding of them. Dialogue is recognised as being key to this; feedback 'involves provision of comments and suggestions to enable students to make their own revisions' but it is 'dialogue [that] helps students to gain new understandings' (Evans 2013, p.71). Skovholt (2018) points out however that classroom feedback discussions often simply reflect the teacher's agenda rather than taking account of and building upon the student's knowledge. Rather than the learner actively constructing their own meaning, dialogue can allow for the absorption of the teacher's own meaning. In this regard, although the scaffolding discourse (and indeed the comments of many of the participants) suggests a balance of power between teacher and pupil, in truth this may not be the case or even realistically

possible. Feedback is chosen by the *expert* (i.e. teacher) to support their own agenda, student contributions are not always fully developed (Skovholt 2018) and discussion is often related to clarity of the teacher's message. As such, teachers are in fact using language to scaffold the learner's understanding of a *gifted* message. Indeed, the participants indicate that oral language allows for a smoother transfer for the message. Askew and Lodge agree stating 'power still resides with the teacher...because the agenda for the feedback is decided by them' (2000, p.10).

Secondly, as feedback carries a potential emotional impact (Pekrun et al. 2002; Eva et al. 2012) the participants felt that dialogue allowed for a softening of the potential upset. Lilly implies that if there was less emotional consequence, feedback was more likely to be engaged with. As such the verbal feedback scaffolded the learner to engage as they were less likely to be emotionally distracted. The participants felt therefore that dialogue aided the ability of feedback to scaffold, as it allowed learners to receive messages, which can be difficult (or uncomfortable) to understand and process the key ideas (Askew and Lodge 2000).

#### **4.7 Discourse 5 – Feedback as Learnacy**

The next section of this chapter is focused on a generally more learner-centric conception of feedback. This is often referred to as 'learnacy' (Butler and Winne 1995) synthesising conceptions related to self-regulation, self-efficacy and autonomy where the learner holds an active role. Early in the project there was evidence of some participants becoming aware of the value of learner-centricity, and the associated roles and responsibilities of the learner, and were also beginning to grapple with perceived contradictions with this model when they were in the role of teacher. Understanding differed according to the role the participant was inhabiting.

*Lilly: I want to say that the child does have their own responsibility in it, but then how do they develop that responsibility? Is that for the teacher? I guess to some degree it is... I think you can still try and encourage but then again, it's hard because there comes to a point where, like I said, only so much a teacher can do. (Interview 1)*

This indicates that, within school, Lilly recognised the responsibility of the learner in the feedback process but was unsure of how this influenced the role of the teacher. However, as a learner in Higher Education, Lilly felt that learners developed a greater responsibility as they got older, implying a developmental view of feedback where the learner-centric currency differed according to the sector.

*Lilly: I do think that changes when you get older. You get to a certain age you're at the point where you make your own decisions and there's only so much a teacher can do. (Interview 1)*

Similarly, Lottie stated that primary teachers had a greater responsibility to ensure the learners engaged with the feedback but this role was reduced as learners matured.

*Lottie: In primary school ... I suppose we're teaching them to kind of take in feedback I guess... So I think like the level of taking responsibility and your independence for learning kind of gradually becomes more and more as the years go by.... so as a teacher I'm doing more than just giving feedback. (Interview 3)*

Both Lottie and Lilly suggest that, in terms of responding to feedback, learners are central in Higher Education, but that in primary schools the teachers remain more significant. Rather than necessarily implying a development of roles and responsibilities, this distinction can be attributed to the unique dual roles of the participants. In other words, when they are in the role of learner, they are responsible, when they are the teacher, they are responsible too. Maybe the participant's view of the feedback process will always be more significantly influenced by their own relational perspective of what is happening, particularly at this stage of the project when their different identities are still developing. The focus on the self may therefore reflect the participants' egocentrism although could also reflect the increased responsibilities of university students in comparison to learners in school. It appears that the pedagogic economies are contextual and differ according to the role inhabited.

Furthermore, Eleanor felt that a more learner-centric view of feedback made the process less emotionally challenging.

*Eleanor: if you can get them to verbalise, to really look at their work in comparison to the success criteria ... then they're more likely to take it on board, they feel some ownership of it and it feels less critical (Interview 4).*

The softening of emotional impact is a result of the less hierarchical power dynamic between teacher and learner when roles and responsibilities are shared. Theoretically a more learner-centric model does not view the judgment of the teacher as the only 'truth;' the teacher's view is not the only valued currency. However, given the highly institutionalised and hierarchical nature of education, it is difficult to see how this would transfer more widely into reality.

Evie indicated that the learner-centric view of feedback was most prized, reflecting the work of others (Sadler 1989). To Evie, this was because there were knock on implications in terms of confidence and motivation.

*Evie: I think that's the, that's the kind of, almost like the best... form of feedback that you can get when .... if they can come to it on their own then they can feel prouder of it and if you can say well look, you did that on your own that's great, you must be really proud of yourself .....then it's so much more rewarding when they actually do get there by themselves and you can tell that they're chuffed and then that almost gives them the confidence. (Interview 4)*

Evie suggests that it is important that learners (in the school context at least) are able to be autonomous and independent, identifying and acting upon feedback for themselves. This more learner-centric model of feedback links to a number of concepts that can be viewed as part of 'learnacy,' generally positioned within the formative assessment discourse. Learnacy (Butler and Winne 1995) includes meta-learning, or learning about learning and aims to develop autonomous learners who have ownership of the learning process. Learning is positioned as dynamic and equitable with both learner and teacher learning through shared interaction, experience and dialogue (Evans 2013). However, given that the feedback models are not age specific, it hard to see how such a learner-centric view might apply to primary age children as well as students in Higher Education. Indeed, does any learner who is part of a teacher/learner relationship really have autonomy and control when the teacher/tutor is professionally responsible for the curriculum, mode of delivery and the judgement about attainment? Is it that expectations of

younger learners' capabilities have actually been distorted by the teacher-centric practice that has existed in schools for so long and has arguably been exacerbated or amplified in recent years. Teacher-centricity is valued, distributed and accounted for through policy and practice. As a consequence, pupils are unable to be fully autonomous as the system has resulted in a form of learnt helplessness.

Several participants also commented on learners having a key role in Higher Education. For example, Daisy stated she had responsibilities as a learner.

*Daisy - But then I think it's my responsibility to build on it and to take it into consideration. (Interview 3)*

As a learner, Daisy implies a degree of learner responsibility and independence. Molly and Boud (2013) develop this in their Higher Education model of feedback known as 'Feedback Mark 2.' Here the learner 'actively makes links between their goals in learning, the strategies or approaches they use to achieve this target and their actual performance outcomes' and as such has 'significant agency and choice' (2013, p.23). This discourse equates to a more sustainable model of assessment as potentially it leads to more long-term attributes and skills for the autonomous learner. Arguably being an autonomous learner will also include having the necessary beliefs to recognise they can and will achieve. Indeed, some of the participants discussed how feedback influenced the way they thought about themselves and their ability to achieve.

*Eleanor: People have said for years, 'You should teach' ... I've always kind of gone, 'But what if I'm not very good? What if I'm not?' ... But when someone who's only met you a couple of months ago and only seen you for a few days really, sees some potential in you then that's a lot more meaningful. (Interview 1)*

Receiving feedback from somebody she respected increased Eleanor's self-belief in her own potential to teach. This acted as a motivator by transferring the faith others had in her to herself. In a similar way, continually receiving what was termed 'negative' feedback was transferred to Lottie's self-belief as a teacher. The feedback allowed for a transaction of belief.



*Lottie: well originally I thought that like getting feedback was constructive and motivating however after [placement] I feel like it's actually demotivated me hugely ... because ...the feedback that I got was always 'not improving', I wasn't improving, it just kind of demotivated me... I feel like I did act on the feedback and I was quite positive about it at first but the more I kept trying things and then my feedback would get worse and I was like 'oh my god like what am I doing that's wrong?' and then I was trying everything in my power to be able to change things and it still wasn't getting any better ...Yeah please tell me something is improving.... I just thought what's the point of looking at it? Like what is the point? Like I was a bright eyes and bushy tailed student on day 1 in placement and it was towards the end, it sounds bad because this is not me at all, it was just like 'what is the point? what is the point in me even trying?' (Interview 6)*

Lottie is implying that the lack of affirmatory or positive comments influenced her self-belief. Too many 'deficit' comments, no matter how constructive, negatively influenced her motivation which ultimately affected her ability or will to engage with the feedback. For Lottie, a negative judgment damaged her 'self-efficacy, or sense of ability to be effective' (Gibbs and Simpson 2004, p.11). Because the feedback influenced how Lottie felt about herself, the feedback was much more than a cognitive exchange (Chung and Yuen 2011) supporting the earlier point about how emotions and feelings help or hinder feedback (Day and Tosey 2011). Both Lottie and Eleanor's comments can also be linked to self-efficacy- the 'sense of being able to deal effectively with a task' (Kunkel 2012). Self-efficacy is what Sadler describes as the ultimate goal of feedback (1989) but self-belief is not enough in itself; learners also need to regulate their performance if they are to be autonomous. Having said that, if we assume that self-efficacy has strong overlaps with motivation, self-efficacy will be necessary if learners are to self-regulate (Altun and Erden 2013) and conversely the ability to regulate one's own learning will support the learner's self-efficacy (Zumbrunn, Tadlock and Roberts 2011). Gaskill and Woolfolk (2002, p.192) describe self-efficacy and self-regulation as a 'dynamic duo.' Indeed, studies have shown that self-efficacy is a predictor of achievement (Altun and Erden 2013), and if so, self-efficacy is surely part of the pedagogical economies.

There was some variation in participants regarding the impact of negative feedback on self-efficacy. When this was a single incident, some participants became more motivated to prove themselves and the feedback giver right.

*Nick: Take the feedback [received] involving differentiation, when I went and did other writing, I was very conscious... It's now going to stick with me and I think that everything I write now, is going to have to involve some form of differentiation.*

*Interviewer: So, although you kind of disagreed with that comment, it's actually had quite a big impact on you? ...But it's more in a kind of, 'I'll show you,' way?*

*Nick: Yeah, it's definitely more of like an aggressive manner.  
(Interview 1)*

For Nick, the single experience of feedback has not had a negative impact on his belief 'in [his] own ability to execute a given task' (Yusuf 2011, p.2614). If anything, it spurred him on. His self-efficacy was already strong and as a result he was optimistic about his future learning even after perceived failure (Hattie and Clarke 2018). For Nick, there was no exchange between the view of the other and of himself.

Bandura (1991) points out that believing in one's potential is future focused, and therefore a symbolic activity. Similarly, Lacan argues that we all have an imaginary future ideal of ourselves (Lacan 2001) that we strive to achieve. Both of these can be related to feedback. Feedback is essentially mapping a journey to our ideal self; it turns the symbolic and imaginary into a series of steps. For example, if the learner follows the improvement suggestions, they will move closer to their ego-ideal or ideal-ego of the teacher, whichever currency is worth more.

Arguably, Nick already had an established identity as both a learner and saw himself becoming an effective teacher in the future. Negative feedback did not undermine this. However, if we return to Lottie, we can see how her self-efficacy was eroded over time when her initial interview is compared to the later one.

*Lottie even if it [feedback] is bad, it's constructive and you work harder to build on negative feedback'... At least for the next time we can work*

*on those and the negative comments are the ones that make us a great teacher (Interview 1).*

*Lottie: it sounds bad because this is not me at all, it was just like 'what is the point? what is the point in me even trying?' (Interview 6)*

William (2011) noted that learners' self-efficacy tended to decrease through schooling and the same appears to be true for Lottie. This raises the question whether feedback practices are responsible for this. However, others may well argue that feedback practice needs to include the development of 'emotional resilience' within learners. The current resilience discourse (Sterling 2010) has certainly gained 'value' and is prevalent and (according to the discourse at least) worth pursuing. It is another consequence of neo-liberalism. Essentially a deficit model, the resilience discourse argues that 'being resilient is the 'capacity to endure ongoing hardship in every conceivable way' (Walker, Gleaves and Grey 2006, p.251; see also Chandler and Reid 2016). Not thriving within this climate is therefore the fault of the individual, not an indicator of the climate they operate in. As such, if the feedback message is emotionally challenging and it has an impact on the learner, it means that the learner is not resilient enough. This seems at odds with the earlier literature that acknowledges how feedback can affect learners emotionally (Pekrun et al. 2002; Eva et al. 2012).

Conversely, Lilly expressed how she had become more confident in her own abilities through her own experience of feedback.

*Lilly: Yeah, as a learner you feed off it almost ... like you need to know if you're doing it right or doing it wrong and you need to have confidence in yourself now and just go with it (Interview 5)*

The use of the word 'feed' is significant. The feedback *feeds* self-efficacy in the 'survival stage' of teacher development until it is firmly in place by the 'mastery' stage (Furlong and Maynard 1995 p.68). The belief in one's own potential teaching ability motivated the participants to develop (Schiefele and Schaffner 2015) and feedback provided reassurance that current performance was 'incremental rather than fixed' (William 2011, p.119).

As learners, several participants felt it was their responsibility to action the feedback they received as they equated this with being an independent learner.

*Lottie: I think when you get to uni you have to be more of an independent learner anyway, it's like instilled into you isn't it? ..... I think because now that I'm older I'm a bit more in control of my own learning...it's like well it's your learning, you're in charge of your learning so you know if you want to improve. (Interview 3)*

In addition, participants spoke explicitly about how they would often self-reflect and identify next steps before they received feedback. Butler and Winnie support this, adding that when external feedback is later provided, it can 'confirm, add to, or conflict with the learner's interpretations of the task and the path of learning' (1995, p.248).

*Evie: ... because I was aware of sort of, reflecting on it before the discussion and aware of how it went then I had more confident and sort of ready for what was to come. (Interview 4)*

The ability to self-evaluate, reflect and identify future improvements can be equated to self-regulation as a key element in learnacy. Self-regulation is defined as how learners regulate their own thinking, learning goals, next steps and strategies (Butler and Winne 1995; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Hattie and Timperley 2007; Wiliam 2011; Zumbunn, Tadlock and Roberts 2011; Altun and Erden 2013). Self-regulation places the learner centre stage but also recognises that the learner does not work in isolation; they are 'guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment' (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006, p.201). In this way, the teacher has a role as well.

As teachers, there was evidence that participants were keen to develop self-regulatory behaviour in their pupils. Lilly stated that she felt the teacher's role was to guide the children towards independence by supporting 'participation and dialogue' (Carless and Boud 2018, p.1316) but was aware of the contradictions of coaching learners towards independence.

*Lilly: It's to help encourage children gain the independence and maybe... have them gain confidence in their own abilities .... To help them see where they've succeeded. So, what they need to know in order to succeed in whatever it is so, what they've done correctly and something to further work on .... you might not know what you've done well and you might not know what you've done not so well and so it depends on the teacher there to either guide you to tell you what you have done well*

*because, how do you know ... so giving them the tools in order for them to progress independently as well. (Interview 6)*

Daisy too spoke about how she attempted to guide her learners through the feedback process. Eraut states, 'we need more feedback on feedback' (2006, p. 118 cited in Evans 2013, p.72), or even, we need more learning about learning (Thoutenhoofd and Pirrie 2015). Carless et al. (2011) agree that learners are rarely taught how to use the feedback they receive. Teaching or encouraging self-regulatory practices are arguably another level of transfer within the pedagogical economies; the underlying ideas become valued, transfer to teacher practice and are ultimately exchanged to the practice of the learner. Knowing how to engage with feedback means that learners are more likely to self-regulate which in turn means they are more likely to give themselves feedback (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Lilly and Daisy both agree that self-regulation is significant and that, as teacher, it is their responsibility to promote it in the pupils. Of course, there might be a perhaps more sinister interpretation of teachers encouraging learners to self-regulate; self-regulation could be interpreted as a technology of the self (Besley 2009), a form of regulation and discipline (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000) which the learners self-police. By encouraging learners to reflect, evaluate, identify and action targets, the learners begin to take on the responsibilities of teachers, responsibilities which have themselves been distributed down from the policies and priorities established nationally.

#### **4.8 Discourse 6 – Feedback as an acronym or abbreviated formula**

Lastly, this chapter will look at a feedback as a formula using either acronyms or abbreviations. Within the pedagogical economies, there can be a tendency in education to strategize pedagogy into formulaic responses or gimmicks (Ward 2008; Boyle and Charles 2010; Boud and Molloy 2012a). In doing so, although values ('good' practice) are exchanged, the original meaning can become distorted or lost. A typical example of this is the SMART discourse, an acronym widely used to represent: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (Department of Education for Northern Ireland 1998; Jung 2007; Department for Education 2015) widely used as a tool for selecting 'effective' pedagogical targets. The difficulty with such an approach is a masking, or at least shallow engagement with, underlying meaning; the strategy that becomes

the distorted economy. Indeed, all of the constituent features of SMART are open to interpretation. After all, what does 'specific' mean in this context, how achievable is 'achievable' and what does the term reveal about understanding of achievement? Even though 'SMART targets or goals, have yet to be rigorously examined in the light of relevant theory and practice' (Day and Tosey 2011, p.515), the language is prevalent in the discourse and subsequently has perceived value.

Like so much of the recent education discourse, SMART came from business originally, and is another feature of an instrumental (Day and Tosey 2011), reductionist approach to education that has emerged from the performativity context. As an example, the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) state student teachers need to become familiar with 'effective' target setting; 'effective' is rather nebulous and can be seen as synonymous with SMART which is equally lacking in clarity. The presence of the discourse within the Standards further gives the discourse currency and value for student teachers. Not surprisingly the data shows some alignment between the participant comments and the SMART discourse, but analysis also reveals just how differently the SMART discourse can be understood. Some aspects were fairly similar, some were not accounted for, some were redefined, and others were added. If we were to apply an abbreviation approach, the participants reframed the SMART acronym to SRTB which is rather lacking in vowels to form a memorable whole word; this in itself illustrates the difficulty with translating pedagogy into an acronymized formula. Forcing an acronym means that letters (and therefore words) are added to form a whole word rather than staying focused on meaning.

This section will therefore look at the participants' 'formula'- Specific, Relevant, Timely and Balanced.

#### **4.8.1 Specific Feedback**

Specificity was a key feature of the participants' comments although what was meant by specificity was not always clear. At times specificity was in reference to precision or clarity but also specificity was linked to the 'what' of the feedback (either as a strength or an improvement) or to 'how' feedback should be actioned. Interestingly nearly all the comments made in reference to specificity by the participants were in relation to their role as learner rather than

teacher. For example, as a learner, Nick stated that feedback needed to be specific. If it was too broad, he was irritated by it. He implies that the more specific the feedback, the more constructive the feedback was as comments were clearly directed.

*Nick: ... one of my little bugbears [is]...when feedback's given but it's not specific, it's sort of a bit wishy washy and it's just like...it didn't seem like it was directed anywhere...., because actually yeah like when you read some of this it's almost like ... it's saying the 'so what?' (Interview 2)*

Lilly too made comments about the specificity of the feedback she received.

*Lilly: it shows general comments and then targets, for future targets, so subject specific and then academic targets as well.... I felt like it was quite detailed as well, I felt it was quite good feedback. ...Like the feedback stated exactly where areas of weakness within my essay and where I needed to progress to improve my writing.... like constructive criticism. ... [feedback] needs to be quite specific ... (Interview 3)*

Lottie also commented on how broad feedback can result in a lack of engagement with the feedback.

*Lottie- I think some students can kind of like wash it over... they are 'oh I don't have a clue what this means, but oh well.' And then you know they've kind of like lost out on how to improve then really. (Interview 4)*

One of Wiliam's (2011) three principles of effective feedback is that it should be 'More work for recipient than donor'(p.129) and Lottie is supporting this which is unusual given that she was speaking as a learner rather than a teacher. Lottie also felt that the clearer the comments or targets were, the more likely they were to be actioned as, not only would they be understood, they were easier to remember.

*Lottie: Generally, you kind of remember because they keep it quite easy like usually they give three targets ...I guess it keeps it quite simple it's easy to remember (Interview 3).*

Lottie's comments indicate that memory is as much part of feedback being used formatively. She implies that good quality feedback is synonymous with specific feedback but this is not

necessarily because of the content of the feedback message but more because it was memorable. One wonders whether Lottie is using the term specific to mean succinct.

Notions of specificity did not simply relate to what the learning gap was. Some participants indicated that specific information on *how* to close the gap was necessary. Again, this supports both a conception of feedback as a deficit and one that is formative, consequence orientated and actionable. Nick indicated that his understanding of this had developed over time in school.

*Nick: I feel now that feedback now to be effective for children needs to be quite descriptive but quite precise ... I didn't understand or appreciate how pinpointed it needs to be. Like I'd marked one of the children's books and set them a challenge and it was quite a broad, ... and they [the children] were like Mr [participant's name] what are you even looking for and I was like oh, okay you need... (Interview 2)*

Hattie and Clarke (2018) argue that the usability of feedback is as much to do with the receiver as the giver, stating it depends 'on whether the receiver not only hears and understands the feedback but also whether they can use it to advance their learning' (p.169). Feedback needs to be specific if it is to be of use (Gibbs and Simpson 2004) but more than that, not only needs to specify what the gap is but also *why* (Arts, Jaspers and Joosten-ten Brinke 2016) and *how* to close it. Without this level of detail, as learners, the participants were less likely to act on it.

*Jenny: Yeah because I think sometimes with feedback they can say 'you haven't consistently referenced', but they don't highlight where you haven't consistently referenced, so how do you know to go back? (Interview 3)*

*Lilly: ... making it [feedback] specific to the children so they would understand their feedback and be able to use it because if not, then what's the point really? (Interview 6)*

#### **4.8.2 Relevant Feedback**

Many participants implied that feedback needed to be relevant which arguably aligns with the SMART discourse of achievable and realistic. Lilly used an example of feedback she had received as a learner to illustrate this.



*Lilly: [the feedback] was really helpful. It was related to us .... (Interview 5)*

She used the same language to describe constructive feedback she had given as a teacher stating it needed to be '*relatable to the child...to enable them to progress, otherwise it's just pointless*' (Interview 5). The term 'relatable' is used rather vaguely but there is an implication that that feedback should relate to what the learner needed next<sup>17</sup>. Lilly may equally be referring to strengths. Furthermore the reference to relatedness does align with Wiliam's (2011) principle of effective feedback: feedback should 'relate to the learning goal' (p.150).

As teachers, some participants also discussed how feedback needed to be relevant to the learner's own specific needs. Relating feedback to individuals learning meant that feedback was therefore more useful and constructive.

*Daisy: So, it's like giving the feedback that's relevant to that child's target, so not just saying in general like have you met the learning objective ... So that's done individual[ly] because if you've got like lower and higher abilities they're not, you're not going to be looking for particularly the same thing, so it's like altering that feedback depending on the child. (Interview 2)*

However, it is questionable how relevant feedback can be to a learner if it is the teacher who is choosing it. A learner-centric model means that a teacher /tutor is not always the best person to decide; dictated relevance could minimise engagement as the learner does not recognise it as relevant to them. However, given the value attributed to teacher-centricity elsewhere by the participants (and indeed the discourse), it is easy to see how notions of relevance have become understood to be within the domain of the teacher.

Other participants spoke about the relevance of feedback in terms of how transferrable it was. Given that within Higher Education learning is organised into discrete modules, participants considered how transferable feedback from one module was to another.

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<sup>17</sup> Arguably there are overlaps here with the earlier discussion on specificity.

*Antony: a lot of the feedback points he's given me can roll into other subjects as well so you know, the likeliness of me having that around when I'm writing other assignments or when I'm proofreading other assignments is highly likely because it's got points there and you know you can just see one point and think right I'll look for that... (Interview 1)*

If feedback was transferable it was therefore relevant to both present and future learning. This made it more useful and useable and as such formative. Had Anthony remained part of the study, it would be interesting to see whether he would also apply this principle to primary teaching where a number of subjects can be taught discretely or in a cross-curricular and therefore linked way.

### **4.8.3 Timely Feedback**

There were several comments made about the timeliness of feedback. This was explicitly linked to maximising the usefulness of feedback. There are also links here to feedback as deficit and feedback as a cycle.

Daisy indicated that as a learner there was a degree of frustration around the timeliness of feedback in that a delay meant it was less pertinent.

*Daisy: I don't know when this was marked, but it was more relevant at the time that we did it as opposed to a few weeks later when we got the feedback (Interview 1)*

Several participants felt that the feedback they received during placement was more timely and therefore useful. Lottie viewed placement feedback as effective as it tended to be verbal and fairly instant. This allowed her to put the feedback into practice quickly and reaffirmed the constructive nature of the feedback as she was able to receive new feedback about her successes.

*Lottie: So sometimes I just think of how I could incorporate that into my next observation. And I just think of an idea of how to incorporate it and see how it goes and if it doesn't go well then ... but every time that I did incorporate the feedback that she said from the previous week into the next week, she had less and less things to pick on.... Verbal feedback is*

*good for in the moment, kind of like, and be able to talk it through because a lot of that happens on [placement] ... (Interview 4)*

Participants also implied that the timeliness of the feedback they provided to the pupils as a teacher made it more effective.

*Evie: from the overall response it seems really beneficial because the children are finding, the teachers are finding that they're getting a much more immediate response to the feedback and it's making a sort of positive change in that lesson, rather than days later maybe when it's maybe out of their mind or not the focal point anymore. (Interview 5)*

If the feedback was immediate, it informed the teacher and learners about next steps hence the timing of feedback was crucial (Wiliam 2011). This indicates a formative view of feedback where the feedback is not merely identifying the gap but closing the gap as soon as possible (Sadler 1989). The participants seem to feel that this was much easier within the school context because of the more embedded practice of verbal feedback. Pedagogically this was seen to be of benefit as it was more likely to be instantaneous.

For Jenny, this was of particular benefit to her as the teacher as using verbal feedback within the lesson gave her information which she could then use. The learners were able to give her feedback when it was most timely.

*Jenny: Yeah I like it; I think it's quite a quick assessment strategy...So it's immediate isn't it? it's immediate feedback. ...the children are feeding back on their understanding of the lesson, so they're telling you what they have or have not understood or what's stuck with them, it could be something that they've struggled with but that's resonating with them ... (Interview 4)*

As Hattie explains, 'the most important feature was the creation of situations in classrooms for the teachers to receive more feedback about their teaching-and then the ripple effect back to the student was high' (Hattie 2009, p.12). Evidence from this study supports this. For the participants, the timeliness of feedback in the classroom was significant in a rather dynamic sense; they perceived that both learner and teacher benefitted quickly as they were able to identify and action 'gaps'. However, one questions whether this perception is also a product of

the technical reductionist discourse around learning, an economy to be transferred and valued (or not) itself. Indeed, the chapter that follows (Relational Economies) will argue that ‘timeliness’ can equally be applied to the affective dimension enabling emotions to become less heightened. As part of this argument, learners require time to come to terms with the feedback; ‘timeliness’ is in reference to stopping emotions blocking engagement with the feedback.

#### 4.8.4 Balanced Feedback

Several participants indicated that feedback needed to be balanced if it was to be effective. Balance or balanced is open to interpretation though: the balance between positive and negative comments, the balance between strengths and areas to improve, the balance between pedagogical and affective feedback or indeed potentially the balance between the power dynamics of teacher/tutor and learner.

The balance between positive and negative was evident in participant comments both as learners and teachers.

*Lilly (in reference to teaching): She used a ‘star and a wish’ in the written feedback, so she gave positive feedback to the children of their learning, but then also some constructive feedback to improve on. (Interview 1)*

*Lilly (in reference to learning): Obviously it takes a different format compared to a ‘star and a wish,’ but it’s got that similar kind of intrinsic idea that you should have points for the future...so going back to the constructive idea of feedback. (Interview 1)*

Balance was related largely to the emotional consequences of feedback and is generally not a feature of the SMART discourse. However, the SMART approach has actually received criticism for failing to take account of the affective area of learning (Day and Tosey 2011) as:

it is recognised that a student’s feelings and emotions may help or hinder their learning, may promote or obstruct their attention and their motivation to learn, and may also form part of the fabric of a student’s learning in terms of how, and how effectively, they encode experience. (Day and Tosey 2011, p.517)

Daisy referred to the balance between positive comments identifying successes and areas of development using the analogy of the feedback sandwich.

*Daisy: I think it was that there was a mixture of positive and negative feedback. So we always talked about the feedback sandwich so having a positive bit of feedback and then negative and wanting to finish on positive. (Interview 5)*

This is a fairly well known metaphor that describes two ‘positive’ comments (in this case the bread) with a ‘negative’ comment (the filling) in between. The idea is that the positive, or ‘affirmatory’ (Jers and Wärnsby 2018, p.592) comments outweigh the negative or improvement (deficit) focused. This is an interesting idea in itself given comments likely to lead to progress are termed negative. Boud and Molly call the feedback sandwich a ‘formulaic response’ (2012a, p.4) and the metaphor is arguably another gimmick that has emerged from the previously discussed reductionist strategized dilution of learning. The reference to sandwich certainly demonstrates a degree of naivety, not only in the purpose of feedback but also that that two positives would soften the ‘negative’ and make it less memorable. Not only is ‘negative’ or improvement focused feedback often the more long-lasting (Jers and Wärnsby 2018), surely the ‘negative’ are the comments that need to be remembered as they highlight the gap? Daisy implied that she was becoming aware of the issues with the metaphor sandwich herself.

*Daisy: I always think that was really important because you ... start with the good things but then also the whole point of feedback, really, is to give you something to improve on because otherwise you wouldn't be really doing it.....I feel like you can generally have some sort of constructive feedback. (Interview 5)*

Although Daisy still felt feedback should be balanced, it was the ‘deficit’ focused comments that were the most significant in terms of formative feedback. As a teacher, Lottie also discussed the need for balance, but she explicitly linked this to motivation. She appears to be using ‘constructive’ as a euphemism for ‘negative.’

*Lottie: I feel like as well you need to give children positive feedback as well as constructive feedback because if you just give, obviously constructive is great because it gets them to learn and improve but always giving them constructive feedback can like damage their*

*confidence and self-esteem so eventually they'll just give up on trying.*  
(Interview 3)

An awareness of the impact of feedback on motivation was more relevant for the participants when they were discussing their role as teachers. They implied that learners (particularly in school) require encouragement as well as feedback on what could be improved. The SMART, discourse takes no account of the emotional dimension (possibly because the acronym would become unsatisfactory) but this implies that affect is not part of the pedagogical economies. As such, the affective is separate from the pedagogic. However, the participants argued that the emotional dimension is central to learning as without it pedagogical opportunities will be missed. Indeed, Zhang and Zheng (2018) state that the balance between positive and deficit comments is crucial because of the impact of emotions. The participants recognised that a comment signalling an area to improve is potentially the most constructive but also that the affirmatory comments encourage engagement with the improvement comment, allowing the feedback to be constructive. Far from being naive, this indicates a depth of understanding of how the pedagogical and emotional economies within feedback interplay with each other, a relationship that a formulaic view of feedback such as SMART does not consider.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion to this chapter, there are many aspects to feedback that can be viewed as having a pedagogical dimension (including an overlap with the emotional dimensions explored in the chapter that follows). Analysis has found variation in which (and how) pedagogic economies are valued, exchanged, transferred and accounted for. Unsurprisingly, for participants who are part of Initial Teacher Education, these valued concepts were affiliated with particular pedagogical discourses that exist within contemporary education, namely: feedback as a gift, deficit, learnacy, scaffolding and feedback as a formula. However, as has been found, these are not mutually exclusive with conceptions often co-existing and sometimes contradicting each other. The conceptions were also sometimes teacher specific, sometimes learner specific and sometimes moved between and across learner and teacher. Conceptions of feedback were therefore fluid, dynamic and open to the influence of the role and context.

Established discourses, whether at a local or national level certainly influenced the way the participants understood and engaged with feedback. At times, some participants demonstrated a critical understanding of some of the rather superficial and technical discourses related to feedback whereas other participants embraced them. In addition, some of the established discourses were much more evident in the role of teacher rather than learner. There was therefore further variation in understanding which was dependant on the role inhabited. Arguably, as student teachers, the participants were part of educational discourse themselves.

It has also become clear that these pedagogical economies do not exist in isolation but are bound with the relational economies discussed in Chapter 5 and the moral economies explored in Chapter 6. These will now be explored.

# Chapter 5: Analysis 2 – Relational Economies

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## **5:1 Introduction**

So far this study has outlined the existing literature around feedback and offered alternative faces of feedback within Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 a justification was provided for the epistemological and methodological decisions taken and the phenomenographic approach to analysing essences of understanding was introduced. This was followed by Chapter 4, the first analysis chapter to focus on variations of understanding or ‘essences’ using the metaphorical device of economies to explore pedagogical economies.

This chapter now moves onto relational economies. Firstly, the chapter will explore what is meant by relational economies before focusing on particular themes that have emerged from the data. In doing so, the chapter will complement Esterhazy’s assertion that ‘feedback is inherently relational ... influenced by social structures and discourses that shape the socio-cultural practices of our educational institutions’ (2018, p.1303). This will include how the standards agenda may be influencing the feedback relationship as professionals walk ‘the tightrope’ between meeting the requirements of the state and building multiple relationships (Rodgers and Scott 2008, p. 735).

## **5:2 Relational Economies**

As outlined in the methodology, the metaphor of economies is a useful way to consider how ideas and understandings can be: given value, accumulated, distributed and exchanged. The preceding chapter explored how pedagogical economies were evident within the data (and how these often echoed educational discourses). This chapter now focuses on relational economies.

The term relational economy is often referred to within the context of geographical economies (Bathelt and Glückler 2003; Boggs and Rantisi 2003; Faulconbridge 2007; Bathelt and Glückler 2011) but also has relevance to the metaphorical economies discussed here. In geographical economic terms, Bathelt and Glucker (2011) state that knowledge is ‘evolutionary and cumulative in nature’ (p.1) and the result of ‘collective interpretations and recombination’ (p.65). Therefore, the economics need to be understood ‘in the context of social and institutional

relations' (Bathelt and Glückler 2003, p.1). In other words, economic geography is better understood as relational economic geography where collective and reciprocal understanding is built on genuine relationships. Bathelt and Glückler (2003) argue that considering the relational aspect is more appropriate (and effective) than a solo economic view of success. So how does this apply to the relational metaphorical economic structure used within this thesis? Firstly, both perspectives have a view that relational aspects are difficult to ignore given that values, understandings and conceptions are always within a social context. Metaphorically, realising the impact and (possible) value of relationships is in itself an idea exchanged within the economy/ies. Furthermore, other associated ideas are grouped within relational economies as they too have a relational aspect and are valued, distributed and exchanged. Secondly, relational economic geography implies that the relations themselves nurture the combinations, re-combinations and exchange of knowledge. In this way, the relationships are themselves necessary for the metaphorical trading and exchange of ideas. Relational conceptions of feedback can therefore include the content of the exchange and the mechanism of the exchange. This chapter will therefore explore the variation in how feedback is understood in a relational sense, how relationships influence (or not) the exchange of these understandings and also how the exchange of feedback may develop relationships. The influence of relationships is not necessarily a linear or straightforward process. Relationships do not always lead to a better understanding of feedback nor does feedback help build relationships. Rather the two influence one another in complex and varied ways just as the experiences of being a teacher and learner (as a student teacher) can also influence one another.

In summary, the purpose of the chapter is to explore the dimensions of feedback that are associated with relational economies. These dimensions, or themes, emerged from the data using the iterative and abductive process outlined within the methodology (with reference to the outcome space.) Just as with the preceding chapter, this chapter further demonstrates a dynamic and variable interplay between feedback giver and receiver and is not an attempt to put forward a single view of feedback but rather explores how differing factors interplayed for the participants within this study. Using comments from the participants to exemplify the discussion, the chapter will consider how the relationship(s) between feedback giver (as a teacher) and receiver (as a learner) were influenced by the mode of feedback, the roles within the feedback

relationship and the degree of recognition within the relationship. Throughout, the significance of the socio-cultural context will also be highlighted as well as the dual identities of teacher and learner.

Three relational themes will be considered within the relational economies:

- Face to face feedback;
- To be known and to know;
- Roles within the relationship

It is important to also reiterate at this point that although the three analysis chapters are presented as discrete economies, there is significant overlap between them and indeed Chapter 7 where participant stories over time are explored. After all, a relational aspect could well reveal pedagogical understanding and vice versa. Indeed, there are examples where the same participant comments are used in more than one analytical chapter.

### **5.3: Theme 1- Face to Face Feedback**

The feedback literature often posits dialogic feedback as effective practice (Stern and Backhouse 2011; Boud and Molloy 2013; Yang and Carless 2013; Boud 2015; Carless 2015b) both in Higher Education and the primary school context. However, the term dialogic feedback is avoided here with a deliberate decision to use 'face to face' feedback instead. This is because although the participants referred to the practice of verbal feedback, this did not necessarily always have dialogic underpinning (as will be explored.) However, it is worth noting that the terms verbal and dialogic feedback were often used synonymously by the participants.

Face to face feedback was a key theme throughout the interviews where the practice and value attached to this form of feedback was frequently discussed. Indeed, reference to it grew as the participants progressed through the three year programme, particularly when discussing school practice. This section will analyse some of these comments, including the variation between them, and explore whether face to face feedback was viewed as dialogic (or

indeed rooted in dialogism,) the connections between dialogue and the building of relationships and how this influenced the emotional response to feedback.

### 5.3.1 Face to face, dialogue or dialogic

The term dialogic is used frequently within the literature as a feature of effective feedback (or pedagogy) (Walker, Gleaves and Grey 2006; Yang and Carless 2013; Ajjawi and Boud 2018; Carless and Boud 2018). It holds currency and value within the discourse and has arguably been transferred from theory to practice in the form of verbal feedback practices. However, the economic transfer of value (metaphorically) has not necessarily been direct. Although the literature identifies dialogic feedback as effective (Walker, Gleaves and Grey 2006; Yang and Carless 2013; Ajjawi and Boud 2018; Carless and Boud 2018), the widely distributed practice of verbal feedback is not necessarily dialogic. Generally, the participants described feedback that was face to face. The general consensus amongst the participants was that face to face feedback had particular value and currency because it allowed for discussion. For example, as a teacher, Eleanor implied that dialogue was important if feedback was to lead to progress:

*Eleanor: ... verbal feedback's immediate. You can question, if they give you a sort of garbled answer you can pick out you know you can ask them in a different way so they get chance to respond and let you know, you know you can better understand what they're saying to you and you can explain in as many different ways as it takes how what you were trying to get across... (Interview 2)*

The notion of discussion as an aid for understanding was brought up by several participants.<sup>18</sup> Discussion was seen as valuable as it allowed for greater clarity of the feedback message, particularly in comparison to written feedback.

*Evie: I would say verbally because I think you can talk it through. You might not understand the written feedback and that's the format they've given you so you can't interact with it (Interview 1).*

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<sup>18</sup> There are links here to the pedagogical economies already explored.

Although Evie is arguing that verbal feedback is more effective, her comments in relation to written feedback suggest a lack of dialogue overall. The 'talking' it through relates to understanding the 'truth' presented by the feedback giver, rather than collaboratively exploring the message together. Indeed, the language used by several participants to explain the value they attached to face to face feedback did not necessarily indicate a dialogic conception of feedback. The perceived value is because the feedback included a conversation. Words such 'telling,' 'clarity' even 'explaining,' in the context it was given, all imply that feedback was a tool for transposing meaning i.e. face to face feedback allowed the teacher to transfer *their* meaning to the learner more efficiently. Although Yang and Carless (2013) argue that an emphasis on dialogue is an attempt to move away from a one way understanding of the feedback process, for the participants, verbal feedback is merely a better vehicle for the transmission of the feedback message. Despite the reference to face to face feedback, in terms of the relational economies, it was a transmissive understanding that was the underlying core value.

As learners, both Evie and Eleanor implied that verbal feedback enabled greater clarity of feedback message thereby aiding the transfer.

*Evie: I also think feedback is better in person, you get a more, I don't know, I feel like it is easier to understand if somebody is telling you rather than it being written. (Interview 2)*

*Lottie: I'd say in that regard yes it was more effective because I could actually like, actually have it explained to me what she meant yes, because I don't think that she wouldn't have known that I wouldn't have understood it like I say unless I'd gone to her myself..... it might be clear to them but as like a learner or a student it's like it doesn't make sense to me. (Interview 3)*

The model of dialogue represented in these comments further reveals a limited relational aspect, as the teacher still holds a position of power passing on knowledge and also passing judgement (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2001). If we consider feedback as a relationship, this is an example of a teacher-centric or 'I-It' (Buber 2013) relationship; the educator *gifting* feedback to the passive learner. Bohm's (2013) analogy of discussion as a game of ping pong is also relevant where ideas (of feedback messages) are batted from player (teacher) to player (learner) until the message is transferred.

The same use of dialogue to clarify meaning was evidenced by the participants both as a teacher (in school) and as a learner (in university), further evidence of the dominance of teacher-centricity within education (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004).

*Nick (in reference to verbal feedback): .... So, are they understanding it, no, change your phrasing or is it upsetting them, well change you're phrasing whereas you can't, once you've put pen to paper ... (Interview 4)*

*Lilly: You can ask questions, you can gain that immediate kind of acknowledgment of something if you're unsure of... I would much rather have had a conversation with someone as a feedback .... say you did have a query, then it would be harder to... I don't know...I can use that conversation that we had or something and it's aided my understanding of the written ... I can piece it together a bit more, more so I think than if I was just given it on my own, without anything ... [verbal feedback ] helps you to gain a deeper understanding than than like if you get written feedback- definitely. (Interview 4)*

Genuine and authentic dialogic talk/learning is underpinned theoretically by dialogism which is arguably a theoretical aspiration. This conceptualises learning as the co-creation of knowledge through the sharing of understandings through dialogue. Crucially, it results in the emergence of new meaning and also suggests equity between teacher and learner. More often than not however, the practice described during the interviews indicated links to monologism rather than dialogism as it was based on a single thought discourse (Robinson 2011a). Having said that, the polarisation between dialogism and monologism is perhaps an unhelpful one. There are degrees of equity between teacher and learner and possibly degrees of solo construction/co-construction. The participants' comments are not necessarily one or the other.

Although the majority of the data indicated a limited dialogic view, there was one example of variation. Eleanor suggested a model of feedback that was verbal, dialogic and underpinned by dialogism.

*Eleanor: it's about giving the feedback but then taking the time to make sure that the feedback has been understood, and also exactly what the next step should be, and involving the learner in those next steps so that they come up with a plan, you come up with a plan together rather than*

*just going 'right there you go, there's your feedback, crack on', but yeah so it's more dialogic. .... it's a cycle... like a hamster wheel.... yeah, it's reciprocal is the word isn't it? (Interview 3)*

Eleanor's comments represent a more adaptive, discursive and interactive view of feedback although, 'coming up with a plan together' is unlikely to be totally equitable given the inherent power dynamics between teacher and learner. Her comments imply that she is aware of how her view contrasts with the more strategized, process focused view of feedback that this thesis has argued is a consequence of the neo-liberal agenda.

In terms of the relational economies, overall there was little variation as the participants did not value (or view) feedback as an opportunity to co-construct new meaning (Bakhtin 2010) but as an opportunity to transfer meaning more effectively; the notion of transference carried the real worth. That is not to say that the transfer of understanding was viewed wholly as a one way process. Later on in the project, some participants spoke about the value of verbal feedback in terms of receiving feedback from learners in their role as a teacher.

*Evie: I do think that verbal feedback is better because you can gauge that the child understands... (Interview 4)*

In this instance, discussion allowed learner misconceptions to be revealed which in turn allowed the teacher to reflect on their own teaching and make adjustments at the time or later. In this way talking through the feedback allowed for it to be adaptive, discursive, interactive and reflective (Laurillard 2013). This indicates greater equity, as both parties had a role and the process was mutually beneficial. However, there is no doubt that even within this example of a relational economy, the teacher still had the position of knowledge and power, identifying the shortfall, providing the resources and ultimately accounting for progress.

Some of the apparent confusion around dialogic versus verbal feedback and transmission versus co-construction of knowledge may in part be a further consequence of the social-cultural influence of neoliberalism on education policy and practices. The relational dimension of feedback is certainly an area that requires nuanced and considered understanding and often there is no space for this within the performance focused, compliant, technical and dominant view of teaching and learning (Bailey and Garner 2010; Yang and Carless 2013) that has already



been outlined. It is not therefore surprising that terminology and conceptions are used interchangeably by the participants. Walker, Gleaves and Grey go further by suggesting that true dialogic pedagogy is now rare because of the ‘confines of a mass education system’ (2006, p.260). The influence of the context is undeniably powerful within the relational economy.

Towards the end of the project though, there was evidence that Eleanor at least was bucking this trend. She had come to understand feedback in a much broader sense, both as teacher and learner, not only linking it to dialogue but viewing it almost synonymously: ‘[describing feedback] *‘it’s a huge part of teaching.... It’s communication’ (Eleanor Interview 6).*

### **5.3.2 Face to face feedback as a means of building relationships**

In line with the relational economies outlined earlier in the chapter, this section will consider if feedback is itself a vehicle for developing relationships as well as understanding feedback in relational terms. As such, the section will identify any evidence of face to face feedback building relationships. Buber (2013) suggests that meaningful relationships (I-Thou relationships) are defined by knowing each other as a whole being and, when applied to the educational context, this includes recognising the potential<sup>19</sup> of the learner. Given the evidence within the previous section, the participants did view face to face feedback as a means of ‘knowing the learner’ and recognising ‘potential,’ in that feedback allowed for misconceptions to be revealed and meaning to be clarified.

According to Buber (2013) and MacMurray (Beck 1992) true dialogue is key to meaningful relationships as it means treating others appropriately and humanely (Stern 2007) and knowing them as a *whole* (or at least as much as this is possible within an educational setting.) The participants indicated that face to face feedback allowed for this; they felt it was individual and personable, certainly in comparison to written feedback.

*Evie: Written feedback is less personable (Interview 1)*

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Recognising the potential’ of a person does imply that this insight is the privilege of the teacher rather than the learner. It also raises interesting questions about what is meant by potential and whether this is linked to a fixed notion of ability.

*Lilly: [in reference to a filmed example of verbal feedback] So, when I was giving feedback, I was so concerned, especially when if it was specific because ... they needed it like black and white, they needed it specific because they just weren't... you know, they needed to know where they'd done well and where they needed to.. they needed like specific strategies and they need things clear in order for them to progress. Like, it couldn't be vague or ambiguous at all, because they wouldn't like, understand that. That's the whole purpose of feedback, surely, is to help a learner progress? (Interview 4)*

Lilly's use of 'concern' implies a degree of care within her face to face feedback. This can be aligned to the 'caring interactions' MacMurray (cited in Beck 1992, p.456) identifies within the genuine dialogue required for building an I-Thou relationship. There is evidence that written feedback presents a reduced opportunity to develop meaningful relationships in that, particularly when anonymous, it depersonalises the interaction, promotes monologism and increases the distance between teacher and learner (Pitt and Winstone 2018). There is potential for verbal dialogic feedback to do the opposite (Carless and Boud 2018) and, as such, to build relationships. As a teacher, Lilly values verbal feedback as it allows her to demonstrate care.

*Lilly: [in reference to talking through feedback with children] Yeah, I think it shows the child that you really care about their work and you're taking an interest in their work and their development. (Interview 5)*

However, is a caring relationship really fully possible? It may be an ideal within the relational economies but the transference of the associated values, is more problematic. 'Caring for learners' is more than likely to be restricted to caring for them in an academic sense in order that learners can make the necessary progress. Educational relationships are arguably not full caring relationships. Indeed, Walker, Gleaves and Grey (2006) argue that the influence of relationships on learning and teaching is largely ignored and may be responsible for wider issues within higher education e.g. student continuation and resilience. Maybe educators and policy makers still have some way to go in recognising fuller relationship between educators and learners.

Many of the participants in this study do associate verbal feedback with relationships and care and imply that both are valued parts of the relational economies. This is arguably rather

superficial though. The values are likely to be instrumentally rather than altruistically driven, given the focus on progress and standards. Indeed, as a teacher, self-care would necessitate such a distorted view of a caring relationship with the pupils- one that ensures that attainment targets are met.

### 5.3.3 Verbal feedback as a means of softening emotional responses

Throughout the study there was strong evidence of feedback having an emotional impact on some of the participants when they were in the role of learner. This was true for both the university and school context. Some of the responses had impact months after the receipt of the feedback. This resonates with evidence within the literature which finds that feedback is capable of evoking negative and /or defensive affective reactions which have far reaching consequences (Molloy, Borrell-Carrió and Epstein 2012; Carless and Boud 2018; Naismith and Lajoie 2018). In this context, affect refers to 'feelings, emotions and attitudes' (Carless and Boud 2018, p.1317) all of which, Carless and Boud (2018) argue, can be mediated by good relationships between teacher and learner.

Two participants in particular (Nick and Evie) described strong emotional reactions that included burning feedback, hiding it and the inability to 'let go.' In this way, the content of the feedback can be viewed as a form of disavowed knowledge (Taubman 2012) in that it was known, but destabilising, so avoided. It is worth saying that such emotional responses were nearly always in relation to what the participants perceived as negative feedback. By negative they meant critical or carrying a lower mark than had been anticipated.

*Nick: When I first got given the feedback it was more angry... Then it went to disheartened, when I got the feedback and I was just like, 'Really, that's what it's come to?' Now, I'm all right with it. When I talk about it I get still a bit agitated sometimes... (Interview 1)*

Nick's comments indicate not just an initial reaction but also a cycle of grieving each time he revisits the experience, albeit not as traumatic as the initial reaction. This is illustrated through the phrases Nick uses over time such as: 'when I ... got ... the feedback [I] more angry; disheartened; I get still a bit agitated; harsh feedback; I'm quite defensive; it got my back up; [the feedback had a] negative sharp direction, I'm still offended by that.' It is difficult to see how such

a reaction would not influence learner engagement with feedback other than negatively. Molloy, Borrell-Carrió and Epstein state that 'emotions act not only as a barrier but also a stimulus in the learning process' (2012, p.50) but there was little evidence in the research that upsetting feedback was ever anything but a block to engagement.

As time went on, some participants began to draw a link between face to face feedback and the softening of subsequent emotional responses. There was a perception that the alternative form of written feedback could feel more traumatic (Evie used the word trauma to describe the experience) as there was less opportunity to moderate the impact through further explanation or reassurance.

*Evie: [in reference to written feedback as an alternative] so sometimes you could maybe take bit more of a front to it. You mightn't understand that somebody is just trying to help you or it just might come across as more of a criticism than a positive or a, 'You could do this to improve.'*  
(Interview 1)

*Nick: I don't know whether it's because you can see the person's face so you can understand,...like our maths sessions the tutor was like 'no you've gone in completely the wrong direction', I took that really well, but if I'd had to email it across to him and it had probably just been annotated, and because more often than not annotations are done shorthand not full sentences, shorthand comes across quite blunt...*  
(Interview 3)

*Lilly: Whereas if you're face to face with someone, so giving oral feedback, you can then more say right don't worry about it, we can help you move forward, it is nothing to be ashamed of if you haven't done very well.* (Interview 3)

One participant, who was prone to avoiding uncomfortable written feedback, felt that face to face feedback was more effective as she was *unable* to avoid it. The conversation forced her to engage with the feedback. This does not necessarily imply that dialogic feedback was taking place, but rather that there were professional and social niceties associated with a conversation between tutor and learner which forced her to engage at least at some level. In other words, the perceived professional response was to engage with the feedback, even if the natural emotional response was to do something very different because it threatened self esteem (Hattie 2009).

*[After describing avoiding written feedback]*

*Interviewer: What about if you did a lesson, [and] you didn't prepare it well enough...and your mentor said 'do you want me to give you some feedback?', how would you deal with that? Would you think 'I don't want to hear it', or would you say 'yes' even though it's going to be hard?*

*Evie: Oh I would definitely say yes because I think it's rude not to...*

*Interviewer: But inside what would you be saying?*

*Evie: 'Oh god no don't tell me'. Yeah definitely, and I think I'd say...I'd jump in before they said anything and say 'look I'm really sorry it was not planned well enough, I know that' and hopefully they'd kind of skip over that fact. (Interview 3)*

Evie's comments also indicate that politeness means the learner is forced to confront troublesome knowledge (Perkins 1999). Addressing troublesome knowledge is part of breaching threshold concepts (Meyer, Jan and Land 2003), so logically politeness can equally result in significant steps in understanding. In terms of the relational economies, what is implied here could equally be categorized within professional or societal economies; behavioural expectations and conventions have been accumulated, distributed and exchanged.

As teachers, some participants felt that verbal feedback also meant that they would be able to rephrase sensitively and pick up on non-verbal cues. As such, the feedback would be less emotionally challenging to the students. In other words, the manner in which the feedback was given influenced the way it was received (Hattie and Clarke 2018) and verbal feedback was considered to be more sensitive, reducing the likelihood of a relationship breakdown and defensive affective reactions.

*Eleanor: So, unless you'd actually given them the verbal feedback ... it would seem quite cold, but if you're crouched down next to them in the classroom, if they're looking worried, you might sort of put your hand on their shoulder or smile at them and reassure them while you're saying it, and none of that's coming out in just the words. (Interview 6)*

Nick also implied that there was a degree of maturity involved in receiving feedback stating that he was now able to separate feedback on the learning from feedback about himself. This may be a little simplistic as feedback never exists in a vacuum and one cannot necessarily remove the self (Eva et al. 2012). Nick's comments below are also noteworthy because of his explicit connection between how he received feedback to how he gave it to the pupils in his class. Here we see a further exchange within the relational economies- the student/tutor relationship has been imported into the teacher/pupil relationship.

*Nick: not all of that was good and it annoyed me but it didn't take me all day to get over it, whereas before it would take me a good few days before I could even go back to it, I was just like alright fine...So, it's gone from being like a personal like ... and I think that translates into how I was approaching feedback in SE3 with pupils because, especially Year Ones they take things really personally. So, it was about helping them understand that I'm not... judging your ideas I'm judging whether you can put a full stop and a capital letter on the sentence. (Interview 6)*

In metaphorical terms, there were further examples of trading between learner conceptions and teacher conceptions within the relational economies. The emotional experience of receiving feedback made participants reconsider how to give feedback as a teacher. Several explicitly stated how their own experiences resulted in a concern about how the children they taught would receive feedback. The participants were reflecting on their own affective understanding and therefore selecting verbal feedback as the softer and more sensitive form to use. This supports Zimmerman's (2019) assertion that reflecting on our own lived experiences can provide valuable professional insight and further supports the economic metaphor that ideas and values can become a transaction in that they are exchanged and transferred.

*Evie: So, I wouldn't say I'd never give bad feedback because it made me feel awful but I'd know that you'd need to approach it delicately and I think if I'd spoken to somebody in that first instance, then I wouldn't have panicked so much because someone would be like it's fine, don't worry, we'll go through it, you just need to improve and then next time you'll do better ... So, I think that's probably part of the reason why I prefer verbal feedback to written ...you get to have the discussion and I think it's more personal and you get the clearer message as well I think. (Interview 4)*

*Nick: I was nervous of how they would receive it because I knew myself I wouldn't want to receive that sort of feedback presented in that way... So, I just thought shut the books, have a discussion about the fact that this is what we were aiming for, .... they all picked up their pens and started looking at and editing and reviewing their work and I think it's because it was explained to them in a way that was relatable. (Interview 4)*

Interestingly, Nick's use of the term 'relatable' also implies a relationship to knowledge as well as between the feedback giver and receiver. There are echoes here with some of the preceding discussion under pedagogical economies in that relatable<sup>20</sup> could be synonymous with the rather formulaic SMART discourse (specific, achievable and realistic).

Finally, one participant connected face to face feedback with both emotional impact and relationships. He described receiving some quite critical verbal feedback from a tutor in a positive and engaged manner. He was conscious that this had not had the emotional impact he would have expected and attributed this to the existence of a relationship between the two and the influence this had on verbal feedback. Nick's comments support those of Askew and Lodge: the 'quality of the relationship between the giver and receiver is significant in leading to learning' (Askew and Lodge 2000, p.6).

*Nick: it was with [name of tutor]. I can't think what he said. I can't think exactly what he said but it's not about what he said that made me think about feedback. So you know, I have found feedback quite difficult at times to, like, grasp especially if it's about something that I'm interested in.... [the tutor] pretty much tore it apart. I think what he said would have been harsh if it hadn't have been coming from [name of tutor]. And it made me think about it and it was obviously verbal feedback and it was instantaneous and we sat down together and worked and rebuilt the idea and things. And I think it made me think about verbal feedback as actually based on that. ...it relies on relationships .... because I've got that positive relationship with [name of tutor] and there is like, you can sense there is a mutual respect there. ... It didn't feel like a criticism it felt*

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<sup>20</sup> This understanding of relatable is very different to Deci and Ryan's (2008) understanding of 'relatedness' which is concerned with recognition and feeling cared for.

*like a critique and a development...yeah, so I was reading a paper about verbal feedback and it was saying about that relationship being like a fundamental thing ....yeah, it affects how it's received and it almost gives you that like, ability to fly above. (Interview 5)*

Phrases such as *'fly above'* imply that the relationship between teacher and student enabled Nick to rise above the potential emotional consequence and see the broader and more powerful feedback message. Other phrases such as *'together... worked and rebuilt the idea'* imply a much more reciprocal, equitable and shared learning relationship. What is not clear is whether Nick felt the verbal form further supported or strengthened the relationship or actually that a strong relationship would mean any form of feedback would have been received positively. The existing relationship possibly meant discussion was naturally dialogic and collaborative. This will be further explored within section 5.4.

Face to face feedback was the preferred form of feedback (both as a learner and teacher) as it allowed for greater sensitivity, explanation and sometimes dialogic conversation. This was often perceived as a relationship and the stronger the relationship, the more effective the verbal feedback. Despite the implied advantages of using verbal feedback, there is a consequential issue pertinent to the performativity climate; how does one evidence that verbal feedback has taken place? This will be explored later under Chapter 6 (Moral Economies) and also Chapter 7 (Participant Stories) where the management of compliance evidence alongside pedagogical and relational principles is discussed by some student teachers.

#### **5.4: Theme 2- Recognition (to be known and to know)**

Theme 1 indicated how participants implied there was a link between face to face feedback and the development of a relationship between feedback giver and receiver. The value attributed to this relationship often influenced how the actual feedback was received or used. The relationship was a vehicle for conceptions of feedback to be exchanged and also conceptions of feedback included relational aspects. The language used by participants to describe their understanding also revealed further variation between teacher and learner-centric models of feedback. Within this section the relational economies will be analysed in reference to variations



of 'knowing' between the feedback giver and receiver. This will include notions of trust and respect.

#### 5.4.1 Feeling known

Several participants felt that effective feedback was linked to the feedback giver knowing the feedback receiver. There were variations within this and it was largely applied to the question, 'how do student teachers understand feedback as a learner?' Interestingly, references grew to this over the period of the study which may reflect how relationships were built between learner and teacher during the participants' time on the course; the relational economies underwent growth over time.

Being known was often linked to personalisation<sup>21</sup> i.e. the feedback giver knows what the learner needs as an individual. This understanding was sometimes clear when participants spoke about generalised feedback they perceived to be ineffective. At other times, participants stated that personalisation was a feature of effective feedback.

*Eleanor: To my mind effective feedback, you have to know the person that you're feeding back to or about, to know what they're going to respond to. (Interview1)*

One participant felt that personalisation was a feature of feedback at university and implies she felt valued and cared for by her tutor.

*Jenny: I just think your effort is appreciated a lot more than in school ...Here, I think it's genuine that they want the teachers to be the best, so they do actually put a lot more time into the people, so you get it back. (Interview 1)*

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<sup>21</sup> Personalisation is a term that also carries the baggage of policy. Policy documents such as 'Higher Standards, Better Schools' (Department for Education and Skills 2005), and the subsequent Pedagogy and Personalisation (Department for Education and Skills 2007) positioned personalisation within the inclusion agenda as means of ensuring all children achieved. However, given the accountability context it exists within, personalisation has been criticised for being a 'superficial fad' (Oates 2018). Personalisation in this sense is very different to what the participants are using to describe being known as a person or being 'personable.'

This is echoed by Buber's I-Thou relationship as it indicates a fuller relationship where one knows thou as a 'whole being' and is able to 'affirm him in his wholeness' (Buber 2013, p.92) and also Hattie and Clarke (2018, p.83) who link learning to students being secure in the 'knowledge that the teacher cares about and likes them.' In the educational context, Buber cites the I-Thou relationship as a representative of a genuine educator as it recognises and realises the potential of the learner as a whole (Buber 2013) which seems to be the essence of feedback. As was discussed earlier, realising the potential of the learner as a whole can be focused on academic potential and therefore imply a deficit or closing the gap model of feedback (Ramaprasad 1983; Sadler 1989). Viewing the potential of the learner in this way is arguably overly simplistic, stripping out the nuances of the self and relationships.

Participants felt that being known was a two way process; many of them wanted to be known and also know the person giving the feedback further supporting the mutuality of knowing within the relationship. This valued understanding had been transferred across both the roles the participants inhabited.

*Lily -That kind of unknown and it's also a scary thing because now it's university and it's someone that... for instance, at school you knew who was marking it and I felt more comfortable gaining feedback in secondary school compared to now. I think that's just because it's new.*

*Interviewer -So does it make a difference then if you know the person who's marking it?*

*Lilly: I think it does, for me, slightly. (Interview 1)*

There was some variation around this conception. Some, but not all, participants felt very strongly that they needed to know who was providing the feedback as this would have implications in terms of how it was received. This also potentially represents Buber's I-Thou relationship but with the learner knowing and recognising the potential of the *educator* as a whole and not just the educator recognising the potential of the learner. Recognising the educator's potential subsequently affected the value the participants attached to the feedback. Deci and Ryan's (2008) self-determination theory supports this further. This framework for motivation asserts that one (of the three) necessary psychological need for motivation is

relatedness: the sense of feeling understood and cared for. Within this study, some of the participants implied they had a sense of feeling known and understood, which may include a sense of being cared for. Given that there is a correlation between the participants' sense of being known and their willingness to engage with the feedback, Ryan and Deci's (2008) relatedness need was also being met.

To a lesser extent, there was also reference within the interviews to knowing the learner within the school setting, often through personalising feedback. The first example refers to identifying achievement centred targets personal to the pupil and the second indicates a broader and more holistic view of meeting a child's individual needs. Lastly, Evie's comment implies that knowing each child is necessary to pinpoint necessary interventions.

*Daisy: So it's like giving the feedback that's relevant to that child's target, so not just saying in general like have you met the learning objective ... So that's done individually because if you've got like lower and higher abilities they're not, you're not going to be looking for particularly the same thing, so it's like altering that feedback depending on the child. (Interview 3)*

*Eleanor: To my mind effective feedback, you have to know the person that you're feeding back to or about, to know what they're going to respond to. (Interview 3)*

*Evie: Actually do something that's tailored to that child and it's going to help them kind of understand and then further going around helping the ones that really were just well off with it, it just gives you the opportunity for a bit of intervention most of the time. (Interview 4)*

This supports a view of teachers needing to know the learner well in order to provide appropriately personalised feedback. Lilly indicated this by stating that feedback needed to be '*specific, relatable to the child...to enable them to progress otherwise it's just pointless.*' (Interview 5). This implies that knowing the learner is central to the feedback having consequence and reveals a pedagogical understanding of formative feedback as a consequence based process (Black and Wiliam 1998). In reference to school, Jenny also stated that she valued the feedback she received from the children as a tool for adjusting her teaching.

*Jenny: I wanted to get their feedback on what they felt they needed more support with. (Interview 2)*

However, it is doubtful whether she also meant that the children knew her and were able to personalise feedback according to her needs. This further supports a rather one sided teacher-centric (Boud and Molloy 2012b) view of feedback within the school setting. It is interesting to note how sometimes contradictory conceptions exist within the relational economies for the participants; 'knowing' within the feedback relationship is both valued and not valued. This may be representative of the two different roles the participants inhabited as learner and teacher.

Some of the participants implied a more learner centred model of feedback where learners are responsible for identifying and acting upon their own learning goals (Sadler 1989). This is also reliant on knowing – knowing oneself. Self-efficacy (Sadler 1989) and self-regulation (Bandura 1991; Butler and Winne 1995) both include reference to knowing one's self (as a learner) in order to make judgements about current understanding / performance and identify a suitable action to close the learning gap. However, the statements made by participants, such as Jenny, suggest that learners were not always able to meet such high expectations. Although she felt pupils needed to know their gaps, they still relied on the teacher to identify the next steps.

*Jenny: I wanted them to tell me that they were doing it wrong instead of me saying you're not writing that sentence properly. I wanted them to be able to put their hand up ... so I wanted them to pick it out instead of me. Because I think they have to recognise what they're doing wrong before you can actually move the learning on otherwise it's just being to be seen to them that you're always on their back and nagging them and no, write like this, write like this instead of me showing them an example and going does your work look like this, so getting them to think about it. (Interview 2)*

Jenny's comments also indicate that it was a more pleasant experience for the learner, if they were able to have some degree of autonomy in the feedback process.

This section has explored how feeling known and knowing (both as learner and teacher) is a significant theme, albeit with variation, within the relational economies of feedback. The next section will explore how this differs between peer/ peer and teacher/learner.

### 5.4.2 Recognition by peers and teachers/tutors

The use of peer feedback as a strategy was largely referred to by the participants as a learner in University and revealed further variation in terms of how feedback was conceptualised and how it was influenced by relationships as part of relational economies. The 'knowing' that existed between peers was viewed as counterproductive and was contradictory to the earlier statements in relation to teacher/learner. Eleanor implied that feedback was only meaningful if it came from somebody she respected professionally rather than knew personally.

*Eleanor: ...because the only other people before who'd seen me were teachers who I knew, either my friends or I'd been into classes in schools where my mum had a connection, so I know them all personally. So, when you hear people who like you anyway telling you that you're good, you kind of just go, 'Yeah, yeah, whatever.' But when someone who's only met you a couple of months ago and only seen you for a few days really, sees some potential in you then that's a lot more meaningful. (Interview 1)*

This is a teacher-centric (as knowledgeable other) view of feedback and also presents feedback as a form of validation. In Eleanor's case, feedback validated her professional identity but conversely she also treated peer feedback with an element of mistrust, despite peers knowing her better and arguably more holistically. Knowing a learner as a whole (Buber 2013) was not always conducive to learning.

*Eleanor: it's always nice to hear someone say, 'Oh, that's really good,' but what are you basing that opinion on? It's not on years of expertise. 'Are you just being polite, or can you recognise good work when you see it?' .... You sort of make a judgement call based on what you know about that person. (Interview 1)*

Eleanor was not alone in indicating that she was uncomfortable in using peers for feedback. However, over time this changed for some participants who established a sense of which peers were worth listening to in terms of being both honest and constructive.

*Jenny - I'd rather not have peer feedback. I like it just going to a teacher... if you sat with a friend who's peer 'feedbacking' then it's not going to be genuine. So I just think it's easier to just not (Interview 1).*

*Jenny: I have someone who I sit with in every seminar, every lecture, as long as she marks it, fine, but no-one else, just because I think I value her opinion. (Interview 2).*

Contradictorily some of the participants' concerns about peer feedback were linked to being too known. Knowing a peer well made the feedback giver too aware of the possible emotional connotations and this reduced the value of the feedback. There is a suggestion therefore of a tension between being known and being too well known. Again, being known was an aspect of the relational economies that was not always clear cut.

*Jenny: I think that it needs to come from someone you don't know to eliminate the personal response, but I think that I would value someone I know is feedback more than someone I don't know.*

*Interviewer: Okay that's an interesting contradiction isn't it, because I think you spoke before about umm how you'd kind of worked out who, which of your peers it was worth listening to and which it wasn't worth listening to, but what you're saying is that in itself causes an additional problem because it can feel more hurtful if you already have a relationship with this person. (Interview 5)*

The contradictions expressed about peer feedback by some of the participants in some way reflect some of the contradictions in the literature. Carless and Boud argue that peer feedback reduces the likelihood 'of power-differentials and negative emotional reactions' (2018, p.1312) but Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel and van Merriënboer (2002) acknowledge that giving feedback to peers is viewed as difficult, risky and often unfair. Again, we see how significant the affective dimensions of feedback are within the relational economies and how these ultimately impact on other economies. For some of the participants, a degree of heightened emotional sensitivity was compounded by reduced sense of trust in the feedback giver when the giver was a peer. This was because of mistrust in both the feedback giver's expertise and their intention.

*Daisy: you're a tutor I feel like we, sort of, not trust your opinion more but, we understand that you've sort of got more knowledge than our peers. So if a tutor was to give us constructive criticism you would be like, okay that's a good plan – we'll try and implement that. Whereas if our peers said something to us we might think, oh that's a bit rude because we're on the same level as peers so it might be a bit more difficult to be*

*give negative feedback if you're sort of like equal in a situation... I think it's [peer feedback] good but then obviously because we're being careful not to be mean it might not be that useful ... 'I still choose who to give it to, for example, like if I know someone hasn't written an essay yet I won't give them mine to read because I'd be like, they've not written it, so they're just going to copy what I've done. (Interview 5)*

This further reveals a teacher-centric (knowledgeable other) view of feedback as peers were not considered to be more knowledgeable. In addition, it illustrates some of the complexities within the feedback relationship. Certainly, these participants seem to be describing a personal transaction (MacMurray 1961, cited in Jarvis 1995) and an I-Thou relationship where the 'whole being' is recognised (Buber 2013). However, the 'wholeness' is focused on personal sensitivities which, rather than enhancing the relationship, ultimately impedes it within the feedback context. The lack of trust is an additional problem because this means the relationship is not necessarily mutual or caring and, given that trust is so important to effective feedback, as Carless (2009) has argued, impacts further on the value attributed to the feedback.

Interestingly, when the participants discussed peer feedback as a teacher, it was largely positive. In this context, the participants were unaware of any difficulties of trust and expertise between the paired pupils. One possible explanation may be because peer feedback is a relatively efficient way to provide feedback in the classroom allowing a teacher to meet the feedback standard without providing feedback themselves. One wonders whether peer feedback is another example of strategized practice, i.e., a strategy rather than a principled pedagogical approach. Jenny is aware of how the practice of talk partners can both be relatively superficial and potentially effective.

*Jenny: I used talk partners in school, ... I did produce some play script writing and I got the children to work in small groups and give peer feedback to each other and I was expecting ... they really hadn't done a lot of peer feedback, I was expecting them to write things like 'Oh it is funny. I like your character name' whatever, but they really did think about it and they wrote 'I liked how... I like your opening adverb' or whatever and they really thought about that individual. (Interview 6)*

The different relationships experienced by the participants do reveal variation within the relational economies including variation in conceptions of being known and trust. The next section will discuss these points more fully.

#### **5.4.3 Respect, expertise, trust and best interests**

Lastly, different values were attributed to feedback from peers and teachers within the university setting. These values were frequently based on judgments about respect, trust and best interests. When several students discussed the need to know the person providing the feedback, they expanded by implying that this was because they respected some tutors and therefore viewed their feedback more positively and constructively. Here we see once more how the relational economies overlapped with the pedagogical economies.

*Eleanor: .... but it probably affects how I react to feedback when I get it because it was the first thing I looked for [was] who had marked it, before I looked at the grade.' ..... the person who I thought might be marking it, I don't really respect them as much. (Interview 1)*

Some participants expanded on this by indicating that a sense of respect was built up over time as learners experienced the tutors' teaching, judged their degree of expertise and began to develop a relationship, or not. The degree of respect was significant in influencing whether feedback was worth listening to and was also linked to the likeability of the feedback giver. In this regard, the quality of the feedback given was irrelevant as it would be judged on the basis of who gave it; the relational value was much more powerful than the pedagogical. When there was no respect, participants felt that learners could be defensive or disinterested about feedback. The view further indicates a teacher 'knowledgeable other' centric conception beyond the actual feedback itself and supports Eva's view that 'when, how, and by whom feedback is delivered matters' (2012, p.17) and that 'perceived instructor credibility' (Dennis et al. 2018, p.76) is related to this variation. Crossman (2007) goes further by linking relationships, respect and feedback explicitly finding, 'in reviewing descriptions of 'good relationships' with teachers...they are also largely linked to statements about perceived teacher expertise. The personal and the professional, therefore become intertwined in the perceptions of participants' (p.321). Similarly Doan (2013, p.7) reported that a respondent 'valued feedback if she respected



the tutor who gave it and devalued it if she did not respect the tutor' and Johnson (2016) stated that if 'a learner believes an educator has the learner's 'best interests at heart' (p.8) a trusting relationship was more likely. McArthur (2018) also affirms that trust is necessary if assessment is to move beyond the procedural and become more reciprocal. The value of expertise and trust in the teacher learner relationship is echoed by others (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel and van Merriënboer 2002; Yang and Carless 2013; Brummer and Kostons 2018; Hattie and Clarke 2018) and is also evident in the interviews of the student teachers in this study associated personal and professional judgments about tutors with the usefulness of feedback.

*Nick: There's some people that you end up respecting more than others ... because you end up not respecting that person's ability to teach, which it sounds awful but you do. .... I always look at feedback, but the light in which you look at that feedback is different. (Interview 3)*

*Eleanor: a lot of it is to do with your interaction in sessions as much as anything else...I'd say there's been two modules where people are likely to pick fault with marking from that tutor, and then the other ones they'd accept it because they respect the tutor.....maybe now people are sort of have their hackles up as soon as they get that mark back. (Interview 3)*

As discussed earlier, perceptions of respect and trust were an issue within peer feedback. Peers do not necessarily have sufficient academic gravitas (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel and van Merriënboer 2002) so the participants did not always recognise their peers as having credibility; as a result their feedback was not necessarily valued. This is supported by Guilherme and Morgan (2009, p.568) who argue that:

The educator can only educate if he or she is able to build a relation based on true mutuality, and this mutuality.... can only come to the fore if the student trusts the educator... otherwise any attempt to educate will lead to rebellion and lack of interest.

For some participants, trust was a significant part of the relational economies – an aspect that accumulated over time and was further exchanged with the pedagogical economies. It is not

clear however whether these perceptions of trust are founded on educator knowledge and expertise or in terms of the educator's character as a person.

Some participants made an explicit link between their perceptions of trust and respect as a learner and as a teacher. Here again we see the relational conceptions transferring across the two roles.

*Eleanor: Yeah respect and trust plays a huge part in it I think, and that's why building up the relationships with children in the class I think is so important, because if they don't trust you and respect you at any age, they're not going to listen to you. (Interview 5)*

For Nick, this realisation made him reflect further on his own perceptions of respect and the impact that had on teacher as well as learner.

*Nick: ..But that's the thing like, it does make you think, see now I'm really worried because I feel like if I let children in my classroom know that I'm not very good, like maths is my weakness, are they then when I give them feedback on maths going to think 'well he doesn't know about maths. (Interview 3)*

If a relationship was perceived to exist, and participants felt known, there was often a further consequence which impacted on the feedback. This was a perception of the feedback giver having the learner's 'best interests at heart.' Related to feeling cared for, as discussed earlier, a confidence that best interests were at the heart of the feedback made even challenging feedback easier to deal with; Johnson et al (2016) supports this arguing that if a learner perceives that the tutor has his/her best interests at heart, relationships that support learning will develop.

*Nick: A tutor's job is to develop the best out of the student and work out what the student was intending at that moment and things like that and I think, I don't know, it's weird, I think it's just because I know [tutor's name]. I'm very clear on the fact that [tutor's name] has the best intention for his students. (Interview 5)*

Nick's comments highlight some of the tensions between recognition and expertise. There were other contradictory and varied relational conceptions particularly when discussing the value of peer feedback. Some participants felt some peers did have the learners' best interests but lacked

expertise and were too worried about emotional sensitivities. Furthermore, they were not always convinced that it was the learner's best interests at the heart of the feedback, again linking to trust. Jenny's comments below exemplify this and also include implicit reference to a context and culture of competition.

*Jenny: if they're a proper friend they will know what you aim for, what you expect, what your standards are, so they should be able to help you meet them.... why would you do that, why would you waste your time giving feedback to someone who can take on board all your feedback, any changes, corrections, whatever, and get a higher mark because you've been given someone who doesn't appreciate the value of feedback, wastes time, talks whatever, and then you end up struggling (Interview 5).*

This could be another example of how the standards and performativity culture is distorting the metaphorical relational economies; conceptions are not always fully invested and exchanged. For Jenny, the high stakes assessment culture and relational understandings of feedback are not natural bedfellows.

The mutuality of knowing clearly influences the existence of relationships within feedback but this is not always a positive thing. The variation within this aspect of the relational economies is further compounded by perceptions of trust, respect and best interests, all of which can influence the level of engagement with the feedback. Peer feedback in particular seems to suffer from a lack of trust and possibly too much 'knowing'. The next section will analyse the roles within the relationships and how these impact on conceptions of feedback.

### **5.5: Theme 3- Roles within the Relationship**

This section will examine variation in understanding of roles within the relationship. This discussion will also overlap with some of the earlier analysis related to face to face feedback and being known and also some of the wider pedagogical conceptions which have been explored within Chapter 4. Two areas will be focused upon: the balance of roles and responsibilities within the relationship and how positions of power influence these roles and the feedback relationship

itself. The balance between these roles is conceived as changeable in that the feedback giver and receiver can have differing importance depending on how feedback is understood.

### 5.5.1 Roles and responsibilities

Within the context of this discussion, 'roles' refers to feedback giver and feedback receiver. These were largely translated by the participants into teacher/tutor and learner, both within the university and school setting. This reveals an understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the feedback relationship as peers were mentioned less often. However, this may have been because the interview questions encouraged participants to examine their own understanding as a learner and teacher. Furthermore, the participants will have experienced peer feedback in an education system where the practice of peer feedback is often viewed as tokenistic given the power of summative of assessment. The socio-cultural context is hard to avoid.

The uniqueness of the student teachers, as both learners and teachers, was apparent within their discussion regarding roles and responsibilities, as generally there was a habit of always positioning themselves as having a key role in the feedback relationship. Within the university context, there was some variation in how roles were viewed within the relationship. Generally, participants were critical of tutors when they felt feedback was not constructive or specific enough. This represents tutors having an increased responsibility within the relationship. However, several participants also recognised a duality of roles and responsibilities between teacher and learner whereby the tutor's role was to provide constructive guidance but the student was responsible for responding and completing the feedback loop.

*Lilly: ...like the feedback is there but then like that markers open the door but then you have to like walk through it.... so the marker, so the person, like the teacher figure has put on a role in kind of creating that feedback, making it specific, making sure it is not disheartening .... (Interview 3)*

*Daisy: I think most of the role feedback was with the tutor here because he was more knowledgeable than me on the basis of this so he could tell me what I needed to do, and what I'd done so far. But then I think it's my responsibility to build on it and to take it into consideration. (Interview 3)*

Although comments such as those above indicate a shared responsibility between feedback giver and receiver, if we examine the feedback itself, a teacher-centric model is still more prevalent. After all, the feedback receiver is essentially receiving the knowledge of the tutor which is a model of transmission and monologism; feedback is still a 'gift from teacher to pupil' (Hargreaves 2005) but one where the learner has responsibility to engage with, understand and act upon. There is no real evidence of new or shared knowledge. Esterhazy (2018) argues that this is a consequence of educational structures and contexts which reinforces a view of 'feedback as information transmitted from teacher to student' (p.1302). Once more the educational context influences how feedback is understood.

Some participants also implied that the modular structure of Higher Education encouraged tutors to shirk their responsibilities; assessments did not always feed into one another and tutors only had responsibility for that module. Feedback is therefore viewed as a process, judged by both the quality and the consequences of the feedback. There were similarities within the school setting but with one change: teachers had a further responsibility for ensuring students engaged with the feedback. This role was not apparent within the feedback relationship of Higher Education. Lilly's comments below (as a teacher) suggest an awareness of how different contexts have different meanings of feedback for her both as a university student and a practising student teacher. The transference of relational economies between the differing contexts was therefore not always possible.

*Lilly: I think it lies in both hands because there's only so much that a teacher can do. I think it's important that the teacher gives positive and constructive feedback to children. ... it's important to encourage them to engage with the feedback and to use that to improve on their own learning.... I want to say that the child does have their own responsibility in it, but then how do they develop that responsibility? Is that for the teacher? I guess to some degree it is... I think you can still try and encourage but then again, it's hard because there comes to a point where, like I said, only so much a teacher can do. So, you can open a door, but then it's up to the pupil to walk through it... (Interview 1)*

This indicates that, within school, Lilly viewed feedback as a shared responsibility between teacher and pupil. However, although there are links to the learner-centric view of feedback, the

teacher still has a significant role. Lilly went on to state that this changed over time as learners took greater responsibility. This supports a developmental model of feedback towards self-regulation. Certainly, by the time learners reached Higher Education, there seemed to be an understanding that learners had a responsibility. Of course, an alternative explanation is that the performativity agenda means teachers have had to take on additional responsibilities as they will be effectively judged and measured by the impact of their feedback on pupil learning. It is therefore in the teacher's best interests to make sure learners engage and subsequently comply. The relational values within this metaphorical economy may in fact be performativity based.

*Lilly: I do think that changes when you get older. You get to a certain age you're at the point where you make your own decisions and there's only so much a teacher can do. (Interview 1)*

*Daisy: I think, as teachers, we sort of make the children respond to feedback. So, I like to give them feedback and give them next steps to improve and then for the first five or seven minutes of the following day's lesson we have time to go over it and I go and speak to them about it and things like that. So, they'd have to get their little green pen out, as opposed to their pencil, and like make improvements. So, I'm making them do that. Whereas at university there is no sort of like session after we get results back to say, come in and sit down and we'll talk about this. (Interview 3)*

An additional responsibility mentioned more specifically within the primary sector was the need to provide praise as implied by Eleanor below when speaking about her role as a teacher.

*Eleanor: so if you're working with a child ... then you would go to town when they do well in a ... lesson, giving them loads of praise and rewards you have to encourage them to try hard in future maths lessons and to give their confidence a bit of a boost. (Interview 1)*

Eleanor recognised that, as a student teacher, relationships are significant in feedback and that feedback is a powerful motivator in terms of confidence. The perceived need for praise can be applied to Deci's (2008) model of controlled motivation, i.e. motivation that is as a result of external regulation or shaping of behaviour. Furthermore, providing praise supports the psychological need for relatedness (recognition and feeling cared for) and competence (expertise) (Deci and Ryan 2008). However, the teacher-centric relationship which is prevalent

elsewhere does not necessarily support the third psychological need of autonomy in its fullest sense although it is questionable whether real autonomy is even realistic given the educational context, the power dynamics within it and the emphasis on standards. Is a consequence of neo-liberalism increased teacher-centricity, as even when it is in the name of learner autonomy the teacher is still the one to be judged?

One participant did conceptualise feedback with self-regulation as an ultimate aim. Although Lilly stated that she felt the teacher's role was to guide the children towards independence, she also felt uncomfortable 'telling' the children but wanted them to discover the next steps themselves. This is supported by (Nicol and Milligan 2006) who identify the ability of learners to recognise goals and work towards them through the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress as a key skill within the feedback process. This model of course assumes that the learner has the same evaluative skills as the teacher which is what Lilly is aiming for in her role as teacher. This could be an example of teacher compliance in the name of pupil self-regulation. Lilly seeks for the pupils to comply with, take on and self-police some of the feedback responsibilities directed at teachers (and indeed student teachers) by policy. Shamir would argue that this is a form of responsabilization 'as a social disposition' (2008, p.4), essentially a new morality associated with neoliberalism.

*Lilly: You know, guide them in the right direction to try and get them to then reach their own conclusions independently ...They have to do it independently as well....I think it's important that children like discover that for themselves because I think it will help their understanding... and maybe encourage... have them gain confidence in their own abilities .... To help them see where they've succeeded. (Interview 4)*

The frequent references made to learner responsibility within the primary school context (but with the class teacher having a much more significant role) suggests that some participants were aiming for dual roles and responsibilities rather than a fully learner-centric model. Interestingly, the conceptions implied almost echo directly the wording from the Teacher Standards which say 'give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback' as a key requirement (DfE 2012, p.12) which in itself further indicates the influence of the policy on both relational and pedagogical economies. The givers of

feedback, in this case teachers, have the more significant role in the execution of feedback and also the response to feedback by the learner. This relates to Boud and Molloy's (2012b) proposed developmental models of feedback moving towards a model of self-regulation for the descriptions of relational roles offered by some of the participants sits within two of these developmental stages (Feedback Mark 1 and 2) (Boud and Molloy 2012b). Mark 1 has the feedback giver in full control whereas Mark 2 recognises the potential of the learner to provide their own feedback. The model described by some of the participants recognises the role of the learner but, particularly within the school setting, ultimately still has the feedback giver in control.

### **5.5.2 Imbalance of Power**

The earlier discussion regarding respect and 'knowledgeable other' indicates a difference in expertise that can also be viewed as a difference in power. Although many participants discussed the learner as having some responsibility in terms of acting upon the feedback, this was still essentially a teacher-centric model where the teacher was gifting their expertise to the novice. A corollary conclusion is therefore that the tutor feedback should be accepted. This indicates tutors occupying a more powerful position; the feedback giver still holds the position of knowledge (and therefore power) as they give feedback and deliver judgement (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2001). As Clouder points out 'not only does this person hold the key to unlocking opportunities for the student, they are also often responsible for assessing students' performance and therefore acting as gatekeepers to the profession' (2016, p.56).

As outlined within the introduction, the institutionalised nature of the contexts is very relevant with their background of competition, performativity and instrumentalism. A power imbalance between teacher and learner is therefore inevitable (Yang and Carless 2013) and distorts the aspirational values within the relational economies.

Further comments reinforced how significant the tutor's role was within the feedback relationship. Even when some participants were describing working with peers, it was often to work out the perceived tacit knowledge held by the tutor. For example, Daisy stated:



*We swap essays and things like that.... it's good because then we can compare what we know and what we think because we're in different teaching groups, so we have different teachers. So, everything comes across a bit differently (Interview 1).*

Although this is related to self and peer evaluation, the practice also indicates that the purpose is to anticipate tutor judgements. Other participants supported this view by making it clear that the tutor's views carried more weight and therefore power, for example, *'With the tutors it's more of a, right, that's the grade they've given me. It must be right. They're the tutors. We're the students.'* (Anthony, Interview 1). Even comments that demonstrate learner-centricity revealed the power of the tutor for example validating peer or self- feedback.

*Eleanor: ...it was really useful to do the observation and work through the feedback with [name of tutor] and sort of see that we were looking at the same things...and then sort of hearing that the tutor had had the same thoughts gave us then the confidence that 'okay we do know what we're doing with our reasoning', we were sort of on the right track with our planning. (Interview 5)*

Clouder and Adefila (2016) use the term 'gift exchange' to describe the tacit agreement between a tutor and student relationship within the health sector. The metaphor can equally be attributed to this context; the gift is the feedback, the exchange is the learner investing time to act upon it. This will be discussed further within Chapter 6 (Moral Economies) as it is also related to *doing the (apparently) right thing but* is also a further indication of a relationship between teacher and learner. Although acting on feedback can be equated to developing the skills of self-regulation within the learner, it is also a model of compliance, doing as one is told. It still relies on a transmission of knowledge from feedback giver to learner; feedback is 'telling' (Boud and Molloy 2012b p.14) and the feedback giver holds the power. As such, the use of the word exchange is probably incorrect as there is no equity to the exchange but is a rather one way movement. Boud and Molloy attribute the transmission conception to a mechanistic approach to feedback where 'a more experienced person tells a less experienced one about how they can do things better' (2012b, p.27) which Esterhazy (2018) supports. One participant implied such a conception and a gift exchange when he expressed frustration with pupils who did not respond to his feedback as a teacher.

*Nick: ...say you mark someone's work again and you're like 'I'm sure I pointed that out for them, they obviously don't listen to my feedback', and I guess it could be easier to become cynical, ... like 'why are they doing it wrong again and again?' and you can assume that they're just ignoring you... (Interview 3)*

However, although most participants, either explicitly or implicitly, suggested that the power was held by the feedback giver, Eleanor implied that the real power was with the receiver in that they had the choice to ignore the feedback.

*Eleanor: Umm in an educational setting of any sort definitely, ... there's a question of a power balance.*

*Interviewer: So how does that work in peer feedback then?*

*Eleanor: I don't know, it depends I suppose on what the, if someone, if I go to somebody and ask them a question because I know they've had experience of something, then I'm putting myself in the position of student and you know, they're the more knowledgeable and umm, I think yeah if you've gone asking for advice the...I think the thing with power is you can offer it to somebody, it's whether they accept it. (Interview 5)*

There were other variations between the participants' conceptions related to roles and power. One participant made an interesting observation about how the primary school policy of keeping books at school discourages the learners from engaging independently. Teachers decided when and how pupils should engage with feedback and therefore hold the power. Another participant stated that school policy sometimes encouraged teachers to identify all areas that needed improving and this was not pedagogically appropriate: *Nick: it's too far ahead for them to even understand (Interview 5)*. A further participant acknowledged that feedback was often related to accountability rather than children's learning: *Jenny: I thought they needed it because otherwise I wasn't going to be able to prove the standard (Interview 6)*. This raises further questions about the relational economy of feedback. Are there in fact three roles within it: the giver of feedback, the receiver of feedback and the policy and practice the relationship exists within. Policy and practice is not necessarily conducive to a productive and constructive

feedback relationship between feedback giver and receiver. The influence of policy will be discussed further in Chapter 6 (moral economies) as a new form of teacher morality.

## **5.6: Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the relational economies associated with feedback. It has discussed how the participants' conceptions of roles, responsibilities and relationships are often variable according to context, individual and the role the participant holds in the relationship. There was also variation and indeed contradiction in terms of the conceptions given value within the economies and how these were exchanged and transferred. Differing perceptions of, and balance between, the roles involved, the impact of face to face feedback, recognition of the giver/receiver and additional awareness of trust, expertise and respect all complicate things further. This can be at an individual level or even within an individual as views change according to context, role and experience. Once more conceptions are fluid and do not exist in isolation. Although generally conceptions are not wholly teacher-centric, they are arguably largely teacher-centric with even apparent learner-centric practice revealing a mismatch in power between teacher and learner. Teacher-centricity appears to be the most powerful conception of all which is arguably as a direct result of the performativity and standards driven climate these conceptions exist within.

The chapter has also argued that the relationships that exist as part of feedback are varied, complex and often perceived as central; there are clearly relational economies within feedback. As Ajjawi and Boud state, 'feedback is a communicative act and a social process in which power, emotion and discourse impact on how messages are constructed, interpreted and acted upon' (2018, p.1108) and as such it is difficult to conceptualise feedback without reference to relational aspects. This is perhaps even more the case for teacher educators who have to develop, maintain and tolerate multiple relationships in multiple contexts; their experience of multiple relationships undoubtedly influences the very presence of relational economies in their understanding. Indeed Zimmerman states that teacher education should be framed as a 'relational pedagogy' (2019, p.185) as it is a 'relational experience' (2019, p.187).

## Chapter 6: Analysis 3-Moral Economies

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## **6:1 Introduction**

Earlier analysis chapters have considered the relational and pedagogical economies using the phenomenological approach outlined within the methodology. In a similar way, this chapter will now explore variations of understanding, within the outcome space, that can be attributed to the metaphorical moral economy. The moral economy will be considered largely in relation to the first two research questions: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as a learner, and what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?

The term moral economy follows the economies metaphor explored in Chapters 4 and 5, i.e. a form of capital that can be accumulated, valued, distributed, exchanged and accounted for. Bourdieu identified three specific, although not definitive, forms of capital: economic, social and cultural (Bourdieu 1986; Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Zembylas 2007). These economies have meaning within a specific social structure (Zembylas 2007) and its practices; in this case the social structure of education. The moral economy aligns best to social and cultural capital, although the very notion of moral economies is complex and often disputed (Whitehead and Crawshaw 2014). Sayer (2000) states that moral economies encompass the 'norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others' that 'go beyond matters of justice and equality, to conceptions of the good' (p. 1). In other words, moral economies deal with values and actions viewed as the *right* or *good* thing. This is certainly true in education. Oser (2014) argues that educational decision making has an ethical/moral dimension that is almost viewed a precondition for the profession. For many teachers, a guiding moral purpose reflects their values, purpose (Pantić and Florian 2015) and identity and allows them to navigate challenging circumstances (Sachs 2016). Considering the metaphor of exchange, the values associated within moral economies can also be exchanged or cascaded between one subject, or one context, and another; individual moral judgements and decisions are influenced by interactions with others and society in general. Within the literature, moral economies are often positioned as polarised from economic or political economies. Performativity (and indeed neoliberalism) is judged to be in opposition to the moral economy (Whitehead and Crawshaw 2014). However, it can also be argued that both can co-exist, albeit uncomfortably, and can influence one another. As although Ball asserts that performativity is 'a recipe for ontological insecurity' (2000, p.3), Foucault (1994; 2003) also argues that subjects are

capable of 'respond [ing] to, or resist [ing] these practices' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, p. 127). The moral economy can therefore be viewed as one of many influences on teacher identity, including performativity.

The moral economies within education are arguably also related to both the social and cultural capital that exists within the sector. These moral economies will include values associated with teacher and learner identity but also the imposed moral implications of professional norms. As Myrick states, 'there are moral complexities and ambiguities intrinsic to the teaching–learning process. Within the context of the knowledge economy and globalization those complexities and ambiguities are proliferating' (2004, p.23). As such any discussion on the moral economies related to education will also refer to the distortion of these economies by the neo-liberal discourse.

Conceptions of truth, duty and identity will also inform the analysis and particular moral dilemmas related to teaching and learning will also be explored. Key theorists such as Foucault and Lacan will be drawn upon as well as more contemporary writers including Ball. Given that there is a strong overlap between moral economies and pedagogical and relational economies, some aspects will only be touched upon to avoid repetition in preceding and succeeding analysis chapters. It is worth stating once more, that there will be occasions when participant comments will be used more than once across chapters to make different points.

As has been the case for Chapters 4 and 5, in this chapter the themes discussed have emerged from the data using an iterative abductive process where transcripts have been examined (and re-examined) to identify reasonable and logical themes and relationships (Marton and Pong 2005; Goh 2013; Khan 2014). As with Chapters 4 and 5, this discussion is not an attempt to suggest a single model of feedback in terms of moral economies but rather, as a phenomenographic inquiry, to explore the variation of experiences, understanding and conceptualisation between participants. All the aspects discussed will include further variability in that they will also consider the varied roles the student teacher embraces, i.e. as learner and teacher, and how these inform one another as a continual process of development.

Several themes identified as moral economies will be discussed:

- Teaching as a moral duty;
- 'Doing It for the file': the new morality of accountability and performativity;
- The implications of truth;
- Teacher identity and the personal moral compass

## **6.2 Teaching as a Moral Duty**

Literature related to both motivation to teach and career satisfaction reveals a strong correlation between teaching and a moral and ethical purpose. Generally, the literature suggests that there are three main identified motivations: intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic (Richardson and Watt 2006; Watt et al. 2012; Heinz 2015; Friedman 2016; Salifu and Agbenyega 2016). These tend to be similar across different educational contexts with altruistic motivations consistently identified as a strong reason for choosing teaching (Richardson and Watt 2006). If we use Friedman's (2016, p.630) definition of altruism, 'worrying about or caring for the fate of others, or as a behaviour that offers benefit to others, that involves investment on the part of the bestowing person,' it is possible to position both altruism and teaching per se. as a moral and ethical calling. The desire to 'make a difference' or 'impart [ing] wisdom or knowledge' (Arthur et al. 2015, p.16) appears a prerequisite to teaching. Indeed, Boon and Maxwell (2016) state that within Australia, 'teaching has always been considered to be an ethical profession taken up by individuals expected to have a strong personal moral disposition' (p.2). Lorite summarises this rather well by stating altruistic views of teaching are 'based on traditional 19th century perceptions of 'teaching as a special mission' of moral worth' (2002 p.28 cited in Heinz 2015, p.267). Hargreaves (1994) supports this and equates a teachers' commitment to the care of children not only to motivation, but also a source of 'depressive guilt' as it can be 'emotionally devastating' when they are unable to meet their own expectation of fully caring for the children (p.145). In economic terms (metaphorically) it is possible to see how this view not only has capital, or currency, but is one that is a view that has been transferred and widely distributed.



Of course, ‘making a difference’ could also be seen as a smokescreen for the political philosophy of meritocracy; is it possible to continually make a positive difference<sup>22</sup>? Allen argues that the formative discourse effectively serves a political aim to facilitate ‘the manipulation of hope’ (2014, p.234) whereas Fullan (2001 cited in Kivunja 2014) argues that the moral purpose of education is to form productive citizens. Not only does morality inform the purpose and motivation of teaching, Arthur (2015) argues that a lot of teacher / student interactions include ‘virtue based reasoning’ (p.5). This includes acting with kindness, sensitivity, caring about the whole child and being fair<sup>23</sup>. Some of these have already been discussed within Chapter 5 but fairness will be explored later in this chapter.

The moral and ethical dimension of teaching is thought by some to distinguish between teaching as a technician and as a professional (Myrick 2004). In other words, acting as a moral practitioner is a professional attribute (Arthur et al. 2015). This highlights an interesting paradox given the performativity culture. Evidencing performance can be viewed as an indicator of the professionalism of a teacher whereas it is arguably an obstruction, given that critics feel it encourages a technical approach to teaching (Ball 2016). Performativity is presenting a new ‘moral compass<sup>24</sup>’ for teachers to judge their actions against and visibly meeting targets is a form of virtue signalling. This will be discussed with section 2 of this chapter.

There are two specific moral aspects related to teaching that will now be explored with reference to the data. Firstly, teaching as a gift to the learner (with specific reference to feedback) and also fairness as a moral character trait for teachers.

### **6.2.1 Teaching (and feedback) as an altruistic gift**

If teaching is positioned as altruistic, it carries with it a connotation that teaching is somehow a charitable bestowing of knowledge to the learner. Although the beneficiary is the learner, the

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<sup>22</sup> Indeed, ‘continuous improvement’ is a Japanese business philosophy known as ‘kaizen’ (Morrison 1998)

<sup>23</sup> There is some overlap with Part 2 (Professional and Personal Conduct) of the Teachers’ Standards (DfE 2012) here.

<sup>24</sup> Moral compass is commonly understood as a ‘universal or unwavering ethical approach to life within a social milieu, utilising fixed sets of rules or standards to guide ethical decision making’ (Bell 2011, p.135)

feedback giver is the holder of knowledge and therefore has power. This in itself means that altruism is not necessarily a selfless act; indeed Friedman (2016) explores how rather than altruism and narcissism being in opposition, there are actually many narcissistic benefits in altruistic behaviour. For teachers, helping others might actually serve to 'feed' the teacher's 'narcissistic appetite' (Friedman 2016, p. 631) and indeed fill the lack they feel in terms of the ideal teacher.

As learners, there is evidence in the data to suggest that the participants viewed their tutors and mentors as knowledgeable others.

*Evie: [in reference to her tutor and the feedback she gave] She's more knowledgeable than us and knows more about P.E and things,' so we appreciated that. (Interview 1)*

The use of the word *appreciate* also supports the idea that feedback was a gift from the knowledgeable other to the learner and for which the learner should be grateful for. When the feedback giver was viewed as comparatively more knowledgeable than the receiver (and to have relevant expertise), this implied respect, that the feedback was 'right' and should be listened to.

*Jenny: Yeah I think so, because I think you...with having a specialism in something, you just...you assume they know what they're talking about, even if they don't, you trust what they say, so if they said 'you needed to include this' then you would take that on board a lot more, and think about it a lot more than had someone without that background said 'why didn't you do this?' you'd just think 'oh well, who are you to say'(Jenny Interview 3)*

*Daisy: you're a tutor I feel like we, sort of, not trust your opinion more but, we understand that you've sort of got more knowledge than our peers. So if a tutor was to give us constructive criticism you would be like, okay that's a good plan – we'll try and implement that. (Daisy Interview 5)*

The data implies a recognition that the learner has responsibility to take the feedback on, or rather accept the advice. This seems to be a moral convention; when a learner is offered the gift of knowledge from a respected other, it is only polite, and dutiful, to accept this advice. As Clouder and Adelfia (2016) put it, a tacit agreement that represents a gift exchange.

*Daisy: I think most of the role feedback was with the tutor here because he was more knowledgeable than me on the basis of this so he could tell me what I needed to do, and what I'd done so far. But then I think it's my responsibility to build on it and to take it into consideration (Daisy Interview 3)*

As teachers, notions of feedback as a gift were slightly more variable. Generally, the participants did still conceptualise it as a gift from themselves (as the teacher) to the learner as there was an implication that they knew the next right steps or the missing knowledge. As an additional point, this in itself also reveals a fairly monologist and simplified view of learning as knowledge is simply being transferred.

*Daisy: Because in a teaching situation I am the expert, so I know the correct answer in most cases, especially because I've done Key Stage One, they haven't really asked me many things that I don't know the answer to. So, like when I'm doing maths questions I can give them feedback knowing that I know the answer. (Interview 5)*

It is interesting to note how Daisy's comments reflect the language of the Teacher Standards so closely, i.e. 'give pupils regular feedback... and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback' (DfE 2012, p.12).

*Eleanor: Read it, everyone read it, do you understand what I've said, do you have any questions and you know, this is how you could improve it next time or think about what you could do to improve it next time, try and write me a response back to show that you've understood what I say...(Interview 4)*

Where there was variation as teachers, this was within the implicit deal between feedback giver and learner. In the role of learner, the participants recognised that it was morally right to respond to this 'gift' from a more knowledgeable other. When they were in the role of the teacher, the responsibility to respond was also their (as teacher's) moral responsibility, rather than the learner's supporting Hattie's assertion that teachers must have 'the willingness to be involved in the deliberate practice to attain understanding' (2009, p.23). This may be a little naive though.

*Daisy: I think, as teachers, we sort of make the children respond to feedback. So, I like to give them feedback and give them next steps to improve and then for the first five or seven minutes of the following days lesson we have time to go over it and I go and speak to them about it and things like that. ... So I'm making them do that. (Interview 5)*

*Lottie: [in reference to encouraging children to respond to feedback]*

*Interviewer: So, do you think the kids in year 2 are still relying on you?*

*Lottie: Yeah, I think they are but they're not at the same time. I suppose like if you correcting their work, ... and you have done it green and you are asking them to go through and do the corrections and they don't know what to do then, ...I suppose it is my fault, I guess...Because...it is my fault because I've not been able to divide my time up correctly with them to be able to help them (Interview 6)*

Lottie's use of the word fault indicates blame and doing the 'wrong' thing. Lottie feels the burden of doing what she perceives to be the right thing, both morally and professionally. However, whereas Lottie saw responding to feedback as her duty and responsibility, other participants indicated a more nuanced view. Here the teachers had some, but not full, responsibility.

*Evie: ....So almost not saying to them explicitly oh you're getting, you're getting this bit wrong you need to work on that and you giving that feedback, it's more the children almost feeding back to you but actually helping themselves, do you know what I mean? (Interview 4)*

If responding to feedback is a learner's moral duty, in reaction to the gift given by another, learners need to be scaffolded in realising this. Several of the participants indicated an awareness of this when they described modelling and scaffolding the learners in how to respond. As Arthur (2015) states 'school teachers play a critical role in the formation of young people, shaping the moral character of their students. The best teachers exemplify a set of virtues which they demonstrate through personal example (2015 p.5). Modelling how to respond to feedback is a way of exemplifying the practice to the learners.

It appears therefore that the moral economies include an understanding of moral and altruistic duties associated with feedback. Whether this is always for the benefit of the learner is less clear.

### 6.2.2 Fairness

Fairness was mentioned frequently by several of the participants, principally in the early stages of the study. However, this was only in reference to when the participants were learners. As teachers, there was no reference to the need to be fair to the pupils. That is not to say that fairness did not inform the participants' practice as teachers, merely that it was not an explicit concern. As learners, fairness was mentioned most frequently when the participants were discussing feedback they were disappointed in when they felt they had not been adequately prepared.

*Lottie: [In reference to written feedback comments] And I think that's a bit unfair as well because if I even knew it was going to be like a document that had to be absolutely perfect throughout then I would have done that....*

*Interviewer: So, is part of that then, about feedback being unfair, when you don't know in advance what they are going to feedback on?*

*Lottie: Yes... Oh yes, definitely ... I find it a bit hard to figure out what we are actually supposed to write ... university it is a bit more like...you've got to...figure it out yourself really. (Interview 1)*

Within the literature, several personal qualities are attributed to 'good' teaching but fairness is a common theme. In one particular study, the most frequently identified attribute was fairness (Arthur et al. 2015). Fairness is arguably linked to character and necessitates ethical and moral judgment. The notion of fairness in the classroom is further exemplified as 'allocating just grades for work, enacting fair treatment in classroom activities, and implementing rules and regulations even-handedly' (Arthur et al. 2015, p.9) all of which are particularly pertinent to feedback. Treating others fairly is not only the *right* thing to do, it could also be a perquisite to Buber's I-Thou relationship where people are known and appreciated fully (Buber 2013). Being

treated unfairly would not allow such a relationship to develop as it is often associated with trust (VanSchenk Hof et al. 2018).

Some participants used their experiences of feedback to build a picture of how fair a tutor was. This was often a collectively formed view which resulted in the tutor being judged for not just fairness but often professionalism and trustworthiness thus supporting VanSchenk Hof et al.'s (2018) assertion above.

*Eleanor: When we all got our feedback back there was almost like a ranking order of the tutors who'd marked and the grades that they gave. There was one tutor and all the groups had been marked by that one, had got much lower grades than those who'd been marked by the others ...Once ... you've compared grading and seen how different it can be for, to our eyes, similar sort of standards of work, you do kind of think, Okay, does it actually mean anything? Is it just down to who marks it?  
(Interview 1)*

Eleanor indicated that she made a judgement about a tutor's worth as a giver of feedback by checking the perceived fairness of the marks/comments given to others. If there was a mismatch, Eleanor made a moral judgment about the tutor and therefore lost confidence in the worth of their feedback. There are links here to earlier discussions within the relational economies. However, Eleanor's comments are particularly interesting as they contradict the teacher-centric / feedback as a gift model suggested earlier in that the 'knowledgeable other' is ultimately assigned through the experience of the feedback receiver as it is the feedback receiver who judges what is considered to be 'truth.' The mismatch indicates that perceptions of fairness, trust and indeed roles and responsibilities are a little more nuanced than the data initially suggests.

Teaching, learning, assessment and feedback carry a moral dimension. Practice is often founded in doing the implicitly agreed *right* thing or acting in the *right* way. The 'right thing' seems to be part of the moral economies that has proliferated and been widely distributed over time, so it is now an unquestionable feature of what it means to be a teacher and indeed how feedback is conceptualised. However, the contextual drive to evidence performance in teaching is distorting

these agreed moral norms. The influence of performativity as a new form of morality will now be explored further.

### **6.3 'Doing it for the file': the new morality of accountability and performativity**

As detailed in the introduction of this thesis, successive education policies over the last twenty years have resulted in accountability, and therefore performativity, becoming a key feature of educational policy and practice (Department for Education 2010; Department of Education 2016). Assessment has been a key aspect of this as it has provided, and encouraged the collection of, data which allows for target setting, comparisons, competition and judgement. Furthermore, student teachers have generally been schooled within a system which has prioritised the use of summative data as a performativity tool. They now find themselves not only a product of the system but also part of the system as they navigate the accountability demands of the school policy they experience on placement. Accountability has become part of the moral economies and this has been distributed through the system so that it is experienced as both learner and teacher. Furthermore, their performance as a student teacher is also measured, evidenced, scrutinised and judged as, in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status, they need to meet the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). To complicate matters further, specific Standards (DfE 2012) relate to assessment and feedback, all of which need to be accounted for and evidenced. Indeed, accountability works at a meta-level within the moral economies metaphor; by its very nature accountability is an economy that is measured and accounted for. It is difficult to see how student teachers could not be influenced by the culture that has nurtured them and that they now have to promote in order to be successful. To some extent, the pedagogical economies chapter has already illustrated the extent to which the participants have become part of the discourses themselves. It raises a further question in relation to the moral economies so closely linked to teaching: has accountability and performativity encouraged a new moral economy and, for this study, is there evidence of student teachers using this morality to inform how they conceptualise and practise feedback?

### 6.3.1 Evidencing Performance

The data suggests that some of the participants conceptualised feedback as a way of evidencing performance. This could be pupils evidencing their learning, or response to feedback, but was more often than not a way of evidencing teacher performance to suit the demands of the school or teacher education system. At times this understanding was implicit but other participants were explicit in their conscious awareness of this. For these participants, evidencing progress had moral connotations as it was the *right thing* to do or at least the *right thing* to demonstrate. This may be because of perceived pedagogical reasons but could also merely indicate compliance or indeed narcissistic needs. Following national or local policy is viewed to be the right action to take. Professionally it probably is but this is not necessarily the same as pedagogically. In Foucauldian terms, this is an example of bio-politics where individual behaviour is controlled and governed by policy, the context and ultimately the self as the policy is internalised as a technology of the self (Anderson and Grinberg 1998; Ball 2013).

Conceptualising feedback as evidence for performance was most apparent when the students discussed written feedback, i.e. marking. During the earlier stages of the project, written feedback was often the default frame of reference whether the discussion was focused on school or university.

*Nick: .... but then I think that some schools are stuck in the mindset of feedback as marking or the feedback that someone wants to see from us is marking.... most staff mean is about feedback and they're like 'well where's your accountability if you don't mark.' (Interview 1)*

It is interesting to note here that Nick is critical of schools that perceive feedback to be solely about marking for the purposes of accountability. This reveals a broader understanding of the purpose of feedback. In contrast, Jenny explicitly stated that there was an underlying purpose to her response to formative feedback; to provide evidence as part of her performance against the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) implying a distortion of the purpose of formative feedback.

*Jenny: [in reference to an example of feedback on placement which identified a very specific target rather than one that could be applied to other lessons] it was not helpful...it was only relevant for that one lesson,*



*that one time ... I've got to be able to show that I can respond to it and the children. So, I couldn't show that I could respond to the feedback of 'Use this different language' because that was just a one ... one lesson. Whereas, if it had been something like 'Use more positive praise' ... I can then prove that I've acted on that feedback the next time someone comes in. (Interview 6)*

This was also the case when Jenny discussed how she gave feedback to the pupils. Jenny had concerns around providing formative feedback but these worries were not in terms of the learners' needs but related to Jenny being able to evidence (or 'prove') that she had given formative feedback that had been acted upon.

*Jenny: [in reference to her adapting the timings related to the returning of written feedback] ... because I thought they needed it because otherwise I wasn't going to be able to prove the standard [related to pupils acting on feedback]. (Interview 6)*

Allen (2014) argues that formative assessment (and feedback) is positioned as morally desirable, stating that it works within the 'morality of improvement' (p.235) and supports the meritocracy agenda; 'the focus is now on a child's unique position as a learner ... a comparison between the child's inner being and God's will has been replaced by a comparison between the child today and what the child might become tomorrow' (Allen 2014, p.235). For Jenny though, this morality of improvement has been altered to the morality of evidencing improvement.

Similarly, Jenny stated that as a learner she valued receiving written feedback as it evidenced her ability to develop. Interestingly, she saw this as evidence for herself rather than an 'other' in that she was the one judging her own performance and progress. Jenny appears to apply Foucault's technologies of control to herself and is effectively self-monitoring, or self-policing, by evidencing improvement. For Jenny, evidencing improvement has become valuable and 'common sense,' (Anderson and Grinberg 1998, p.333) practice.

*Jenny: I think that it's just a sign of progression from the primary school and I suppose it's proof here. You could get all your assignments printed off on that page and you could say 'This is what everyone said about me'*

*Interviewer: What do you want the proof for? Proof for what?*

*Jenny: For me to show that I've acted on it, so made it better. So, the first year, for example, if it was couldn't reference through for my life, then I can prove, okay, now I can and I can do ...*

*Interviewer: Who are you proving it to?*

*Jenny: Myself. (Interview 6)*

The repeated use of the word 'prove' implies an underlying lack of trust between those who are judged and those who are judging. As discussed in earlier chapters, trust has powerful connotations across the moral and relational economies. However, if this is the case, Jenny distrusts her own judgements. Given that trust is considered key to effective feedback (Carless 2009; Carless 2012; Hattie and Clarke 2018) (and has already been explored as a relational conception in the previous chapter,) self-doubt is an interesting consequence of the distrust implicit within the performativity culture (Ball 2003). It appears that (in metaphorical terms) although doing the 'right thing' has been accumulated, accounting for and judging it is more problematic.

Generally, the participants showed an increasing awareness of performativity as they moved through the programme<sup>25</sup>. For some of the participants this change of focus aligned fairly naturally with their own understanding of teaching and learning.

*Eleanor: I think if you're teaching well, teaching with the children in mind, it kind of comes naturally where the standards are fulfilled. (Interview 6)*

Here Eleanor is aware of the drive to evidence progress but this is secondary to her focus on effective pedagogy. For other participants, evidencing progress was accepted as a part of assessment and feedback but nevertheless was something they felt increasingly uncomfortable with. The coexistence of effective pedagogy and evidencing performance resulted in particular tensions and dilemmas which will now be explored.

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<sup>25</sup> This will be explored further in Chapter 7 which deals with two participant stories over time

### 6.3.2 Dilemmas and Tensions

As the participants progressed towards the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS,) many expressed an increased uneasiness in terms of the conflict between feedback policy and philosophy. This was particularly the case in their role as teacher. For some participants, such as Evie and Jenny, their awareness of the conflict was coupled with acceptance of it as the status quo.

*Evie: [in reference to marking] ...I was doing it because I had to do it.*

*Interviewer: Did [the Standards] influence the way you gave feedback or the way you thought about feedback?*

*Evie: Yes, it probably did. I feel like what I used... I definitely put those feedback sheets in and perhaps a manuscript of verbal discussions with the child, various bits and pieces but that feels quite forced, almost, you make more of a conscious decision, don't you? Yes.... I definitely felt like that for a lot of my monitoring and assessment... that I was doing it for the file. (Interview 6)*

*Jenny: ....but the teachers have to mark the books so that's why the feedback's given, it's not really given, it sounds really bad but it's not really given for the child, it's given for the teacher to have marked the book....to show progress. (Jenny Interview 1)*

Nick became aware of the need to be accountable early on and could identify elements of feedback practice that were purely for surveillance. Even at this stage, Nick was uncomfortable about the conflict between these two conceptions of feedback.

*Nick: Well, Ofsted want to see that we're giving feedback, so we need to use these stamps.' I'm just like, 'That's not what they're for!' (Interview 1)*

As time went on, the awareness increased. Nick became more conscious of the need for him to evidence his feedback practice as a student teacher (who would be judged on his performance) and the tension with what he felt was the purpose of feedback. He implies that for him, the moral economies of feedback included conflicting values.

*Nick: that bit between actually informing children's, by moving someone on and your evidence is like there's an awkward relationship there.... that's the thing I still struggle with and I still think how can my, like ethos of good quality feedback is good quality teaching fit with a school that then says documented feedback is good for accountability. So, ... it's how to manage the feedback with the accountability ... (Interview 6)*

Nick's use of other phrases like *'the burden of accountability'*, *'they didn't trust her feedback'* and *'it's like whoever you're interacting with is becoming a customer, and you're not trusted'*; all indicate a strength of negative feeling about the implications of accountability as a form of power and control which became stronger over time. By the final interview, Nick had attempted to influence feedback practice during a staff meeting whilst on his final placement. Rather than accountability/ performativity practice leading to ontological insecurity (Ball 2000), Nick developed a stronger sense of what he felt is pedagogically right and wrong, despite the prevailing moral economies associated with performance.<sup>26</sup> Rather than subscribing to the normalised discourse, Nick is challenging it both explicitly and implicitly by resisting practices (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000) and disputing policy. This appears to be driven by a strong identity i.e. knowing oneself and what is best for oneself (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000), which in itself is part of the moral economies.

*Nick: It was weird planning meetings on a Friday night for about ten minutes, then we'd have marking sessions after school every day till about six o'clock where we're just sit and mark together and discuss where we're going to take this child ... You're like 'surely there's something off here?' surely, we should be saying this is what the class needs and then going in-depth of how we're going to plan and build that knowledge?' when actually, they're just like 'right onto the next thing?' (Interview 6)*

Day (2002) argues that newer teachers are particularly susceptible to feeling the pressures of competency measures as they are likely to be less resistant to changing or challenging policy, more compliant but also more vulnerable. The findings of this study suggest that this is a little more complex with some participants becoming more likely to reflect and critique, albeit with an

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<sup>26</sup> This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

awareness of the need to be compliant to endure. To an extent, some of the student teachers gamed the system i.e. knowing and keeping the necessary rules but also retaining a personal philosophy.

*Daisy: I think in year one you're just a bit blindly following what the school do which equally you do still have to do in year three, but I think even though I might've been following what the school wanted me to do it wasn't necessarily my opinion ... with the teaching standards I didn't purposely think I've got to do this assessment because it's a teaching standard ... it was just more a case of I'm going to do that because that's what I have to do and that will give me evidence for the teaching standards. So, it wasn't really a conscious thought that I was thinking I've got to get evidence, I guess I just knew that I would have it because that's just something that goes on.... because regardless of what assessment they follow ... you do still need to know where the children are at. I wasn't just doing it just blindly because it was there I did sort of have my own view on how it worked and what I should be doing ... it was difficult because it was trying to get the balance between being who I am as a teacher but still having to do what I'm being told to do. (Interview 6).*

#### **6.4 The implications of truth**

The notion of truth is a slippery one, particularly for this research. Methodologically the study sits within an interpretative frame, or according to Kambereis and Dimitradis' (2005) chronotope framework, chronotope 2: reading and interpretation. Epistemologically chronotope 2 posits that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore views 'knowledge, truth and rationality as relative (or perspectival) rather than absolute' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005 p.32). In other words, there is no 'one' truth, merely relative perspectives of truth. According to Nietzsche, truths are 'merely illusions,' consisting of an:

army of metaphors ... which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation (1974, p.46-47 cited in Peters 2003, p.203).

Foucauldian understanding supports this further claiming that there are no fundamental truths but procedures for their development, dispersal and supervision (Foucault 1980). Bio-politics and technologies of the self are part of this as attachments to a 'truth' can be seen as a form of power, and ideas become truths when they are related to power (Motion and Leitch 2007). In other words, there is no single truth to be discovered but notions of truth are created by those who hold power (Papadimos and Murray 2008).

Ball (2016) made reference to three modalities of truth: games of truth<sup>27</sup> (which would include bi-politics and power dynamics,) the truths about ourselves (knowing and caring for the self) and the truths we tell others (including fearless speech<sup>28</sup>). Within the data, several participants spoke about the need for feedback to be truthful or honest. These truths were related to academic performance and could be seen as 'as a truth to tell others' (Ball 2016) but also, given the inherent power relations and regulation at play in any learning context, could equally be related to games of truth. For some participants, telling the 'truth' was at times implied to be a virtuous moral economy but there was also a further implication that there was indeed one truth. These 'truths' will now be explored further, alongside the additional implications to motivation and self-esteem, both as a learner and teacher. It is important to note too that there were links between truth and trust, but these have largely been discussed within Chapter 4 under relational economies.

#### **6.4.1 Truth and honesty within learning**

Although pedagogical economies are discussed with Chapter 5, the reference to honesty by participants also necessitates some pedagogical exploration at this point. Generally, there was a consensus that truth was necessary if feedback was to be constructive even if it was emotionally difficult to hear.

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<sup>27</sup> Foucault defines games of truth as 'a set of rules by which truth is produced' (Foucault 1997, p.297)

<sup>28</sup> As will be discussed later, fearless speech (or parrhesia) is a form of free speech that speaks 'truth' to power (Foucault 2001).

*Lottie: I think honest feedback is definitely the best feedback because even if it is bad, it's constructive and you work harder to build on negative feedback. (Interview 1)*

This implies that feedback needs to feed forward into future learning and that, if this is to happen, the feedback comments need to be clear and honest. Lottie is suggesting that the identified strengths and areas to improve need to be based on a perception of truth if it is to have purpose and consequence. Of course, whose truth is open to debate. Eleanor goes further and implies that honesty is synonymous with feedback. Metaphorically, truth is an asset within the moral economies.

*Eleanor: It's honesty again, yes you've got transparency is probably the best way to put it, you've got to, if everyone is aware of their expectations, it's difficult to give any feedback if you're not sure what the point of it is, if you're not sure ... (Interview 2)*

The signalling of truth or honesty as virtuous in feedback was not just the case when the participants were referring to their role as a teacher but was also desirable for themselves as a learner if the feedback was to be constructive and pedagogically valid. Metaphorically the economy included an exchange between the roles of learner and teacher.

*Evie... 'you wouldn't want to be fed lies and then... say if you'd handed in your draft submissions and then your tutors are going it's great, it's great and then you've ended up with 42... I mean I would just rather have it straight to be honest.... but obviously tactfully done. (Interview 5)*

Eleanor extended this to discuss the feedback dynamic of pupils providing feedback to herself as a teacher. This was through their contributions to lessons. She suggested that she valued the pupils' feedback and appreciated honesty. However, she also indicated that this was not necessarily the case. This implies that although she aspired to an equitable feedback relationship between learner and teacher, there were also power dimensions at play.

*Eleanor: I know I asked leading questions as in what's the word beginning with but rather than, because I think sometimes you can ask quite leading questions to children of that age and they give the answer that they think you want to hear. So I tried not to, I was trying not to influence the next child's answer by giving too much...I think it has to be*

*the children's own thinking not something you've planted as much, because you can lead. (Interview 2)*

This could equally true in other contexts. As a student teacher, there are additional power dynamics between student and tutor/ mentor. Although Williams (2014) states that for students and mentors 'honesty is an important basis of [the] relationship' (p.324), tutors and mentors ultimately decide whether or not a student teacher meets the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). In this way, although honesty might be a morally desirable asset, pragmatically it may not be. Total honesty may not be conducive to the performative, standards driven agenda since 'the implications of truth telling and confessing are very different in each school' (Besley 2009, p.77). Jenny alluded to this when she implied that honest feedback carried risk when it was directed at the more powerful member of the feedback relationship; in other words, necessitated the courage of 'fearless speech' (Foucault 2001). This further reinforces a conceived imbalance in the feedback relationship as a consequence of the educational climate.

*Jenny: ... I think, again, it would be embarrassing to admit you didn't get something, whereas children are more resilient, aren't they? Whereas we have this like three year period to show that you can do it, not that you can't... because if your tutors think that you're struggling in something, then their opinion at university would be different. (Interview 6)*

Of course, the use of truth within feedback is dependent on the feedback giver knowing a<sup>29</sup> 'truth' and indeed the learner accepting a 'truth' and both agreeing the same 'truth'. Interestingly, the participants refer to knowing *the* truth rather than a perception of truth. This could simply be a turn of phrase but could also mean that they have an objective understanding of *one* truth and this is privileged to the 'knowledgeable other' i.e. the feedback giver as the author of *the* truth. This reinforces a teacher-centric view of feedback although that is not to say that the receiver of feedback does not also recognise the same truth. We can see here how the relational, moral and pedagogical economies are linked. It can also be argued that the apparent transfer of truth to the recipient also conceptualises feedback as 'telling' (Boud and Molloy

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<sup>29</sup> The avoidance of the truth is a deliberate one.



2012b p.14) or transmission. This gets more complex when we consider self-feedback as it assumes that one is capable of both identifying and accepting the truth about ourselves, at least how we perceive it. However, within the Foucauldian line of reasoning, 'we cannot know the truth about ourselves, because there is no truth to know, simply a series of regulatory institutions and discourses in which we are produced' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, p.131). There is no true self which makes it challenging to give true feedback about the self as a learner. In other words, the apparent 'truth' needed for constructive feedback is merely an illusion; notions of honest next steps are simply a construct of societal and cultural norms. Truth as a moral economy may also be illusory.

Although many participants aspire to truth and honesty within their conceptualisation of feedback, comments actually suggest that degrees of truth and honesty are more pertinent. Sensitivities around too much truth add a complex affective dimension to the role of the teacher in developing and supporting the whole learner pedagogically and personally. Some participants argued that honesty was important in all contexts but others stated that this was sometimes problematic, for example when giving feedback to peers. This further suggests that the need for honesty is not necessarily black and white but much subtler; it impacts potentially on the learner more widely and, in the case of honest feedback to peers, the feedback giver as well. Furthermore, the economies are working alongside and influencing each other. Understandings of feedback are not discrete.

*Interviewer: [in reference to peer feedback] It sounds like ...you have a certain degree of angst about it in terms of you don't want to upset people.*

*Jenny: Yeah.... [then in reference to earlier identified need for clear honest feedback]... it [honesty in feedback] does... but...I think ... it comes back to the feelings thing, I think everyone's just so much more sensitive here and we take it personally and then you've got to deal with your whole group being in a strop. (Interview 5)*

If we now return to the earlier example of Nick attempting to influence school policy about feedback (Section 6.3.2 Dilemmas and Tensions) it is possible to see another form of truth. Nick

had contributed to a staff meeting, drawing attention to the need for any feedback policy to have feeding forward at its centre rather than evidencing performance.

*Nick: it was a really interesting conversation and it was, it was quite good to, ... because I knew, ...that these conversations were happening so I got some books out of the library about feedback ..but I remember being able to sit there and have a conversation ... but they say that this is good and they say that's good ...because I was like but people are looking at this now and people are looking at that. So, it was, it was a really interesting time to be in school. (Interview 6)*

Arguably, Nick's contributions can be seen as a form of parrhesia (fearless free speech) that speaks the 'truth' to power (Foucault 2001; Ross 2008). Given that these conversations took place within the final assessed school placement, there was a degree of danger associated with speaking the perceived truth by Nick, given that the other members of staff present were involved in judging Nick as a student teacher. Indeed, it is the status of Nick within the context which means his contributions could be seen as parrhesia. He was effectively the powerless speaking to those in power and therefore carried risk (Christie and Sidhu 2006). Parrhesia consequently has a further 'moral quality- it takes courage to speak the truth in the face of risks and danger' (Christie and Sidhu 2006, p.461), it is one's duty to tell the 'truth' (Foucault 2001) and assumes the truth teller has 'particular moral qualities ...to know the truth and...to convey the truth' (Foucault 2001, p.15). Of course, the very notion raises a further question, how can we be sure that the 'truth' shared is in fact true? (

It is clear that notions of truth and types of truth are both frequent and problematic within feedback. Some of the personal, moral and professional difficulties associated with the honesty within feedback will now be further explored.

#### **6.4.2 The moral and professional difficulties with honesty, motivation and self esteem**

Generally, when the participants discussed the need for truth, it was couched in the language of positivity as although honesty was significant, it needed to be handled sensitively in order to

preserve self-esteem and motivation. Balancing sensitivity and constructive honesty reflect what Oser (2014) refers to as the conflict between professional morality and professional standards.

In the context of the classroom, participants had an awareness of tempering the honesty in order not to damage self-esteem.

*Lottie: Well if you, if you say to a child oh this is wrong, this is wrong, you know kind of like diminish any enthusiasm to write. Probably ruin their confidence. So if you just pick out one thing, it is small manageable target for them to achieve within the week or a day...it is about confidence and building that confidence and being reassured that it's okay not to get everything right or everything correct and it is fine. And if you approach it in a sensitive way then the child will obviously feel like oh well, I didn't get it right but I can improve and I can keep trying and trying and trying. ...So, it's important to praise them so they don't lose that enthusiasm. (Interview 6)*

For some participants they were also aware of the need for this within their own learning. Conceptions spanned across the teacher and learner role.

*Nick: You're taught to sugar coat things and I think because you get that feedback all through your education then to come to university and just get negative feedback... even in high school just getting negative feedback is a bit like, well, where is the positive praise because there must have been something good in there as well? (Interview 1)*

This points to an additional moral dimension associated with honesty. A fundamental purpose of good teaching is arguably to ensure learners are happy, and motivated. Some participants were explicit in associating tempered sensitive feedback with motivation.

*Daisy: Mostly positive feedback from me to them .... because they're obviously very young ....To motivate them to carry on and do it again.... so, they know so that when they do this sort of thing again they know what they've done well and obviously then have the confidence .... (Interview 3)*

Deci and Ryan's (2008) model of motivation identifies autonomous motivation (linked to sense of self) and controlled motivation (which includes some form of external regulation or shaping of

behaviours). The links between motivation and feedback that some of the participants describe falls between the two; by using controlled motivation to regulate external behaviour (the feedback), some participants perceived that learners would have a better sense of self and would therefore be more autonomously motivated. However, others suggested that the effect of honest feedback on motivation was very much down to the individual.

*Eleanor: it's a personality thing because some children you could say ah, come on you can do better than this, ...then others you had to really ... like this little girl I was just talking about I had to really tread softly and ... really boost up the praise first, well done you've written a lot or whatever and can you read it to me and then when she couldn't then it was a case of sort of having to gently just say right...So, you had to do all the positive stuff first and then a bit more at the end and the good old positive negative, positive negative sandwich. (Interview 4)*

This was also the case when participants spoke about their own experiences of honest feedback as a learner; an unbalanced focus on the 'feedback gap' had a negative impact on motivation and self-esteem.

*Lottie: I was quite positive about it at first but the more I kept trying things and then my feedback would get worse and I was like 'oh my god like what am I doing that's wrong?' and then I was trying everything in my power to be able to change things and it still wasn't getting any better .... I just cried all the time. I just thought what's the point of looking at it? Like what is the point? Like I was a bright eyed and bushy tailed student on day 1 in placement and... towards the end, it sounds bad because this is not me at all, it was just like 'what is the point? What is the point in me even trying?' (Interview 6)*

Lottie felt acutely that feedback had been demotivating and implied that this related to her sense of self and was therefore a form of autonomous demotivation. The focus on areas of development, although honest, meant that she had less determination and wanted to give up. The feedback impeded what could be viewed as an innate need for competence within motivation (Schüler, Sheldon and Fröhlich 2010). It is not difficult to see how the moral economies of feedback are complex, sometimes contradictory and have significant consequences. Indeed, even the notion of praise was subject to variation. Other participants felt

that if constructive feedback was smothered with too much praise, this would also be demotivating.

*Daisy: ...if you got praised for everything single thing that you did right every day then you'd be there forever, because if you get praised all the time ... it's not really effective. So, that might be a bit demotivating as well. (Interview 3)*

This is supported by Murtagh (2014) who found that although teachers often focus on trying to make their feedback motivating, sometimes the opposite occurs as learners become over dependent on the teacher thereby reducing autonomous motivation. Also praise tends to be formed as evaluative rather than constructive feedback. This may feel sensitive but can result in 'devaluing the evaluation to the point where its function was merely phatic' (Alexander 2000, p.369 cited in Murtagh 2014, p.519). If feedback is merely phatic there is a further moral correlation as it serves to create goodwill and good feeling rather than move the learning forward. Daisy supported this when she suggested that feedback was more related to social niceties than developed feedback practice. *'It's just in general, I try not to offend people...'* (Daisy Interview 3.)

The link between sensitive feedback and motivation was a conception, or 'essence' where participants clearly translated their own experiences as a learner to the way they gave feedback as a teacher. The participants had a strong moral purpose in ensuring their pupils did not feel the same way that they themselves had felt when they experienced what they perceived to be insensitive feedback. Motivation as a moral economy was transferrable across the roles of learner and teacher.

*Daisy: I've sort of believed that [the necessity for positive feedback] more strongly since I first started because I've been on placement more. So, you can see what sort of an impact like having a positive attitude around children. And also last year when I was on placement my mentor didn't do the positive thing, she just essentially was very negative for about an hour and then told me what was good, which was a bit depressing, really. So that made me think that's not what I need to do because it's not very good... (Interview 3)*

The need, or not, to tell the truth within feedback certainly has a moral dimension. Participants were aware (and sometimes felt the burden) of the implications of truth to motivation. There was also evidence that 'truth' had implications for teacher/learner identity. This, and the wider moral links to identity, will now be discussed.

### **6.5 Teacher Identity and the Personal Moral Compass**

Just as Foucault argues there is no one truth (1980), similarly nobody is born with an innate personal identity but rather identity is formed and reformed over time through experience and the influence of the technologies of control (Besley 2009). This fits well with the methodological basis of this study i.e. that understanding (including understanding about one self) is formed through experiences. If, as Arthur (2015) suggests, good teachers have particular moral and ethical characteristics (as explored earlier,) it seems reasonable that these values also inform and underpin teacher identity. In other words, teacher identity includes a personal moral compass which is developed and redeveloped through experience. This is supported by Sutherland, Howard and Markauskaite who state 'teachers' identities are central to their beliefs, values and practices that guide their actions' (2010, p.455).

The experience of feedback will be part of identity formation, both receiving feedback as a learner and also the practice of how the teachers choose to offer feedback. Both reveal, reinforce and challenge moral values. Furthermore, student teachers will have their identity significantly influenced by the teachers they encounter (Buchanan 2015) and this will include differing moral compasses which may present themselves in feedback practice. Lacanian understanding would categorise this as the ideal-ego, an idealistic image of what a teacher should be like, gathered from experiences of other teachers or representations of teachers. Lacan (2001) also identifies the influence of policy and discourse as the ego-deal. This presents an alternative ideal image of a good teacher. Both of these can compete with one another producing tensions between the individual idealism and the idealism presented in policy.

Student teachers could therefore begin training with an expectation that *good* teachers would behave in a certain way and hold certain moral values. As novices, they would pursue this ideal.

Indeed, 'early idealism' (Furlong and Maynard 1995 p.73) has certainly been recognised as a stage of teacher development which is formed from expectations and experience of significant teachers. The process of becoming a teacher will challenge student teacher ideals of what a good teacher is as student teachers encounter other class teachers, mentors and tutors, as well as respond to the symbolic ideals presented in policy and discourse.

Feedback has the potential to validate the attainment of the student teacher ideal or destroy its credibility as something not worth pursuing, and indeed feedback can also enable the transfer of values (or moral economies). This section will explore how the receipt of feedback can validate and contradict personal identity (and the associated moral economies) and also how the practice of giving feedback can strengthen or undermine identity.

### **6.5.1 Feedback to validate identity**

Several of the participants discussed experiences of feedback which had either reinforced or challenged their identity. This was largely in reference to their experiences as a learner.

Eleanor discussed how positive feedback from her mentor had authenticated the belief that she could be a good teacher. This was particularly meaningful as it came from somebody she respected as a 'good' teacher and Eleanor therefore really valued her opinion. The feedback validated her professional capabilities and identity allowing for consolidation of the metaphorical economies.

*Eleanor: People have said for years, 'You should teach,' friends who are teachers, family members and I've always kind of gone, 'But what if I'm not very good?' ... So for someone who's seen me interacting, who isn't closely related [to me] ... when someone who's only met you a couple of months ago and only seen you for a few days really, sees some potential in you then that's a lot more meaningful... '....things like, 'She's a natural and excellent relationships with the children,' things that I thought were important. You can't teach without having a good relationship with the children, so reading things like that from someone whose opinion I value ... it's hard, because we never want to believe we're as good as we are or that we could be. So, when you hear it from somebody else I think your first response is, 'Really?! You think that? Okay,' and then you start to think, Well, maybe I am. Maybe I can,' which I think is where I start to*

*get emotional because I'm not very good at seeing my potential....I suppose I've started now, since this, to think 'I am already a teacher,' in the early stages of it, but 'I'm becoming a teacher,' rather than, 'I might become a teacher.'* (Interview 1)

It appears that Eleanor's feedback from another teacher contributed to, or reinforced, her ideal-ego. The teacher had the same values and philosophy that Eleanor aspired to and, as such, her feedback enabled her ideal to feel less idealistic.

Conversely, other participants discussed how feedback had felt like an assault on their identity. It is difficult to tell whether this diminished or reinforced their identity, but it certainly unsettled them by causing a questioning of their values and self-perception. Nick referred to the fact that the feedback appeared to criticise something in which he felt had a degree of competence (in this case creativity).

*Nick: You're not just writing an essay. It's a creative thing so you're thinking a lot and you're sort of putting yourself out there a little bit...you feel more vulnerable...but that's what I know I can do well... because you care about it so much it does feel a lot more personal.* (Interview 1)

This indicates that feedback was viewed as exposing, particularly in relation to his personal identity and perception of competence. Other participants were able to articulate how they could separate feedback about performance or competence from their identity.

*Eleanor: I still could've done better on my last appraisal than I did but because I knew, because I'd accepted like this is where I am, I'm at a personal low but it doesn't necessarily mean that this is it, this is my ability as a teacher because all the verbal feedback I got overall from the teacher ... you are going to be a good teacher, you can be a good teacher. So I was like right that's just what I've got to keep in my mind and ....* (Interview 2)

This separation of evidenced professional competence and identity is an interesting one. Being judged in a more holistic and moral sense, rather than the technicalities of teaching, is arguably about a professional rather than technical identity (Arthur et al. 2015). However, notions of identity seem to be becoming more closely linked to performance standards; the ego-ideal will certainly be influenced by any measure that attempts to quantify what a good teacher is. As



Salifu and Agbenyega state 'teacher identity is constantly being embedded in power relations, ideology, and culture' (2016, p.62). Buchanan goes further to suggest that the focus on standards and performance in fact creates a post-professional rather than a professional model of teaching (Buchanan 2015) and this will in turn encourage a post professional teacher identity. Eleanor's separation of measured performance and identity also seems to be an example of self-care within the power dynamics of performance. In Foucauldian terms, Eleanor is using technologies of the self; forging an identity through self-formation i.e. knowing oneself and what is best for oneself (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000).

There was clearly variation between participants in terms of whether feedback influenced identity and, if it did, whether it was affirmatory or contradictory. Feedback was a mechanism for reinforcing both the ego-ideal (as an experience with another teacher) and the ideal-ego (as feedback was also related to the standards that needed to be met). Furthermore, Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016) suggest that individual teacher identities are often part of a collective norm. For student teachers these norms will include those expressed within their teacher education programme and also the norms encountered within their differing school experiences. Identities (whether collective or individual) are practised (Cochran-Smith 2003) therefore student teacher identities are likely to be shaped by the feedback practices they encounter (as teachers) during school placement. In metaphorical terms, the moral economies are influenced by, accumulated in and transferred between the differing discourses, communities and experiences within a teacher education programme. Feedback is a mechanism for this.

### **6.5.2 The practice of feedback as part of the formation of identity**

If teacher identity is formed through experience, for student teachers this will include their experiences as both a learner and a teacher. This will include observing and engaging with differing feedback practises in the settings in which they are learners and the settings in which they practise feedback themselves. This final section will consider whether the practice and nature of feedback influences the formation of identity.

The development of teacher identity by working with other teachers is a form of apprenticeship (Buchanan 2015) but that is not to say that the values associated with feedback experienced are

taken on wholesale. Evie was able to articulate how she had been influenced by the teachers she had worked with in terms of feedback practice.

*Evie: Yes, obviously you don't want to embarrass the child or make them feel, like damage their self-esteem or anything. But providing you just kind of think ... about what you are saying then it can be okay. Or even say that you will go and speak to that child after ... like when the group is working or something... I mean it is a great way to boost self-esteem... I think they felt quite proud when I said oh I loved how you've done that there and quite specifically praised them. And then it helps the others kind of boost their kind of work as well ...it's how Mr [mentor's name] feeds back to me and he always starts with a positive and ... it's always constructive criticism and I hope that I use that as well in my teaching when I am giving feedback...that same kind of structure. (Interview 2)*

The metaphorical moral economies observed in the teacher's feedback practice were transferred to Evie. She had noticed that her mentor always included positive and constructive comments within feedback to her as a learner so became conscious of trying to do the same with the children she taught. This seems to be a learnt behaviour built upon what she considers to be the *right* thing to do. The feedback practice observed and experienced by Evie allowed her identity to be shaped by 'current circumstances' as it 'is constantly in motion, developing as teachers engage in their daily practices and reflect on their work' (Buchanan 2015, p.703). Rodgers and Scott (2008, p.751) support this, stating that teacher identities are constructed and reconstructed through 'interaction with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the self-lives, learns, and functions'; the potential interactions within a teacher education programme are effectively the conduit for the transfer of moral economies in feedback practices.

There were also examples of feedback practice that was in opposition to the student teacher's identity.

*Daisy: I think in year one you're just a bit blindly following what the school do ...but I think even though I might've been following what the school wanted me to do it wasn't necessarily my opinion ... now I was thinking well ...this isn't the method I'd use or this is the method I'd use for my own class. (Interview 6)*

Daisy was also able to reflect how her desired practice had changed over time as her identity became clearer and stronger. This caused some tension when she attempted to negotiate school/national policy and what she felt was important. Metaphorically, the transfer of economies did not take place but did influence, and in Daisy's case affirm, the economies held by the student teacher. There is an indication here that the feedback practice she needed to take part in was not what she viewed as the *right* action but also that she knew she had to comply. Given the power dynamics within a final placement, her dilemma was more than likely an unspoken form of 'fearless speech' (Foucault 2001). Both Friesen and Besley (2013) and Buchanan (2015) recognise that student teachers are frequently faced with struggles such as these as they are both exposed to differing practice and values, have preconceived identities challenged and become more determined in what they believe makes a good teacher. As Buchanan states 'the tensions of identity formation during teacher education can be jarring, and aren't always examined explicitly through participation in the program' (2015, p.703). This is an area worthy of serious consideration by teacher educators.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored some of the moral dimensions (or economies) associated with feedback as evidenced by the participants. Truth, fairness, and identity have been examined as well as wider discussion on teaching as a moral duty. It is clear that the performativity, and the associated standards agenda, have had significant influence on the participants' conceptions related to feedback, and indeed teaching, in a moral sense by distorting what is viewed as good. The polarisation of educational discourse has compounded this further by redefining what is right to do and what a good teacher looks like. As a result, there are implications for teacher identity. The chapter has also found how the moral economies are not discrete but are linked the relational and pedagogical. These links are variable and moveable. All of this illustrates how, for student teachers, conceptions of feedback are multiple, fluid, complex and messy with ongoing interplay between the role of teacher and learner. There is not one model of feedback that can be applied to all participants, roles and contexts.

Together with Chapter 4 (relational economies) and 5 (pedagogical economies) the data has been used to identify variation between student teacher conceptions as a learner and as a teacher in relation to the first two research questions: what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as a learner; what are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers? The next chapter will now focus on how these conceptions developed over the period of the study (and the student teachers' teacher education programme) by examining two participant stories. The following chapter will therefore focus on the third research question: what are the relationships between the student teachers' developing understanding of feedback as a student and a teacher?



## Chapter 7: Participant Stories of how Understanding Develops

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## **7:1 Introduction**

The previous three chapters have explored variation in conceptions of feedback amongst the participants in relation to the research questions:

1. What are the student teacher's conceptions of feedback as a learner?
2. What are the student teacher's conceptions of feedback as a student teacher?

This longer chapter will now focus on particular participants in order to answer research question 3: what are the student teacher's developing understandings of feedback? Two participant stories will be the focus of this chapter: Nick and Jenny. These have been chosen as their changing understanding includes both similarities and differences across a range of areas. For each, changes in their understanding will be tracked across the period of study and programme<sup>30</sup>. How their conceptions changed over the period of the research will be examined with reference to key moments, events and experiences; threshold concepts and disavowed knowledge. The identification of these conceptions (or 'essences' of feedback) is based upon the outcome matrix used as part of the phenomenographic analysis. The chapter does not argue that the development of these conceptions can be generalised across all the participants in this study, or indeed other student teachers. The purpose is to present two different illustrative examples of development of understandings of feedback. The choice of two, rather than one, participants does allow for some further identification of variation although, on the whole, the two stories are treated as discrete exemplars. The chapter will argue that for the two participants significant conceptions altered over time as their experiences and reflections also grew. As has been the case in earlier chapters, on occasions the discussion that follows is exemplified with participant comments already used in the study in relation to research questions 1 and 2.

As part of this discussion, models of teacher development will be referred to. It is worth stating at this point however that reference to such models of learning does represent something of a methodological conflict. Such models suggest rather a linear staged approach to learning and,

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<sup>30</sup> Programme refers to the Initial Teacher Education degree the participants were part of for three years.



given that the premise of this study is that learning takes place through experience, and that experiences differ between individuals, this sits rather uncomfortably. Nevertheless, the models do provide a useful conversational partner given that much of the literature on teacher development refers to them. Indeed, referring to them alongside the data will allow for shortcomings of the models to be highlighted. As such use will be made of existing developmental models of teacher development such as McLean, Bond and Nicholson's 'novice to experienced learner' (2014), Fuller and Brown's (1975) model of 'survival, mastery and resistant to change or consequence orientated' (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p.68), Fuller's model of concerns (Conway and Clark 2003) and adapted versions of Lewin's change model (Guskey 2002).

Novice is a term commonly used within such models to describe student or early teachers (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014; Brody and Hadar 2015) and students entering Higher Education will undoubtedly be shaped by the feedback they receive (Evans 2016). However, feedback does not begin in Higher Education. The research participants within the study arrived at university with an understanding of feedback already in place given that they had received assessment feedback throughout their own education (Lortie 1973). As such, it is unlikely the participants were true novices in terms of feedback at the start of the project and, as such, alignment with the models listed will not necessarily be clear cut. Models of teacher development from both Initial Teacher Education and continued professional development of qualified teachers will be drawn on, given that there are few models solely focused on Initial Teacher Education (Lee and Schallert 2016). Furthermore, the models of existing teacher development do not necessarily take account of social and political (policy) influences of which the last twenty years of education has had many. Indeed, this period has witnessed a policy epidemic (Levin 1998) or policy pandemic (Vidovich 2009). As many models of teacher development originated over twenty years ago, these do not factor in more current educational change which has impacted on teacher education and professional development.

## **7.2 The Participants**

Two participants were selected for this chapter. The selection was not made until mid-way through the study when themes (or essences) had begun to emerge for all participants. However, the two participants focused on in this chapter were of particular interest. Nick

demonstrated wholehearted engagement in the process throughout and also had a critical eye on feedback. Jenny was also fully invested but was more focused on what she viewed as ‘good practice’ in order to meet the Standards. As a pair both participants represent two different responses to teacher education.

As this chapter is concerned with teacher development, the interviews are used chronologically over the three years of the study. The table below outlines when these interviews occurred in relation to the time of year and also place in the training.

Interview	Year of the Course	Stage of the Course	Month of Year
1	Year 1	End of Semester 1 Pre SE1 block	January
2	Year 1	End of Semester 2 Post SE1 block	June
3	Year 2	End of Semester 1 Pre SE2 block	January
4	Year 2	End of Semester 2 Post SE2 block	May
5	Year 3	Towards the end of Semester Pre SE3 block	December
6	Year 3	End of Semester 2 Post SE3 block	May

Table 2 Interview Calendar

### **7.3 Participant 1: Nick**

Nick was a male mature student. Before beginning university, Nick had been a student at drama school but had left the course and started volunteering in a primary school. This experience had consolidated his desire to teach. Nick’s experiences in further education had informed his understanding of feedback. Some of these conceptions were reinforced during his three year teacher education programme, while others were challenged, critiqued and altered. The

identification of these changes emerged iteratively from the interview data. This section will therefore analyse several changes related to: teacher-centricity; sugar coating; consequence; compliance and relationships. Chronologically ordered interview comments are used to exemplify how understanding developed in these areas over time.

### 7.3.1 From teacher to learner-centricity

Many of Nick's comments about feedback at the start of his training implied a teacher-centric view of feedback where the feedback giver was the knowledgeable other and the purpose of feedback was to transfer this view of knowledge through correction. This revealed itself in several ways over his first year. When discussing the feedback he received as a learner, Nick stated that he preferred concise feedback. The example he gave was a form of correction.

*Nick (in reference to two pieces of recent feedback): both of them were concise but they were constructive. It was like, 'Look at your referencing, don't put initials.' (Interview 1)*

As a learner, Nick expressed a preference for being told what to correct or what to include. His comments related to a key experience of receiving (what he felt was) 'negative' feedback. Part of his frustration with the feedback was that the criteria had not been made clear by the tutor. If it had been, Nick would have made sure all elements were included. Nick felt that the tutor was privy to an ideal of perfection and that feedback allowed the learner to have this ideal revealed or, as Bloxham and West (2004) put it, to be exposed to the 'rules of the game' (p.721). The rules of the game are the tacit knowledge needed to be successful through assessments. Of course, this tacit knowledge does not necessarily mean only one form of knowledge, but nevertheless Nick implies there is one form, known by the teacher, that has to be transferred to the learner. This was also true within Nick's discussions related to his role as teacher.

*Nick: [in reference to the filmed lesson] ...during the lesson I was like why are they not moving how I want them to move and actually, it probably wasn't the clearest way to explain ...because basically I'd told them to do it ... I don't actually think it's probably the clearest instruction.... I was trying to encourage them and get them to uniformly move and I was, I was trying to get my, the image which was in my head into their heads for them then to work with...I was modelling it to try and*

*get them to understand what sort of movements I was looking for...*  
(Interview 2)

Nick's comments about the transfer of his own image to the pupils resonate with the concept of the learning/feedback as transmission, telling or a 'gift' (Askew and Lodge 2000, p.5), and therefore largely focused on direct instruction or correction. This reveals a view of learning as information which is 'constant, fixed and not open to interpretation or adaption' (McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014, p.5). Boud and Molloy (2012b) identify this form of feedback as 'known transmissive rituals whereby the expert tells the novice' (p.15). This would further imply lack of engagement in feedback practice is the fault of the learner rather than the giver. The tutor's responsibility is to tell, the learner's to listen. Here Nick's conception shows slight deviation as he seems to apportion blame for the lack of engagement to the quality of his instruction. In other words, if he had 'told' more effectively, the children would have listened more effectively. Nick is more open to critiquing his own role in this feedback process given his relative inexperience as a teacher; he does not yet see himself as the 'expert' in terms of the expert telling the novice. It is also interesting to note that teaching as transmission is used by Korthagen (2013) as an example of the kind of belief that pre-training teachers often bring with them based on their own schooling. It is a belief that is often in opposition to the pedagogy promoted in teacher education programmes.

Whilst not explicit, there is further evidence of Nick's understanding of feedback as telling in Year Two of the study (and his programme). As a student at University Nick emphasised the role of dialogue within feedback but suggested it was useful in terms of clarifying the message from teacher to learner rather than developing understanding between them or encouraging a new direction.

*Nick: When I spoke to the person that marked it... she explained what that actually meant and I was like 'that makes sense. (Interview 3)*

With a transmissive view of learning, the clarity of the message is particularly important and Nick was clear that he needed feedback to be very specific- in other words, *what exactly do I need to know, what do I need to change?* As a learner, Nick referred to having to work out the intention of the feedback giver and it is plausible that the intention referred to the information

transferred. He was frustrated because the information did not embody or reflect the intention adequately.

*Nick: ... when feedback's given but it's not specific, it's sort of a bit wishy washy...it didn't seem like it was directed anywhere...like you have to figure out their point of view when they're reading it. (Interview 3)*

A teacher-centric view of feedback was also clear when Nick spoke about himself as a teacher. Again, he valued verbal feedback as it enabled clarity in terms of exactly what the teacher felt needed to be corrected rather than necessarily developing new understandings.

*Nick: [discussing an example of verbal feedback] just look at this one sentence, check your spelling ... and it could just be that you highlight that one sentence and you say think of your phonics. Whereas others need you to actually say to them this is spelt wrong because of this, remember this sound, remember that... (Interview 4)*

Within the final year of the programme there was evidence that Nick's understanding developed to become a little broader. Although he used examples of areas which are fairly transmissive, he also indicated that correction is not enough. Nick was becoming aware that although feedback may superficially appear to close a gap, unless the misconceptions that caused the gap are explored, true learning will not take place. This is an implicit reference at this point to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, the optimum gap between a learner's current and achievable understanding.

*Nick: ...But it [feedback] gives, as a teacher, it gives you that opportunity to build those building blocks and if you're going to target absolutely everything...if a child doesn't know how to spell something tell them the correct thing and you highlight that. Then you highlight the fact they've not used a noun correctly then you have to highlight that they've not used a fronted adverbial phrase, then .... it's too far ahead for them to even understand. So there needs to be that, what comes just before the point where they've made the error so that's where they're at. So that's where they need to go and what's the very next step from where they're at? And develop it from there so there needs to be an understanding of their progression to give appropriate feedback. (Interview 5)*

This change reflects Fuller's 1969 model of teacher development (Conway and Clark 2003), in that Nick has moved from concern with self (which correlates with a transmissive or teacher-centric view of feedback) to a concern with the needs of pupils which Fuller defines as late teaching. Late teaching is appropriate given that the change occurs towards the end of the training programme. Furthermore, elements of Nick's pedagogical understanding and the associated skills echo the findings of de Vries, van de Grift, Wim and Jansen (2014), who identified classroom management and climate as earlier aspects of teacher expertise, moving to explanation (arguably transmission) and then learning strategies and differentiation. Being able to recognise the next most valuable steps in learning as part of feedback aligns with these later stages.

In one of his last interviews, Nick describes a much broader, and indeed fully dialogic, view of feedback when he discussed receiving feedback from a tutor. This moves away from the transmissive, corrective form of feedback he focused on earlier in his training.

*Nick: He [the tutor] pretty much tore it apart and was like, you're going in the wrong direction ... and we sat down together and worked and rebuilt the idea and things. (Interview 5)*

Nick went further stating that *'teaching is feedback and good quality teaching is good quality feedback'* (Interview 6), further evidence that he was viewing feedback in a much broader sense, synonymous with teaching and learning rather than as a separate process. He attributed his changed understanding to a range of experiences within his training stating that it was just *'a natural progression that I've sort of seen it a bit more and a bit more and a bit more'* (Interview 6); the experiences and reflections on the experiences, informed his thinking. Nick's development seems to be based upon 'the mediating process of reflection and enactment' (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, p.950) and this allowed for a more nuanced understanding. His reflections also support Askew and Lodge's feedback continuum (2000) which moves from conceptualising feedback as gifted from teacher to learner, understanding it as 'ping pong' or as 'loops' (Askew and Lodge 2000) reflecting an understanding of learning that moves from transmission to construction and co-construction (Clarke 2003). Teacher-centricity was therefore a conception of feedback that developed and changed over time.

### 7.3.2 From 'sugar coating' to 'hard skinned'

The second changed conception was related to the 'sugar coating' of feedback. One of Nick's key experiences resulting in a threshold concept being breached was when he received what he perceived to be negative feedback. Over the course of Year 1, it is possible to see the significance of this experience and how, towards the end of the year, this caused him to grapple with the associated troublesome knowledge. Initially Nick felt strongly that feedback should be 'sugar coated' and implied that this was a conception learnt through his own schooling. This reinforces the point that these participants were not true novices as they had already spent several years within the education system experiencing, and therefore conceptualising, feedback.

*Nick: If it had been structured with a positive and a negative... like when you went to primary school, you were always taught to mark with two stars and a wish. You're taught to sugar coat things and I think because you get that feedback all through your education then to come to university and just get negative feedback... even in high school just getting negative feedback is a bit like, 'Well, where is the positive praise because there must have been something good in there as well?' (Interview 1)*

Although Nick attributes this understanding to his previous schooling, it was his experience of receiving what he felt to be unfair and negative feedback that reinforced this further. The feedback experience was certainly an emotional one. Nick stated he felt '*disheartened*', '*angry*' and '*agitated*.' It has been acknowledged that receiving feedback can be emotional (Pekrun et al. 2002; Eva et al. 2012) but this is often pronounced when the feedback is unexpected (Sargeant et al. 2011) which was the case for Nick. The reaction was further heightened because the feedback was related to creativity, something with which Nick self-identified. A result, rather than feedback being perceived as related to the task, it is interpreted as related to the self. As Eva argues:

feedback of any form is never delivered or received in a vacuum...one cannot take the 'self' out of the assessment if the goal is to have the information being delivered be deliberately incorporated [by the receiver] into practice (2012, p.17).

Such entanglement between task and self can have an impact on how the feedback itself is engaged with or valued (Bing-You and Trowbridge 2009; Sargeant et al. 2011; Dennis et al. 2018) which aligns to Nick's experience when he describes how disheartened he feels. There is further evidence of this in an additional comment in reference to prior experience where Nick appears to see feedback as a threat.

*Nick: I was like, 'No, if my teacher thinks I'm crap I'm not going to stick around and hear it.' (Interview 1)*

Nick's comments imply that the feedback had a direct impact on his self-efficacy; 'one's sense of being able to deal effectively with a task' (Kunkel 2012), which Schiefele and Schnaffner (2015) link directly to student teachers' well-being and ability to complete their training. If so, the experience of feedback has even wider connotations for student teachers. Furthermore, if identity is based upon who or what an individual is perceived to be by him/herself and by others (Lee and Schallert 2016), in this interview, Nick avoids feedback that influences the way he feels he is perceived and therefore challenges his identity itself. Although during the first interview there is evidence that Nick linked feedback to identity (and subsequently motivation/demotivation), as the year progressed, there was also evidence of development in his thinking. Within the second interview, Nick returned to the notion of sugar coating and indicated that within his own learning, this was now less relevant as the value he attributed to feedback had changed.

*Nick: The sugar coated thing, it's really interesting I forgotten I'd said that; I think for pupils like when you, when I'm giving feedback to students I think it potentially still needs to in the sense that the whole ethos of like two stars and a wish and things like that its setting off, its starting on a you've done this well, you've done that well let's look at this sort of thing. But then in terms of my own feedback ... like ... this morning, I was looking over it and I was like some of this is quite blunt and to the point but I appreciate it, I'm just like okay that's fine that's what I need to work on. I appreciate that I have room to grow and I needed to. From the feedback that I've received on placement, because I've had some really good lessons which I've had great feedback from and then I had like an Requires Improvement lesson in maths which upset me to no end but from being upset I saw that the feedback is valid. (Interview 2)*



For Nick, the experience of school placement was key to this change in understanding because of the timeliness and frequency of the feedback. However, although Nick stated he had adjusted his thinking, even mid-way through the project some of his comments revealed that he was still working through this change.

*Nick: I think it needs to be clear and succinct [to the point] but definitely for children it needs some form of sugar coating because I've seen what just being blunt with them does.*

*Interviewer: Why just for children?*

*Nick: I don't know maybe it's just a social thing that I think as an adult you should just be able to take it.*

*Interviewer: Do you think people do take it as an adult?*

*Nick: No, I don't so I wouldn't imagine anybody else does. So maybe adults do need sugar coating but in a different, maybe not in a different way... I guess we all want to see the positive and I think if you give someone a positive it makes your feedback more ... like a constructive criticism than just a criticism....*

*[discussing written feedback in school] ... It sounds harsh but I would get rid of the words 'well done', I'm fed up of putting that like now...it seems to lead pupils to false hope for the future... so I would ... get rid of the whole 'well done you tried really hard this lesson...I feel like I can be more critical and more pinpoint to what I'm actually [saying]' ( Interview 3)*

Nick consistently used language throughout the interviews that indicated that without 'sugar coating' feedback can be somewhat of an insensitive experience. His interviews are peppered with emotive adjectives such as 'harsh' and 'brutal' to describe feedback, for example, 'a teacher... can ... be quite happy to give harsh feedback to a child' (Interview 3), 'we could mark in that brutal ... way' (Interview 4), 'your work's been ripped to shreds' (Interview 4) and 'I was just going to be laying into them which is what the other teachers did do with them if they did work wrong, it was very much like laying into them' (Interview 4). In fact, the very use of the term sugar coating indicates that feedback is itself unpleasant and needs softening. So, although Nick emphasises the importance of clear constructive feedback, the lack of softening is personally

problematic to him. The need for softening could be a form of disavowed knowledge (Taubman 2012), i.e. something that is both known and denied at the same time. Nick states that clear focused feedback is more important than pleasantries but, in reality, these are still significant to him.

As Nick moved towards the end of the training, he was more definite in his rejection of sugar coating.

*Nick: I'm not sugar coating, I don't sugar coat my feedback I present it in a way that explains why, and I think, I think that's the thing I've come to realise as well even with, like even with foundation children you can explain to them. (Interview 6)*

The change seems to be based upon a shift in pedagogical understanding. Nick was becoming more aware of the need for feedback to move learners on and, as a result, clarity became more and more important. In fact, clarity was more important than sugar coated compliments; the pedagogical rather than the relational economies related to feedback were more significant to him at this stage. Nick was explicit in stating that he was now to separate himself from the actual feedback and he used this with the children he taught. This was partly because he had appeared to have become more confident and assured in his own identity. We can see this in the comment that follows next (*'I know who I am'*) when Nick also indicates that pedagogical economies were present in both of his roles (learner and teacher) on his final school experience (SE3).

*Nick: [reflecting on previous interviews] I think there was lots of discussion wasn't there about finding it personal and like I think that's finally going and I don't know whether that's just because I'm becoming more hard skinned and a bit... cockier like I know who I am, and I know what I'm on about and I know what I want... (Interview 6)*

*Nick: [then in reference to a specific piece of feedback he had received] not all of [the feedback] was good and it annoyed me but it didn't take me all day to get over it, whereas before it would take me a good few days before I could even go back to it, I was just like alright fine.. So, it's gone from being ... personal... and I think that translates into how I was*

*approaching feedback in SE3<sup>31</sup> with pupils because, especially year ones they take things really personally. So, it was about helping them understand that I'm not, I'm not judging [their] ideas I'm judging whether [they] can put a full stop and a capital letter on the sentence. (Interview 6)*

If the formation of a strong confident identity informed this development, it is difficult to identify one single experience which prompted the change. Instead, time seems to have made the difference, time to move from the survival stage in teaching, to start feeling like a master; to reflect and time to feel successful. Oosterheert and Vermunt (2003) would argue that this represented a change from survival to reproduction orientation where student teachers are focused on improvement.

Drawing on identity and social identity theory, Stets and Burke (2000, p.225) define identity as 'the categorisation of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance.' In such a way, Nick has begun to feel like he inhabits the role of learner *and* teacher as with experience he has become accustomed to what this means, the expectations and the behaviours. Another explanation is that he had moved away from an imaginary identity to an accepted manifested identity. This concrete identity was based on moving learning on rather than making learners feel good (although of course these are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Lacan argues that as humans we strive to achieve an unobtainable fantasy, a flawless identity in conflict with the reality of our identity (Lacan 2001; Ruti 2008). For Nick, the early experiences of feedback were emotionally challenging as they highlighted that his perceived, and ideal, identity was not necessarily manifested. As Ruti states, there is an 'existential anxiety of living with the awareness that life is contingent, and that, ultimately, we do not have any positive or stable identity' (2008, p.561). For Nick, feedback was a mechanism for highlighting the conflict between ideal and reality. As his identity developed over time and became more realistic, feedback became more palatable. In terms of teacher development models, 'early idealism' (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p.73) is a recognised stage of early teacher development; Nick appears to have been grappling

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<sup>31</sup> School Experience 3- the final School Experience (SE) of the programme

with this himself at the start of his training when he managed the difference between the ideal and reality.

The chapter will now discuss the third area of development for Nick.

### **7.3.3 Feedback as an event to feedback as a process**

A related changed conception is that of consequence and timeliness; this contributed to Nick's changing understanding, focusing on the pedagogical rather than emotional value of feedback. His experience of feedback on his first school experience was key to this. School experience feedback differs from academic feedback as it is largely verbal, occurs frequently and, given the limited time frame, needs to be actioned promptly. The experience of receiving feedback in this manner helped Nick to conceptualise feedback as an actionable formative process and this gave it value. His comments also highlight the influence of getting feedback on a regular basis.

*Nick: I don't know whether it's just because placement is so go, go, go, go, go you don't get time to really think about it but I've noticed that recently when ... I receive feedback I take it on board a lot quicker and deal with it and action it... I don't know if my head's just in the game, like I don't know whether it's just because, because I've had some really good feedback and I can see that this is the right career for me now, I am heading in the right direction and it sort of put some of my worries aside. I don't know whether that just now means that whenever I got some bad feedback I don't see it as bad feedback I see it as constructive.*

*Interviewer: So what you're saying is that the good feedback you have has given you confidence that you can do this, so when you get that bad, you know not as positive feedback that doesn't knock your confidence and you don't think I can't do this, I think how can I use this to be better?*

*Nick: Yes, yes and I think maybe it's because the, the positive feedback is coming from the same people that the negative feedback is.... Obviously ... I still got upset by it but I thought this person has last week said my lesson was outstanding, for them now to say it's alright well obviously there must be some firm grounding because it's not favouritism, it's not personal it is literally just this is what I've observed, this is what it is. So I just thought... right what do I need to do, set myself some little action points to work on. (Interview 2)*

It is interesting to note how Nick himself is trying to analyse this change in understanding. This indicates that Nick is in the process of making sense of, what for him, is a threshold concept; even if feedback lacks positivity, it is still useful and should be used. As has been outlined in Chapter 3, threshold concepts describe concepts that are viewed as 'central to the mastery of their subject' (Cousin 2006, p.1). Understanding the formative potential of feedback is central not only to the subject but also to the practice of learning to be a teacher or indeed a scholar. So as a concept, formative feedback is pivotal and critical for developing disciplinary knowledge (Timmerman et al. 2013; Gosselin et al. 2016). Meyer and Land identify a number of key features of a threshold concept, of which one is particularly pertinent: the concept should have a degree of troublesome knowledge (Perkins 1999) e.g. be somewhat counterintuitive, uncomfortable or go against common sense (Cousin 2006). This is the case for Nick, for to acknowledge that 'negative' feedback is useful means an implicit acknowledgement that his previous reactions to such feedback may have been inappropriate. The timeliness and frequency of feedback during placement were key to this as ignoring or resisting feedback, no matter how upsetting, was not really an option. Recognising the impact of engaging with the feedback, further reinforced its usefulness. This development could be linked to Guskey's (2002) model of teacher change: changes to practice -> changes to pupil outcomes -> changes to teacher beliefs. Nick had to change his practice and accept the feedback. This resulted in a change in outcomes; his own outcomes as a student teacher making him more successful. As a result, he changed his beliefs.

There was a further softening within the second year of the project. When reflecting on his previous reactions to feedback, Nick acknowledged that the feedback itself could have been formative, constructive and useful, but that he failed to recognise it as such at the time and so did not benefit from it as he might have done.

*Nick: ...if you dismiss someone and they give you something that's really good, yeah maybe you are cutting your nose off to spite your face  
(Interview 3)*

Nick was clearly rethinking the feedback which he had received and had also given during the previous year with an increased importance placed on its formative nature rather than how sensitively it was phrased.

*Nick: [in reference to an example of feedback from the previous year] ...it's probably a similar length sentence and the amount of description as previous feedback, that maybe I would have passed off as being a little blunt before. (Interview 3)*

There is a theoretical link to agency here. Nick wanted to be judged as a *better* student teacher and he had recognised, through his experience on placement, that responding to feedback was a way of achieving this. This may have initially been quite a cynical decision i.e. he was being *seen* to do the right professional thing, but he had come to realise the possible rewards from responding to feedback in that it enabled him to move closer to his ideal identity- a professional teacher. Sadler (1989) identifies recognising, and closing, a learning gap as key components of feedback; this requires agency. The action (and agency) are crucial if the feedback gap is to be closed; without it feedback does not have consequence and does not feed-forward. Nick has recognised, or at least comes to terms with the fact that feedback often indicates a gap and that it is also his interest to close that gap. In attempting to fill the gap (or lack,) Nick has been driven to reach a certain level of competence.

Not only did Nick indicate that he came to realise the importance of consequence within the feedback he received, he also established a similar link to school practice. Whether one influenced the other is difficult to tell, but Nick does develop the notion of feedback as consequence further, for example, when he implicitly referenced learner self-efficacy as being desirable because it empowers learners to give and view feedback independently and positively in order to make improvements.

*Nick: Yeah, I want...I think that's why I wanted to do primary as well, like I want to foster the right mindset in children. (Interview 3)*

By the final year, Nick had developed this concept even further; he implied a stronger link between feedback and self-efficacy/self-motivation.

*Nick: [it] comes back to feedback again, doesn't it? A growth mindset is all about intrinsic development and intrinsic reliance and things so then for you to put 'well done' in a book? That removes the intrinsic...it's not growth mindset anymore that's a reward. (Interview 5)*

Nick implies he wanted to promote active learning in his pupils and he recognised feedback as a way for doing and not doing this. This is a much more learner-centric view of feedback where he is encouraging the learners themselves to have agency to close the learning 'gap' rather than responding because they are told to. Nick's own experiences of increasingly responding to feedback in this way have influenced his desire to promote this attitude with the children he taught. Interestingly, Endedijk, Vermunt et al. (2014) found that student teachers' own self-efficacy reduced during their training as they were perceived to become increasingly competent. It is a curious contradiction that Nick's increased interest in the learnacy of his own pupils may have been in direct opposition to his own development.

### 7.3.4 From resistance to cynical compliance

The next changed conception is the development of 'cynical compliance.' Throughout his training programme, Nick was challenged with aspects of school practice he did not view as worthwhile. Often these challenges were to do with tasks that were linked to accountability or performativity. During year one, Nick spoke about his experience on placement and the school policy of using verbal feedback stamps. He was already convinced at this point that verbal feedback was valuable but objected to the evidence trail required by the school. He implied a lack of trust in the teachers.

*Nick: The whole school... has a feedback policy. They've just introduced verbal feedback stamps...I have nothing wrong with verbal feedback stamps, but to hear the sentence, and she's used it in her staff meeting ... 'Well, Ofsted want to see that we're giving feedback, so we need to use these stamps.' I'm just like, 'That's not what they're for!' They use them at the minute for Ofsted and I'm like, 'No, use that stamp if you want, but only when a child has been working and you've verbally given them feedback.'* (Interview 1)

By the second year, Nick was still referring to this aspect of school practice but seemed less outraged about it.

*Nick: I remember in early interviews they (the placement school) had just introduced verbal feedback stamps... Verbal feedback is so much better now...from applying it and applying it right, it's so much better, I still*

*think that a verbal feedback stamp is not for a child. However, if a school wants to do a verbal feedback stamp just to, so that they know that it's been done there, fair enough, because it's quick, it's easy, the teacher's literally just stamping a book whilst talking... (Interview 4)*

As he moved into his final placement, he reiterated that he felt verbal feedback was more effective than written feedback. He was still frustrated and cynical about the need for accountability and proof that verbal feedback had taken place as he saw this had no pedagogical value. However, he recognised that he would also need to comply if he was to complete the placement and be a successful teacher. Day (2002) acknowledges 'the pressure on... younger colleagues is to comply with competency based agendas' (p.677) which supports Nick's comments.

*Nick: I do think verbal feedback is key. Still hate verbal feedback stamps I think they're a waste of time. Like it still benefits no-one and bugs the life out of me... [in reference to placement school]. I'm like, I'm not using a verbal feedback stamp. And they were like, but you've got to. I'm like, I'm not! But they've got a chart and I was like, okay that's fine. Tick a box. (Interview 5)*

By his final placement, Nick developed his understanding of how feedback could be conceptualised as mechanism for accountability. He had increasing awareness and acceptance of how accountability influenced practice and although it was still a frustration to him, he implied it was a necessary frustration given the context.

*Nick: [in reference to recording verbal feedback] I appreciate from a school's point of view that if you ... are being moderated or assessed at a later date you don't have that child with you to go 'do you remember what helped you in that lesson?' you've got, there has to be some form of evidence in the culture that we're in.*

*Interviewer: just to be clear, who is that for that comment?*

*Nick: Anyone external to the school, so be it Ofsted or be it a moderator or be it a partner school that comes to look at the books that is making a judgement about them...the verbal feedbacks for the child and to move the child on...*



*Interviewer: and the record of the verbal feedback is for externals?*

*Nick: It's for someone else yes, or SLT so even they know that in the lesson you were definitely talking to the child...Anyone that wasn't in that conversation ... I don't know how much it benefits the children. (Interview 6)*

Nick took this further when describing, 'the burden of accountability' and implying a lack of trust in the profession.

*Nick: One of my friends had a book scrutiny every week of something through her NQT year because they didn't trust her feedback, they didn't trust that she was showing progression in the children through her feedback....it's like whoever you're interacting with is becoming a customer... and you're not trusted. (Interview 6)*

Nick was also aware of the need for him to evidence his feedback practice as a student teacher who would be judged on his performance and the evidence that supported it. This experience highlighted for Nick the tension and conflict between moral and pedagogical conceptions of feedback.

*Nick: That bit between actually informing children's [learning], by moving someone on and your evidence is like there's an awkward relationship there.... that's the thing I still struggle with and I still think how can my, like ethos of good quality feedback is good quality teaching fit with a school that then says documented feedback is good for accountability. So, it's how to manage the, it's how to manage the feedback with the accountability ... (Interview 6)*

Accepting that aspects of performativity were needed for accountability agendas, despite their limited pedagogical value, resulted in a degree of cynical compliance from Nick. However, an individual's perceived need to comply is not automatically driven by wanting to comply with national or school-based policy. Kyndt et al (2016) identified a stage of development within the first three years of teaching when the novice teacher tries to gain the 'respect of their colleagues and start to affiliate' with them (p.1115). By complying with agreed practice and the dominant discourse within the school, affiliation with the staff is more likely. This is even more significant for student teachers who are effectively being judged by the staff they work alongside. Being

viewed as 'difficult' could have far reaching consequences in terms of their ability to pass the course. Compliance, no matter how cynical, is arguably in the student teachers' best interests and sits well with Conway and Clark's (2003) model that begins with concerns about self. In Foucauldian terms, Nick's cynical compliance is an example of how he was beginning to self-govern; his behaviour (and attitudes towards his behaviour) was adapted to suit policy in order that he could succeed. Rather than there being one key experience that developed this understanding, it was his experience in schools over time that contributed to this change; he was increasingly exposed to accountability demands both as a teacher and as a student teacher who needed to account and evidence his own progress. Although Ball argues (2003) that performativity 'does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are' (p.215), at this stage, Nick has not changed who he is - hence his cynicism - but certainly has had to change what he does.

The cynical aspect that Nick displayed is also an indicator of both a stronger sense of a teaching philosophy and shrewdness in saying or doing the right thing to get through that stage of training. It seems reasonable to claim that as a student teacher progresses, their own personal teaching philosophy develops and strengthens. Nick certainly seems to have a stronger sense of what he feels is pedagogically right, even if he accepts that aspects of policy need to be complied with. Huberman (1989) thought that teachers move into a stabilisation period after three to five years in which they gained increasing mastery and expertise. A strong sense of philosophy and associated teaching values are arguably part of such expertise. However, Endedijk et al. (2014) argue that this could happen much sooner. As such, it is possible that the sense of mastery become stronger as an undergraduate student teacher moves through the three years of training and as they increasingly 'consolidate what they have learned in the first hectic period of starting to teach' (Endedijk et al. 2014, p.1132). Nick has learnt to keep, or 'game', the necessary rules whilst retaining a personal philosophy. As a participant, cynical compliance was a key part of his story.

### **7.3.5 From content to relationships**

Finally, Nick self-identified relationships as a threshold concept in his own developing understanding. However, there is evidence that Nick was aware of this much earlier. In this

regard, it is possible that the importance of relationships was disavowed knowledge for Nick; he knew it, but almost denied it, even if not explicitly. Certainly, whether known or unknown from earlier in the project, Nick became more and more aware of the significance of relationships within the feedback process and made strong links between his experiences as a learner and as a teacher.

As previously discussed, at the early stages of the project, Nick spoke explicitly about the emotional impact of receiving feedback from tutors who were not particularly well known to him. By the second interview, at the end of the first school placement, Nick indicated that he was becoming more resilient in receiving feedback and he attributed this to who was giving the feedback.

*Nick: Obviously ... I didn't sort of go that's great feedback, you know I still got upset by it ...it could be that thing of yes I respect the feedback because [of] that person, there's a proven track record that that person has my interests at heart... so there is, there's an element of trust there ... (Interview 2)*

The fact that Nick had received ongoing feedback from his class teacher over placement had encouraged the development of a relationship based on trust. Because of this, Nick became more receptive to the feedback he received from the class teacher. This positive experience is in opposition to the experience of receiving end of module summative assessment feedback which had proved to be upsetting and arguably increased the 'distance between staff and students, reinforcing a more monologic feedback paradigm whereby students are merely passive recipients of feedback rather than active engagers' (Pitt and Winstone 2018, p.3).

By year two of the project, Nick had spent more time with tutors and seemed to be developing relationships conducive to feedback, particularly when the feedback was verbal. Nick was able to unpick why he felt he received feedback better from some tutors than others: expertise and respect. At this point, there is also evidence of Nick's reflections as a learner directly influencing his reflections as a teacher. One experience informed the other.

*Nick: like [the name of the tutor] looked at one piece and he did like certain elements of it, he was like 'no you've gone in completely the wrong direction', I took that really well...*

*Interviewer: Are there some tutors that if you got written feedback from, you would cope with it better no matter what it said?*

*Nick: Possibly, yeah. I've never thought of it but yeah, I suppose certain people you...it sounds awful actually, but let's be honest, there's some people that you end up respecting more than others...I feel like you have to...like, you end up...you sort of have to respect that person's ability to do what they're expecting you to do...you end up sort of thinking 'well you don't obviously know what you're talking about in this area that you're supposed to be an expert... But that's the thing like, it does make you think, see now I'm really worried because I feel like if I let children in my classroom know that I'm not very good, like maths is my weakness, are they then when I give them feedback on maths going to think 'well he doesn't know about maths.' (Interview 3)*

There was further evidence of one role informing his understanding and experience in another role during Nick's placement in his second year.

*Nick: I was nervous of how they would receive it because I knew myself I wouldn't want to receive that sort of feedback presented in that way....I think if you've had, if you've had an experience where your work's been ripped to shreds you end up having empathy for someone especially in that school (Interview 4)*

Nick's awareness of the emotional impact of receiving feedback made him more sensitive to how he gave feedback. What is not clear though is whether his nervousness was because of the impact on the learner or the impact on how he would be judged as a teacher. Nick was also sure that verbal feedback was much more powerful in this context as it minimised the potential negative impact. His discussions appear to indicate that this was more powerful when he knew the learner, knew what they needed (both emotionally and pedagogically) and could modify his feedback accordingly. The need to know those in the feedback relationship became a strong and explicit dimension to Nick's understanding; his own experiences as a learner increased his empathy for the pupils he taught.

*Nick: if you're giving feedback in the moment ..and you know which ones you need to go over and right 'let's look at this then, let's look at that sentence' and give, explain and expand around those points is a lot more effective and efficient for the child because one, you can see how they're taking it. So, are they understanding it? No...change your phrasing or is it upsetting them? well change you're phrasing, whereas [in reference to written feedback] you can't [make changes], once you've put pen to paper ... (Interview 4)*

Nick implied that he was able to nuance his feedback by tuning into how the children responded to it. As such, he was demonstrating an understanding of the interrelationship between both the relational and pedagogical. The children were not empty vessels waiting for the gift of feedback, they were humans with emotions that required a personable approach. There is also a suggestion that the dialogic nature of the feedback allowed Nick to treat the pupils appropriately and humanely (Stern 2007) and thus support the development of a relationship between teacher and pupil. However, there appears to be three people in this connected relationship, the tutor, student teacher and pupil for it is Nick's relationships (or not) with his tutors that ultimately prompted Nick's relationship with his pupils. In other words, Nick valued the relationships with his tutors and this impacted on his desire to have similar relationships with his pupils.

In terms of teacher development, Nick's growing understanding of the importance of relationships within feedback links to a more elaborated version of Guskey's (2002) model of teacher development: change to practice -> change to outcomes-> change to belief. As a result of tutor practice, Nick changed his belief which then changed his own practice, changed pupil outcomes and further reinforced his changed belief. It could be that this only really happens during the unique period of student teacher education when the dual roles of learner and teacher are experienced frequently. Once teachers become more experienced, their awareness of what it feels to be a learner could diminish and they become more resistant to change from a learner's perspective; as such this would support Furlong and Maynard's model of 'survival, mastery and resistant to change' (Furlong and Maynard 1995 p.68). It also explains Endedijk et al's (2014) finding that student teachers become less self-regulatory over the period of their training; their conscious increased competence as a teacher results in a reduced need and agency to develop and improve. This suggests that self-regulation requires a degree of 'lack' as a catalyst. Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) support this stating that transformative agency is

needed for student teachers to cross the boundaries from novice to expert. As noted in the concluding chapter, a further longitudinal study looking at longer term development across a teaching career is an area worthy of further research.

During the final year of the project, Nick proclaimed his awareness of the importance of building relationships in feedback implying it had been a threshold concept. The way Nick describes this change certainly meets some of the characteristics attributed to threshold concepts; it was both transformative, bounded to the discipline and allowed for connections to future learning (Meyer, Jan and Land 2003). Given Nick's previous references to relationships, he doesn't necessarily imply troublesome knowledge (the fourth characteristic) although it could have been a troublesome or uncomfortable process for him. However, who is to say what one person's threshold concept is? Surely this is dependent on an individual's understanding. Nick indicates that an experience with a tutor had led to a conscious realisation of the significance of relationships and this had been somewhat transformative.

*Nick: ... He pretty much tore it apart and was like, you're going in the wrong direction and I think what he said would have been harsh if it hadn't have been coming from [tutor's name]. And it made me think about it and it was obviously verbal feedback and it was instantaneous and we sat down together and worked and rebuilt the idea and things. And I think it made me think about verbal feedback as actually based on that. ... it relied on relationships... because I've got that positive relationship with [tutor's name] and there is like, you can sense there is a mutual respect there. It didn't feel like I was being critiqued, it generally felt like someone saying, no it's right that you want to go in that direction but you're going in the complete wrong way about it, sort of thing. And bringing it back round. It didn't feel like a criticism it felt like a critique and a development....it didn't feel like a criticism of myself it felt like a critique of my work and my idea. ... and I was reading a paper about verbal feedback and it was saying about that relationship being like a fundamental thing ...*

*Interviewer: So, you're saying having the relationship is important...I mean, it doesn't affect the feedback they give but it does affect the feedback how it's received?*

*Nick: Yeah, it affects how it's received and it almost gives you that like, ability to fly above ...the need for respect and I think that's where the relationship thing is like grown from. It's that fact that it's not like a relationship of friends or like even friendliness it is just about that like respect and the understanding between. [Interview 5].*

Despite Nick's voicing of his transformation as a sudden change, as discussed, his interviews did reveal this understanding was developing over a much longer period of time indicating a degree of disavowed knowledge on his part earlier on. He effectively understood this before he stated he had come to understand. There are also other points of interest within the excerpt above. Nick's use of the word 'grown' implies that relationships grow organically, and perhaps, need to be nurtured. He also distinguishes between pedagogical relationships and friendships. This reflects some of the developmental models discussed earlier (Fuller 1969) where new teachers move from a focus on self to a focus on progress. Nick is now able to distinguish between pedagogical and personal relationships and attributes the former with more value. However, Nick also recognised that pedagogical is also relational as it involves building understanding between people.

Before moving onto the second participant story, and in conclusion, it is clear that Nick's conceptions of feedback changed over the three years of his training and the study. His changes indicate discrete and linked understanding of, and between, the three economies (pedagogical, relational and moral). His experiences as a teacher and a learner both informed these changed understandings and indeed sometimes informed one another. There is also evidence of how the performative context influenced understanding. Sometimes Nick absorbed the conceptions that were either implicit and explicit within the socio-cultural context and discourse. For others he was an active resistor. It is also interesting to note that Nick was very aware of how his own understanding developed over the three years, sometimes choosing to articulate what for him were transformative (and threshold) moments. As illustration, it is worth referring once more to Nick at this point when he described how this thinking had changes over the course of the study.

*Nick: But teaching is feedback. That's the thing I've come to realise and it's, I think when you compare the interviews I think... it's just, it's quite a*

*natural progression that I've sort of seen it a bit more and a bit more and a bit more, but I do think that teaching is feedback and good quality teaching is good quality feedback. (Interview 6)*

The broadening and deepening of understanding is how Nick himself summarised his experience over the three years.

## **7.4 Participant 2: Jenny**

Jenny was a female student. She had come to university after completing A levels at sixth form. Jenny felt that she did not receive targeted feedback at school indicating it was very mark or grade focused. Some of Jenny's previous conceptions about feedback were reinforced during her three year teacher education programme, others were extended or altered through her experience at university and in school during her placements. Several altered conceptions will now be analysed related to working with peers, self-evaluation, feedback as evidence and feedback as a measure. As with Nick, these themes emerged iteratively from the interview data and each is explored with chronological reference to the data collected over the period of the longitudinal study.

### **7.4.1 Working with peers: from a personal conflict to partial acceptance**

One area where there was subtle change over time was peer feedback. At the start of the project, Jenny was very clear that she did not like peer feedback.

*Jenny: I don't really like people looking at my work. I'd rather not have peer feedback. I like it just going to a teacher or... I just think peers are a bit more critical, but then again if you sat with a friend whose peer 'feedbacking' then it's not going to be genuine. So, I just think it's easier to just not. (Interview 1)*

This statement initially suggests a teacher-centric view of feedback in that the tutor is seen to provide more useful feedback. However, Jenny's explanation reveals that this is not necessarily because the teacher is more knowledgeable but that the teacher is possibly more objective or distant. Her concern with peers seems to be that if a friendship already exists, the feedback will



not be genuine as it will be overly positive. In other words, a lack of social relationship means the feedback will be more constructive. Jenny is implying that a peer who knows her well, arguably as a 'whole being' (Buber 2013, p.92) will find it more problematic to give effective feedback. For Jenny the feedback relationship needs to have some professional distance and VanSchenk Hof et al. (2018) agree that friendship can negatively influence assessment objectivity. Jenny's understanding of peer feedback is linked to Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development where teachers are focused on concerns about their own fears and hopes. At this early stage of the project, it was also likely that relationships between peers were not fully formed and Jenny is likely to have been unsure of whose judgment to trust. Trust is important if the relationship between educator and learner (in this case between peers) is based on a mutual trust (Guilherme and Morgan 2009).

During the second interview (end of year one), Jenny elaborated further on her view of peer feedback.

*Jenny: I still don't really like peer feedback but I'd like it a bit more if, we did something professional where we sat with a friend and we had more like a tick list kind of thing for ourselves and I didn't mind doing that because if you didn't have it they just didn't tick it. ...it wasn't so like you're my friend, so I'll tick everything kind of thing... it's a bit of a cop out just to say well its fine, its fine for fear of upsetting someone I think*

*Interviewer: Would you get upset if somebody said that to you as a peer?*

*Jenny: Well if I've worked really hard and thought it was good then yes but I think that you've got to accept that your stuff isn't perfect but I think it's just too subjective because I don't know how ... where the line is for people that are offended and things like that so I think it's just worth avoiding. (Interview 2)*

Jenny seems to still mistrust peer feedback because she mistrusts the intention of a peer reviewer. Rather than avoiding peer feedback because she may find it upsetting, Jenny implies that the feedback giver would be too aware of the sensitivities around feedback to provide anything of use. There is also an indication within her comments about conceptions linking feedback to her own self-evaluation; these will be discussed later in section 7.4.2.

By the second year of Jenny's programme (and the project), she indicated that she had come to see the benefits of peer feedback, but on her own terms. However, analysis of Jenny's actual comments reveals that this is not clear cut and in fact the initial concerns still remain.

*Jenny: [in reference to peer feedback] No I don't like it. As long as I'm talking with one person, and like I have someone who I sit with in every seminar, every lecture, as long as she marks it, fine, but no-one else, just because I think I value her opinion. I don't like peer assessment because I think people... I just don't like it; I don't think it's of any value.*

*Interviewer: I remember you saying you didn't necessarily respect their opinion, and also people were very nicey nicey.*

*Jenny: Exactly and there's no real depth to it.*

*Interviewer: With the person you've established a relationship with in terms of feedback; do you feel that you are getting depth of feedback from her?*

*Jenny: Oh yeah definitely, and like we're working together on ... a paired presentation, and it's just ridiculously easier than individual essays because we help each other out. We never send each other our essays. Because we've done it [the presentation] on Google Drive, you know where you can have two people working on the same document, so like we would be reading through and then I'd write a section on something and she'd write a section on something, and then we'd say 'right, swap and read each other's, and it's live so I can see her reading mine, she can see me reading hers, and just point out any errors like that; I think that helps. I suppose it's feedback but it's immediate.*

*Interviewer: So you've kind of developed your own way of doing peer feedback with each other*

*Jenny: Yeah definitely, or if I need something wording, if I know what I want to say but I can't say it in the right words to type, she'll come up with an idea, if she needs a synonym or something for something she'll ask me kind of thing, we know each other's strengths in terms of writing I think.*

Jenny's comments reveal the same issues with trust and genuine useful feedback. Although she trusts the person she works with, the model of peer feedback she describes has her in control. She is asking for particular feedback from a particular peer, one that she judges to know 'the answers.'

By the end of the project, Jenny stated that she had changed to have a very positive view of peer feedback, but this was as a teacher in school. She presented this as a transformative change.

*Jenny: On no, I love peer feedback now...because it worked well in year 5 when I was on SE2, and I think that if they can talk to each other about it they can help each other more than a teacher can, because they can put it in more appropriate language... and relate it to something that is more relatable to children so that they can grasp a better understanding. (Interview 5)*

However other comments revealed underlying and ongoing concerns about peer feedback and trust when she considered her role as a learner. Trust, or lack of it, left her feeling vulnerable. Therefore, although she explicitly stated she felt peer feedback was valuable when she was in the role of teacher, the understanding did not transfer to her role as learner.

*Interviewer: And as a learner yourself do you find that working with peers is the same for you?*

*Jenny: Not really because I haven't really, until uni I never really valued peer feedback, whereas, so now I do value it but I just find it hard to actually do, like ... I value that but then only to a certain extent because... I don't know... I think ultimately you think you're right don't you? ...I think that it needs to come from someone you don't know to eliminate the personal response, but I think that I would value someone I know's feedback more than someone I don't know. [in reference to a peer she works with] so I would trust what they say but then I would be a bit like 'oh okay, I thought you'd say it was good' or I don't mind them say scribbling on it and then at the bottom just saying 'but overall it's fine' kind of thing, I need like that general statement to say it's okay...(Interview 5)*

There are complex and contradictory matters of interpersonal relations evident here. Jenny initially states she would prefer the feedback to be from someone she doesn't really know but

then implies the opposite by referring to trusting the person she chooses to work with. However, by trust, Jenny is suggesting that she can predict the feedback they will give and how they will do so. She is selecting a peer who will not provide any unexpected surprises through feedback which indicates the peer is considered useful in validating Jenny's own self-assessment.

Later in the same interview, it is possible to see a competitive discourse entering Jenny's ideas.

*[and later] ... why would you do that, why would you waste your time giving feedback to someone who can take on board all your feedback, any changes, corrections, whatever, and get a higher mark because you've been given someone who doesn't appreciate the value of feedback, wastes time, talks whatever, and then you end up struggling.*  
(Interview 5)

Trust is an issue once more as Jenny has concerns that the peer will gain from her expertise and be rewarded with a higher mark. For Jenny this is deeply unfair. So, although Jenny states the feedback she receives from peers is valuable, actually what she is seeking is generic confirmation of her own evaluation; she has already reflected, evaluated and come to a judgment about the quality of her work and is very careful to choose a peer who will provide this form of feedback for her. Choosing an alternative peer carries competitive rather than pedagogical risk. Although Jenny states she values peer feedback, this understanding is disavowed. She suggests that recognising its value has almost been transformative, but it appears she both knows and denies her perceptions of peer feedback; Jenny sees its value but doesn't see its value, only its risk. Of course, at this stage in her training, Jenny will have been exposed to module content focused on what is generally viewed to be good quality primary school feedback. Undoubtedly this will have included peer feedback. Indeed the Department for Education's advice on marking explicitly lists peer feedback as a recommended approach (Department for Education 2016) and the reasons Jenny cites in terms of the advantages of peer feedback (relatable, transferrable) are well rehearsed in the literature, as outlined within the pedagogic economies chapter. This is an aspect of teacher education that makes the participants in this study unique. They learn about 'effective' feedback by both experiencing it and being exposed to related research, policy and practice. It is reasonable to suggest therefore that students may well adhere to the pedagogical discourses within teacher education (whilst not necessarily fully believing it themselves as

learners) because they want to present the ideal identity of a student teacher. In Lacanian (2001) terms, the ego-ideal presented through educational policy is an image student teachers are trying to meet. Ruti's (2008 p. 91) identification of the conflict between the 'concrete reality' and the 'abstract ideality of Being' as a key feature of humanity is relevant here. Jenny knows the abstract ideality is that she should embrace peer feedback as both pedagogical practice and belief but actually still feels uncomfortable about the practice in reality. In other words, Jenny states that she sees value in peer feedback although she doesn't fully believe it. Of course, this may be because she has already developed her own beliefs about teaching, learning and feedback based on her numerous years in school as a learner, 'many of which are diametrically opposed to those presented ... during their teacher education' (Korthagen 2013, p.81). It can also be argued that Jenny's appreciation of peer feedback in school supports Guskey's (2002) model of teacher development; Jenny saw the impact of the approach in practice and therefore believes it works because she has 'seen it work' (Guskey 2002, p.384). Her understanding as a learner is developing separately. She appreciates peer feedback should work but hasn't yet really seen the impact of peer feedback in her own learning to convince her to change her belief. In this regard, she has separate dual identities 'experienced in situated ways in their university and placement classrooms' (Lee and Schallert 2016, p.80).

Working with peers was an aspect of Jenny's participant story that was complex and at times conflicting.

#### **7.4.2 From implicit to explicit reflection and self-evaluation**

The second area discussed is that of self-reflection/evaluation. Understanding of this theme was largely a core belief that existed throughout Jenny's period of study at an implicit level. However, understanding became more explicit, developed and applicable to primary practice over time.

In the early stages of the programme, Jenny made implicit rather than explicit reference to self-evaluation when describing school practice.

*Jenny: I wanted to make sure that the children were noticing in their own learning that they weren't following what we were wanting them to do,*

*so when they were writing ... I wanted them to tell me that they were doing it wrong instead of me saying you're not writing that sentence properly. I wanted them ... to pick it out instead of me....I think they have to recognise what they're doing wrong before you can actually move the learning on otherwise it's just being to be seen to them that you're always on their back and nagging them and no, write like this, write like this instead of me showing them an example and going does your work look like this, so getting them to think about it. (Interview 2)*

Jenny describes promoting self-evaluation by encouraging the pupils to be actively involved in identifying their own errors. However, this is not fully learner-centric; the pupils are essentially spotting the errors the teacher would have spotted.

Within the second year of the programme, Jenny's comments about peer feedback also imply that she valued self-evaluation as a personal trait. In reference to working with a peer, she commented '*if I need something wording, if I know what I want to say but I can't say it in the right words to type, she'll come up with an idea, if she needs a synonym or something for something she'll ask me kind of thing,*' implying she had already self-evaluated her own weaknesses in the way she expected the children to. Similarly, when discussing receiving feedback, she stated '*I literally expect it to be between like certain marks, that's all, so I think that's why it doesn't bother me.*' Jenny's self-evaluation informs the peer feedback she seeks and prepares her for feedback from tutors.

By the end of Year 2, and after spending some time in school, Jenny discussed how she had promoted the use of reflection and self-evaluation in the children. She discussed this as a significant experience implying it had resulted in a conceptual leap.

*Jenny [in reference to the reflection books she introduced on her placement]: I just thought it was useful for them to reflect on their learning ... so they know it's fine to say that you're proud of what you've done. You might not have done it right but if you feel like you've done a good job, tell me, write it in your book – explain! .... I've learnt that children need to reflect on their learning a lot more.... And sometimes they don't get a chance to like, reflect. I think reflection is kind of the same as feedback in schools, isn't it? (Interview 4)*

However, there was evidence of this thinking developing before this moment in previous interviews. Interestingly, Nick had also identified significant experiences and changes in understanding that evidence suggested were already developing long before he had recognised their emergence. Therefore, both participants raise a question about threshold concepts and whether that are necessarily crossed in such a marked way, like a ‘penny dropping,’ or are threshold concepts more of a ‘slow burn.’

Although Jenny repeatedly stressed how she valued pupil reflection and self-evaluation, her comments also suggest that this was not necessarily always about the learner but was an important form of feedback for her as a teacher. Yet there was no evidence that she felt the same about her own self-evaluation, i.e. that it was also feedback for the tutor or mentor who had given it. It is Jenny’s awareness of how reflections and evaluations can be an important form of feedback for the teacher specifically that could be a threshold concept for Jenny.

*Jenny: So, it was more for them to say what they enjoyed or didn’t and then, obviously, if there was a problem ... I won’t do that anymore. But, yeah, they just helped me loads... Like, they need to give feedback to what they think to be able to... for me to plan a proper successful lesson or lessons, I need to know what they like so, the feedback from them is like a good starting point... (Interview 4)*

Jenny also felt it was her responsibility as a teacher to ensure that these evaluations and reflections were honest and useful.

*Jenny: So, I was saying, ‘Who feels like they’re better at this and who feels like they’re better at this?’ and I was using what they had done because all of them had some reason that they could say something they’d improved on ...so, yeah, I did try and scaffold them*

*Interviewer: So, are you saying then that they were a form of feedback for you?*

*Jenny: Yeah, definitely. If they’d put like... ‘I really enjoyed this because I got to make up my own sentences with...’ but then some people would say, ‘I found it boring because I was just repeating the same work!’ So... it was feedback to me to think, if I was doing that again, maybe I’d have different activities so... I’d changed things like that. (Interview 4)*

This represents one of the contradictions within a more learner-centric approach; it still requires a degree of teacher-centricity to scaffold and promote learner-centric practice. However, is it the tendency to present both teacher and learner-centric as polarised opposites that gives rise to this apparent contradiction? For, if teacher and learner-centric was understood as a continuum that teachers and learners can move across, both could co-exist comfortably.

During the last year of the project, Jenny reiterated her preference for pupil self-evaluation/reflection as a feedback strategy for the teacher. She also emphasised fully for the first time what she perceived to be the benefits for the learners.

*Jenny: I think it's valuable to listen to what the children think because I might think it's gone well in my head and they might actually prove on paper and prove in the maths books that they can do it but they might not have confidence in what they're doing...so I just find it valuable to know what they think about the lessons.*

*Interviewer: So, who is gaining from the feedback in that clip?*

*Jenny: Me, me, definitely because their confidence ... because they need to learn ... in that class, they needed to learn to understand that making mistakes and not understanding wasn't bad. So, for them to admit, like a couple of them, when I said 'was it really challenging?' for them to put their hands up is a step in itself and ... it helps me know their thought processes about it, about the lesson, so that I know what they're capable of doing. So, then I can tailor future lessons...It's a reflection on their learning. I think that's really valuable. To be able to reflect and think about how they've done, instead of me ticking work and saying they've done well, I think it's important that they recognise that, and they recognise, 'Right, okay I didn't understand it, maybe I need some more help.' I just think that's them being in control of their learning, I think (Interview 6).*

The inclusion of both learner and teacher benefits within the explanation supports Fuller's (1969) model of development where teachers move from concerns about self to concerns about tasks and outcomes. Jenny is using evaluative and reflective practice to meet both concerns about self and concerns about others; she and the children both benefit from the practice. The inclusion of her own needs within this is not necessarily unexpected given her reference to her own self-



evaluation in the past; from early on in the programme, Jenny implied that she regularly self-evaluates and uses feedback to inform implicit goal setting; she now seems to be encouraging the same self-regulatory dispositions within the pupils. Her use of reflection books is associated with Bandura's (1991) self-regulation which includes self-observation, judgement and self-reaction and also Butler and Winnie's (1995) adapted model where monitoring takes place continually. Jenny's assertion that reflection is important would also certainly be supported by Carless et al. who suggest that self-regulation is 'the essence of sustainable feedback' (2011 p.7). Furthermore, her comment about children being in 'control of their learning' indicates that she is conceptualising feedback as more learner-centric, albeit with a role for her as a teacher scaffolding, directing and encouraging practices to develop autonomy (Black et al. 2006). She is therefore using pupil reflection books to scaffold the children's own ability to reflect and as a tool for her to reflect and develop her own performance.

### **7.4.3 From accountability to evidence**

A third development is the use of feedback as evidence. As for the other areas already discussed, Jenny indicated that this understanding existed early in the programme but over time it became a more prominent feature that spanned her role as a learner and teacher. At the start of the project, Jenny was aware of the need to evidence feedback within school but was also frustrated by it. She appeared to be aware that in school written feedback was in place to evidence progress rather than promote progress; it was for the teacher to prove feedback had been given.

*Jenny: .... but the teachers have to mark the books to that's why the feedback's given it's not really given, it sounds really bad but it's not really given for the child, it's given for the teacher to have marked the book.*

*Interviewer: So, it's about the teacher being accountable to show they've done it?*

*Jenny: Yes, to show progress. (Interview 1)*

However, as a learner, Jenny indicated that she used feedback as evidence of her own progress implying that it acted as a motivator. In self-determination terms (Deci and Ryan 2002), the evidence feedback provides a sense of competence and effectiveness.

*Interviewer: What do you do with feedback when you've been given or when you've heard it?*

*Jenny: Normally, I quite like writing things down, so you have a record of your progression. So, I'll probably write this up because it says, 'write it in your action plan'... I like writing it up because then you can see when you've actually made a change. (Interview 1)*

As a learner, during the second year of the study, Jenny made some reference to her liking of written feedback as it provided a permanent record she could refer back to. It seems that over these first years, Jenny found feedback gave her evidence that she felt was positive in her role as learner. She employed evidence as an indicator of how she has 'added value' to herself (Ball 2003, p.217). As Ball states, 'accountability encourages us to ask 'Are we doing enough? Are we doing the right thing? How will we measure up?' (Ball 2000, p.3) and therefore works 'from the outside in and from the inside out' (Ball 2000, p.4).

By the final year, evidencing and proof had become a much stronger conception for Jenny to the extent that it was accepted as necessary as a learner but also as a teacher. Whereas she had previously been critical of school policy based on evidence and accountability, she was now using it herself in order to be successful. The need to account for progress had altered her understanding; evidencing and accounting for progress had become more relevant as she moved towards completion of the training, and therefore final programme judgment against the Teacher Standards. Within interview 6, Jenny emphasised the necessity to evidence the feedback she gave to children. She implied that the formative nature of the feedback was not solely for the benefit of the children. In other words, she was providing formative feedback as she needed to evidence that she could provide formative feedback if she was to meet Teaching Standard 6: assessment and feedback (DfE 2012).

*Jenny: The assessment policy for the school I was in did a lot of ... have you seen pink and green highlighting?...I don't like that, I just think it's messy and ... I don't think it's as useful as a comment and that kind of thing...So they did from nine to twelve maths on Monday, Tuesday and the same Wednesday, Thursday for literacy. But that meant that there wasn't as much emphasis on the assessment side of things because, if I didn't mark their work on Tuesday, technically they didn't need their*

*books because if they didn't instil proper target time, they didn't need that work until Monday so I could take ages..... I put in target time... because I thought they needed it because otherwise I wasn't going to be able to prove the standard through no fault of my own really, if that makes sense. (Interview 6)*

At this stage of the programme, Jenny also reiterated that she valued receiving written feedback as it evidenced her ability to develop. Evidence of feedback was useful in reinforcing her performance as a teacher and as a learner and subsequently reinforcing her identity as both.

*Jenny: I think that it's just a sign of progression from the primary school and I suppose it's proof here. You could get all your assignments printed off on that page and you could say 'This is what everyone said about me'*

*Interviewer: What do you want the proof for? Proof for what?*

*Jenny: For me to show that I've acted on it, so made it better. So the first year, for example, if it was couldn't reference through for my life, then I can prove, okay, now I can and I can do ...*

*Interviewer: Who are you proving it to?*

*Jenny: Myself*

To Jenny, how she, and her performance, was judged was important and she took care to portray an image that she felt evidenced what she felt was an appropriate student teacher. Even at the end of the programme, Jenny was cautious about exposing evidence that may reveal she was not who she wanted to be.

*Jenny: ... I think, again, it would be embarrassing to admit you didn't get something ..we have this like three year period to show that you can do it, not that you can't....because if your tutors think that you're struggling in something, then their opinion at university would be different. (Interview 6)*

However, it is difficult to argue that her understanding of feedback as evidence impacted on the subsequent understanding as a teacher. It is more credible that this is as a result of policy at both school and sector level. Poskitt (2014) argues that understanding of assessment practice move from non-awareness of practice through to an unconscious application. Understanding,

and application, of what may be seen as good practice is influenced by the 'political, economic, cultural, educational, and human context' (p.542). The sector focus on evidencing performance in order to be a successful student teacher or teacher will therefore arguably influence the speed of teacher development and encourage superficial change where practice is different, but belief is not.

In Jenny's case, her need to evidence her own and her pupils' progress implies that she has retained a focus on her own needs as well as developing an interest in her pupils; she could be positioned as being at the inward focused stage of teacher development (Fuller 1969; Conway and Clark 2003). This is not necessarily surprising given a context where teachers have to remain concerned with self as it is their performance that is effectively being evidenced. Indeed Conway and Clark (2003) state that it is more or less impossible to have separate stages of development where one either has concerns about self or concerns about others as the concerns will ultimately always link to teacher identity and self-image. For Jenny, evidencing performance has become a necessary part of practice. It supports her developing identity by reinforcing her performance against national standards and this in itself acts as a motivator; she can evidence how she has progressed both as a learner and as a teacher. Even if some of her practices do not result in an explicit and discernible positive effect for the pupils, they do have a positive impact on Jenny as a student teacher. Guskey (2002) states that practices are abandoned if they do not result in positive learner effects but if the effect is that teachers are judged more positively in terms of competence, presumably practices will continue. Performativity significantly influenced not only how Jenny understood feedback but also how she understood herself as a learner and a teacher.

#### **7.4.4 From summative to formative**

The last area to be discussed is that of measurement i.e. how feedback can provide a quantifiable grade or mark. This is an area where Jenny changed her view over the period of study as Jenny began to value formative comments over summative grades. During the first year, Jenny was quite explicit in her preference for, and value she attached to, summative feedback.

*Jenny: Things like this, 'pass and fail,' it's not as important to write the feedback, but something with an actual mark it probably is.*

*Interviewer: Why do you think it's more important with a mark?*

*Jenny: I don't know. I just think a pass is above 40, whereas an individual mark you can write more about what to get into the next band and things, but I think... I'm not saying a pass is low, but I think it's easier to... I don't know what I'm trying to say. It's easier to pass and just know you've passed. You could get 40 and pass or you could 90 and pass whereas if it's an individual number thing, you can know how to move up into the next band when you've got 60 to 69/70, 79 you can actually look and see what you need to do.*

*Interviewer: Do you prefer it when it has a mark?*

*Jenny: Yeah, definitely. (Interview 1)*

Although Jenny indicated she felt all feedback was important, if an assessed piece of work was just pass/fail, or formative, the feedback was less significant as it did not include a mark. This indicates that summative marks are the most important or significant form of feedback for Jenny as they provide a measure of the standard. This early prioritising of summative assessment may have been related to Jenny's pre-course experience.

*Jenny: In sixth form I honestly didn't get a lot of feedback. We did our work in our lessons, put it in our folders, went home, revised it, did the test. ... I think in school you were just kind of pushed through... I don't know... everything was graded.... Sometimes some teachers... would put, 'Even better if...' at the bottom, but all the others it was literally a mark and a grade, but that didn't happen a lot... In school it was kind of like, 'Here is my marking grid. Tick. Mark. Next one. Tick. Mark. Next one.'*  
(Interview 1)

Although Jenny was discussing this practice as an example of poor practice, it was nevertheless her experience, and would have influenced her understanding. The link between her pre-course experience and early understandings supports the idea that pre-service teacher beliefs are significant in shaping understanding about both learning and teaching (Löfström and Poom-Valickis 2013; Ní Chróinín and O'Sullivan 2014; Lee and Schallert 2016) and that these beliefs could potentially remain (Korthagen 2013).

By the second year, Jenny indicated her understanding had changed and she now found the formative comments much more valuable. She recognised that the way she engaged with comments was different and, as such, the value she attached to them was also different.

*Jenny: [in relation to other students] Oh yeah, 'is this assessed?' we always ask that, like 'is this assessed?' like does it really matter?...Yeah just because it has numbers attached doesn't mean it's any more valuable... I do actually look at the feedback to see what I can do better with this assignment, so ... I'll look at the comments from the [assessment] last year to make sure I address it this year, so it's not, I suppose it is engaging with the feedback but it's more thinking about how I can boost marks through the feedback. (Interview 3)*

Jenny appears to have recognised that the formative feedback had power in terms of her own progression. Interestingly though she was still using the mark/grade as an indicator of this progress but it is as if the measure itself gave her agency. The grade or mark acted as a signifier for Jenny, a signifier of the learning 'gap' (Sadler 1989) identified between the current and potential possible learning as a student teacher. As such, the measure gave her agency to close the gap and improve her marks /grades.

Jenny's emphasis on the formative nature of feedback increased over the study as she appeared to move from a focus on the summative product of learning to the formative process. She was also able to identify how her experience as a learner and as a teacher were related. This is significant as largely Jenny's changing conceptions rarely moved across roles.

*Jenny: if my friend sent me something, I would rather be overly critical and I'd rather choose overly critical back ... because if they give you fake feedback, like just saying it's all perfect, there's nowhere to go with that. I suppose that's how the children ... that's probably why I like next steps.... Because it's an action. (Interview 6)*

Jenny attributed her change in understanding to her experience of receiving feedback in placement and unpicking feedback with her tutor.

*Interviewer: In terms of feedback, what have been the key things that have made a difference to you.*

*Jenny: mostly the placements.... I think the appraisals because it's hard to ignore feedback when you're getting it once a week... I think that the university assignments are useful on getting feedback on that essay at that time but I think Academic Tutor meetings where they give you actual feedback of ... 'You're doing well, here and here you might need to pick up on this.' I think that's more valuable because there's somewhere to go ...*

*Interviewer: So really you're saying that it's the experience of feedback?*

*Jenny: It's the experience.*

*Interviewer: Of getting it?*

*Jenny: Yes. (Interview 6)*

Her placement experiences had been particularly significant in changing her understanding about the value of feedback supporting the statement that field work is considered a major source of influence in teacher professional learning (Cheng, Tang and Cheng 2014). The reason placement was so significant was because she was receiving ongoing feedback throughout the placement that needed to be acted upon and which reinforced the formative benefits. Jenny continued to use feedback formatively even though she was moving towards Qualified Teacher Status. As with other areas discussed in this chapter, recognising the impact of practice on her own outcomes and competencies led to a change in beliefs. This reiterates that Guskey's (2002) model of development can be reinterpreted to change in practice, followed by change in *teacher outcomes or measured competency* and lastly changes in beliefs and attitudes. Furthermore it could be argued that Jenny's change is not only an example of change as training but also change in personal growth (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002), as she is using feedback because even as a teacher, she sees herself as a 'learner[s] who work in a learning community' (p.948).

For Jenny, the influence of the wider educational context was acute, constant and one that she embraced. Standards were a driver to how she understood and engaged with feedback across both of her roles and shaped pedagogical, relational and moral economies of feedback. Nevertheless, in comparison to Nick, Jenny's changes in understanding were less marked and, as

such, it is difficult to identify any significant explicit threshold concepts. The changes that occurred were subtle and often not clear cut with overlapping and contradicting stages of thinking. However, as Taubman (2014) states, maybe a staged continuum is an overly simplified way of considering teacher development; rather it is a dynamic, circular and never ending journey. When we consider that this will include accumulating and adapting identities as a teacher, as a learner and as a student teacher, it seems perfectly reasonable that developing understanding of feedback can be a messy and puzzling process.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, both participants developed their understanding of feedback over the three years. There were similarities for the participants but also many differences, in particular responses to the standards focused educational context: Nick was largely a resistor whereas Jenny an embracer. Essences of understanding related to the relational economies were also very variable. Nick recognised his developing understanding of the relational aspects as transformative whereas for Jenny this remained somewhat disavowed. Some of the individual conceptions were new, others built on conceptions already in evidence from the start and others contradicted one another.

The conceptions related to the participants as learners seemed the more fixed with change generally being a subtle development. Conceptions as a teacher showed greater change over the period of the programme and experience, and time to reflect upon this experience, acted as a key instigator. Interestingly, participating in the research process itself was noted by participants as a key reflective tool that enabled them to develop their understanding.

*Jenny: (in reference to the impact of participating in the project) I'm ...loads more conscious of feedback. Whether it's giving it, receiving it, I think I've kind of understood how feedback can either be valuable or it can be detrimental (Interview 6)*

*Nick: Over these three years your understanding of professional judgments and feedback does change massively and I don't know if it's*



*part of the research project and the fact that I'm always thinking about...  
feedback a lot. (Interview 5)*

On occasion there was evidence of how experiences within the learner role directly influenced understanding within the teacher role and occasionally the other way round. Nevertheless, regarding feedback, conceptions as a learner appeared less open to change. Arguably this is because the participants' identity as a learner was already well established as a result of their time within the education system. Their identity as a teacher, and consequently their conceptions of feedback as teacher, was more malleable as despite starting the programmes with a teacher identity, no matter how ideal, the participants also recognised that they were at the start of the journey from 'novice' to 'expert' (Brody and Hadar 2015). Indeed, the ability to accept and engage with this development was seen as a necessary professional attribute i.e. the embracing 'ongoing change in their professional identity as lifelong learners' (Lee and Schallert 2016, p.73).

Changes in understanding were sometimes related to Guskey's (2002), Furlong and Maynard's (1995) and Fuller's (1969) original and adapted (Conway and Clark 2003) models of teacher development. However, these models do not take account of the fact that, for feedback, the student teachers were never really novices so began their training beyond the starting position suggested. Also, the models do not include reference to the performativity context which, as has been argued, significantly influenced how the participants' understanding developed. Furthermore, it was also clear that change was not a discretely staged process. Even explicitly and personally recognised moments of transformative change indicated that development was far more fluid and iterative than any staged model suggests. The complex nature of feedback itself may be part of this. For, as has already been argued, feedback is inherently multifaceted with competing, co-existing and varied conceptions that fall into (or even across) pedagogical, relational and moral economies. If feedback itself is so messy, it is not surprising that developing understanding of it is also not straightforward.

This complexity is compounded by the fact that this understanding sometimes develops in parallel across the two roles inhabited (as a teacher and learner) but can also follow separate routes or a blurred path that crosses between the roles. The hazy nature of developmental is arguably because the participants never solely recognised themselves as simply a teacher, but

both a learner and teacher who had to remain focused on their own learning needs as well as those of the children they taught. As Lee and Schallert (2016) state, student teachers occupy several possible identities, the majority of which are dual. The participant stories discussed here demonstrate how these dual identities (and the experiences associated with them) co-existed and informed one another in the ways that feedback was conceptualised. Existing development models do not take account of this.



## Chapter 8- Concluding Discussions

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## **8.1 Thesis Review**

In the preceding chapters, this research study has explored the conceptions of feedback of a group of undergraduate student teacher participants. Taking a longitudinal and broadly phenomenographic approach, the analysis has identified three economies of understanding: pedagogical, relational and moral that have been used to examine variation of conceptions related to feedback. The study has also explored changes over time focusing on how conceptions altered over the three years of the study (and indeed the teacher education programme) for two particular participants. This concluding chapter will now propose a conceptual model that summarises the main findings of the study. Key aspects of the model will be outlined in reference to the original research questions and the metaphor of economies. By discussing these in relation to the literature, findings that support existing theory, extend these ideas and also contribute new knowledge will be outlined. Possible limitations of the study will also be explored. Following this, the implications of the research for the three contexts studied (primary education, Higher Education and Initial Teacher Education) will be discussed with reference to the findings, including implications for practitioners and policy makers. Following this, any future identified research opportunities will be suggested before the inclusion of a personal reflection on the process of completing work at this level.

However, before the main conclusions are outlined, it is pertinent to review what the thesis has explored to this point. This thesis focused on a study of student teachers attending an Initial Teacher Education three-year programme at a UK university. The thesis began by discussing how feedback has arguably been distorted by the neo-liberal agenda, particularly within the context of education with the influence of such ideology on policy discourse and professional practice. Three key research questions were identified:

1. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners?
2. What are student teachers' conceptions of feedback as practising primary school teachers?
3. What are the student teacher's developing understandings of feedback as a student and a student teacher?

Chapter 2 went on to situate feedback within assessment and then explore how feedback can be understood within the three contexts of Higher Education, primary education and Initial Teacher Education. This chapter emphasised the polarised nature of the context specific conceptions and therefore went on to identify a number of alternative faces of feedback. Chapter 3 described the epistemological and methodological decisions taken within the phenomenographic study and introduced a metaphor of economies as an analysis tool in order to identify conceptions that are given value; accumulated; distributed and exchanged. These economies were used in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to analyse how student teacher conceptions as both learner and teacher can be viewed as pedagogical, relational or moral economies and the overlap between these three was acknowledged. Finally, Chapter 7 went on to look at two specific participant stories in order to analyse how conceptions changed over time and how the two roles of learner and teacher influenced these changes.

## **8.2 The conceptual model of economies**

The study argued that existing conceptual models of feedback often present a rather mechanistic, linear process where one action leads to another. In addition, these models often focus on one aspect of feedback and fail to take account of the complexities and far reaching consequences of feedback. Using the economies metaphor, the study therefore put forward a conceptual model (see overleaf) which is much more fluid, dynamic, and complex. At its heart, the model posits that feedback can be understood in many different ways with no one conception necessarily more prized than another.

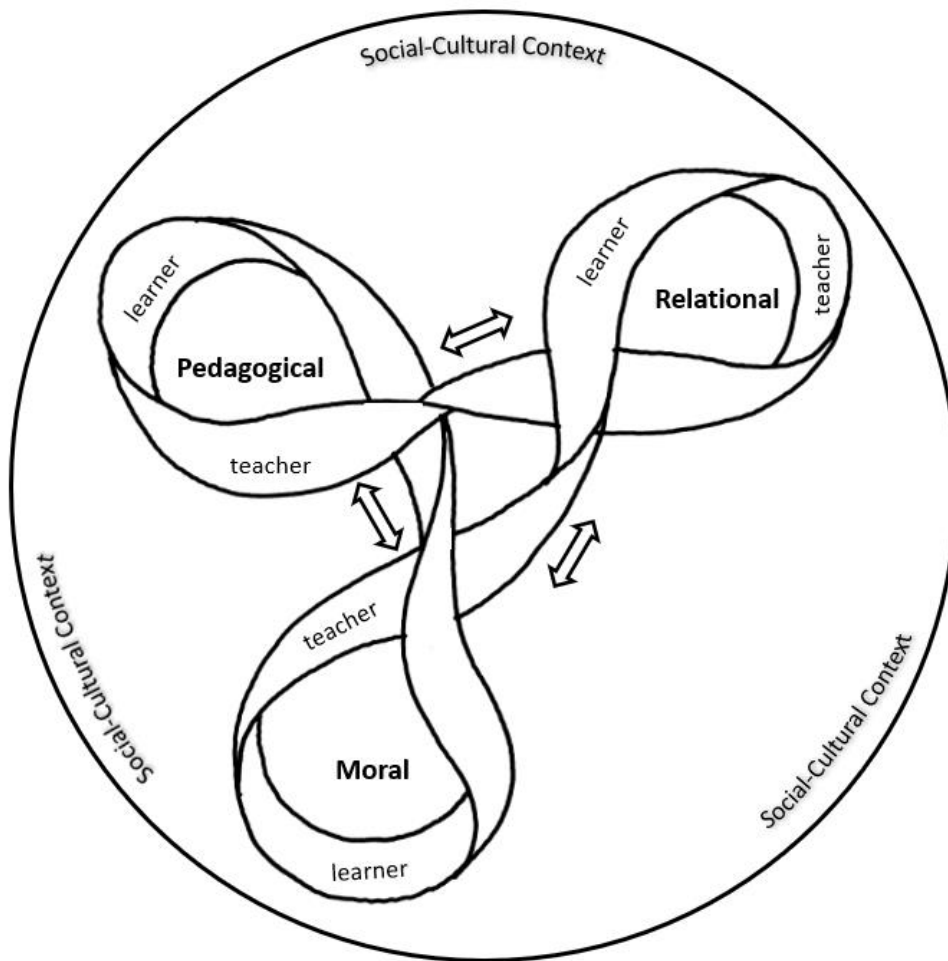


Figure 5 The Feedback Ribbon

The ribbon of the model signifies the dual experiences of teacher and learner, one on each side. Using a mobius strip, where one side flows into the other in a never ending manner, the model suggests that for both teacher and learner roles, and the experiences that support these, there is an ongoing fluidity and influence between each. Neither role is necessarily more significant than the other; both co-exist. The different experiences of teacher and learner inform the student teacher in developing inter-related pedagogical, moral or relational conceptions about feedback. These conceptions are dynamic and are open to change as new experiences present themselves. Furthermore, conceptions are altered further by the unavoidable influence of the social-cultural context (whether its discourses are accepted or resisted). Fairclough's (1992) broad understanding of social-cultural is used here, i.e. 'local or global, micro or macro' (p.286). In



other words, within the model socio-cultural includes political, policy, national and local specific influences.<sup>32</sup>

The model provides a visual representation of the inter-connectedness of the pedagogical, relational and moral economies, with one often influencing another, even if for a short period of time, for example one conception could have consequences for another and vice versa. Although the economies are grouped into separate areas, the model also acknowledges fluidity between them as each cannot be viewed in total isolation. For example, if one understands feedback as corrective and transmissive, the relationships between teacher and learner will be viewed in this way and there will also be a change to the moral purpose of teaching. Notwithstanding the argument that some of these conceptions can be longstanding, and based on previous experiences as a learner, the model posits that, for student teachers, development is dynamic, not fixed, and open to influence from new experiences and discourses. This is an ever changing and sometimes messy picture. The fluidity and dynamism of the model is because of the unique role student teachers hold at this time in their careers. Navigating several identities and relationships at once (some with inherent power dynamics), results in a corollary openness to new conceptions and experiences. In other words, an uncertainty in identity encourages openness to suggestion particularly when some of these suggested conceptions carry the added weight of the standards agenda. It may be that over time, as identity becomes more assured, the fluidity of the model reduces, becoming fixed on particular conceptions.

The conceptual model makes use of three economies (pedagogical, relational and moral) to group conceptions of feedback experienced and understood as teacher and learner. These are not necessarily balanced, are changeable over time and from person to person i.e. one economy may grow, another may shrink, depending on experiences of feedback as a learner and/or teacher. The next section will outline the main findings of the study regarding these three economies.

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<sup>32</sup> Indeed Fairclough's (1992) view of social-cultural is comparable to Gee's distinction between discourse and the much broader Discourse' (Gee 2015b) that includes the social norms, roles, identities, actions, practices and conventions that the language exists within.

## 8.2.1 Pedagogical Economies

Within the pedagogical economies outlined in the thesis, there are two broad findings.

### *8.2.1.1 Teacher-centricity as a Consequence of Neo-Liberalism*

Confirming the findings of Carless and Boud (2018), the study found evidence that the participants entered the program with pre-conceptions related to pedagogy possibly derived from their experiences as learners at school. These more often than not reflected a teacher-centric model of feedback and as such supported the view that the teacher-centric model is the most dominant discourse in education (Askew and Lodge 2000). Pedagogically, feedback was often conceptualised as a gift from the teacher, corrective and supported a deficit view of feedback. However, as learners, the participants also recognised their own role in engaging with feedback implying learner-centricity in parts. Indeed, as teachers, pedagogically feedback was sometimes conceptualised with reference to self-efficacy and self-regulation but this was not totally independent; the role of the tutor or knowledgeable other was still necessary to either validate self-evaluation, confirm what needed to be improved or provide direction on how to action the improvement. In this regard, although literature positions independent self-regulation as either a core consequence or purpose of feedback (Sadler 1989; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2004), or indeed as the best form of feedback (Boud and Molloy 2013), the study suggests that this in reality is rather idealistic. Given the education assessment systems, processes, inherent power dynamics and ultimate prioritising of loaded summative judgements, it is difficult for feedback to be purely self-regulatory and learner-centric. The age of measurement has resulted in the educational debate being preoccupied with how quality can be quantified (Biesta 2015). Within the neo-liberal education culture, knowledgeable others will always carry power as they make key judgments about learners and therefore, ultimately, disempower them; performativity encourages, albeit implicitly, a top down model. If a consequence of neo-liberalism is that it strips away what makes us human (Metcalf 2017), or as Kotsko (2018 p.89) claims, 'makes demons of us all,' it seems logical that it will also disempower us as learners.

### ***8.2.1.2 The Influence of Discourse***

Within the pedagogical economies, there is strong evidence of how educational discourses infiltrate student teacher conceptions. The socio-cultural context was perhaps a stronger influence for this economy as it prescribed what was judged and hence to be professionally valued, for example through the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). On occasion this influence was superficial and participants did sometimes recognise this, changing their views as they articulated their ideas during the interview. Nevertheless, the language associated with particular practices associated with feedback were prevalent within both the participants' descriptions of feedback experiences and how they categorised feedback as effective or ineffective. Furthermore, feedback was repeatedly conceptualised as consequence-oriented or action-focused process, supporting the work of Scriven (1967) and Black and Wiliam (1998). This further reflected the content of the Initial Teacher Education and primary education pedagogical discourse. Indeed, many of the pedagogical conceptions were a direct result of experiences as a student teacher and the discourses the role is subject to. As Ball (2015, p.307) states, 'we do not do policy, policy does us' and discourse becomes our truth.

## **8.2.2 Relational Economies**

The second set of economies presented within the thesis were relational. Two broad associated concluding themes are outlined below.

### ***8.2.2.1 The Influence of Emotions***

The study has argued that the relational economies were a significant part of the conceptual model and within these emotional factors were strong. As learners, participants indicated that feedback informed motivation either positively or negatively which subsequently influenced how they viewed their own identity, capabilities and self-worth and ultimately whether they engaged with the feedback or not. Whilst these findings support existing literature concerned with the link between emotions and feedback (Pekrun et al. 2002, Eva et al. 2012), the study also found that the impact could be cumulative and long lasting as can be seen by some of the participants' comments long after the feedback events. Many existing feedback models do not take account of the unpredictability of feedback in terms of the emotional consequences, presenting it as a

much more straight forward and linear process. This study argues that such models are perhaps somewhat naïve to suggest that relational aspects can be ignored. Furthermore, the study argues that a further consequence of neo-liberalism and performativity is a strategized approach to processes such as feedback, stripping out the affective aspects, which are more nuanced and unpredictable and hence less recognisable in the neoliberal discourses. As McArthur states, ‘the problem with a reliance on procedure is that it denies the dynamic, unpredictable, socially constructed nature of what it means to engage in an assessment task’ (2018, p.45). The conceptual model presented within this study acknowledges that feedback is a social process and as such relational understanding (including emotions) can override other economies at times.

#### ***8.2.2.2 Investing in Face to Face Feedback***

Secondly, the study asserts that face to face feedback presents an opportunity to build relationships which in turn make emotional fall out less likely. As learners, participants implied that face to face feedback encouraged them to engage with feedback that carried emotional risk as it was unavoidable. As such face to face feedback allowed opportunity for troublesome knowledge to be accepted. A perceived trusting relationship between learner and teacher increased the likelihood of feedback being seen as fair and constructive and arguably verbal feedback encourages such a relationship. In this context, the study found links between feedback and Buber’s (2013) ideas on relationships, arguing that feedback can be a mechanism for the development of both an I-It relationship (where the learner is viewed as an object,) and degrees of the fuller I-Thou relationship. The importance of an effective relationship is rarely articulated in the feedback discourse and certainly absent in the ‘quality’ discourse. This study argues that the human and relational dimension is integral to effective feedback communication.

There were pedagogical links to verbal feedback too, as the study found that verbal feedback had value in explaining and re-explaining the feedback, as well as positive non-verbal body language; as such, verbal feedback had pedagogical and relational advantages. However, the study also argues that generally, verbal feedback is rarely dialogic or indeed representative of a more learner-centric view. Generally verbal feedback interactions were still examples of gifting feedback or feedback as addressing a deficit; the mechanism of verbal feedback simply allowed for greater clarity of the teacher’s message and was, as such, still transmissive. This is a further

example of a key finding of the study: that differing, and apparently contradictory, conceptions can co-exist at the same time and are rarely as discrete as the literature often presents.

### **8.2.3 Moral Economies**

The thesis has argued that there is a third set of economies: moral economies. Two key themes in relation to this economy are outlined below.

#### ***8.2.3.1 Duty and blame***

The study found that moral economies provided a purpose in relation to how feedback messages were conveyed and acted upon. The moral economies were tied to notions of identity, role, responsibilities, professionalism and duty. Student teachers had to navigate the morals, and subsequent actions, linked to their ideals of their roles and also the imposed morality of the standards agenda. As learners, participants felt it was their responsibility to follow the advice of the knowledgeable others but, for many reasons, notably the emotional consequences of accepting feedback, participants were apologetic in their admittance that they did not always take up the opportunities that feedback allowed for in terms of future learning. As learners, participants indicated that it was theirs, not the tutor's, responsibility to engage. This responsibility was positioned as a moral duty. The study therefore has found that the oppositional polarisation of teacher-centric versus learner-centric models of feedback is not as clear cut or helpful as the literature suggests. As teachers, participants felt a moral duty to ensure the learners engaged with the feedback in a way that transcends the teacher/learner polarity. Regardless of the context (or role), feedback was judged as the responsibility of the student teacher and student teachers therefore had to shoulder blame and regret when it was not effective.

The literature implies that altruism is a key motivator for teaching (Richardson and Watt 2006; Watt et al. 2012; Heinz 2015; Friedman 2016; Salifu and Agbenyega 2016) but this study argues that the action of giving feedback can be considered both altruistic and narcissistic. In other words, gifting feedback allows teachers to feel a satisfaction in 'caring for ... others, or ... behaviour [s] that offers benefit to others' (Friedman 2016, p.630). The altruistic dimension suggests that the teacher is gifting the feedback to the passive learner, thereby underscoring the

teacher's contribution as the teacher is needed for a difference to be made and a teacher-centric view. However, this ultimately also serves a narcissistic need. Of course, the participants were student teachers who had chosen a profession where they had wanted 'to make a difference' (Arthur et al. 2015, p.16), which may have affected the value they attributed to teachers; critically, if practice was solely learner-centric, the participants would essentially be making their role redundant.

### ***8.2.3.2 The Morality of the Standards***

The socio-cultural context had significant influence on the moral economies as the standards agenda essentially imposed new moral guidelines for the student teachers. Doing the 'right thing' often evolved into evidencing the 'right thing' according to how the standards define the 'right thing.' Some participants appeared to accept this, while for others it was more of an uncomfortable compromise. As teachers, the participants recognised that feedback was evidence of performance of how they completed their teacher duties, how they had enabled pupils to make progress and how they had met the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). For some participants, this evidence was a motivator, as it allowed them to recognise the impact they had had as a student teacher and affirmed their new emerging identity as a professional teacher. However, the performativity aspect to feedback, in relation to the need to generate data and provide 'evidence' of learning, was conceptualised solely within their role as a teacher. The study therefore concludes that the challenges and demands of performativity- a reality for all in education- are particularly acute for student teachers which is not necessarily surprising given the rising accountability demands associated with this role. There may be links here to the current crisis in teacher retention and resilience given that so many newly and recently qualified teachers (NQT and RQTs) teachers do not stay in the profession (Quicke 2018).

## **8.3 Relationships between the two roles of student and teacher**

It is a unique feature of the study that it has examined how these differing roles influenced each other in regard to understanding feedback. Key cross fertilization of conceptions from learner to teacher and then teacher to learner will now be summarised.

### 8.3.1 Learner to Teacher

The study found that there were occasions when experiences as a learner directly informed conceptions of feedback as a teacher. The participants found the interview process itself useful in making these connections and encouraging a deeper degree of self-reflection. The dualism of the experiences of teacher and learner, and the associated conceptions, was particularly pertinent to the student teachers, who clearly saw themselves in both roles and had a degree of flexibility in their teacher identity given the stage of their career. One wonders whether, as the student teachers become more assured in their professional teacher identity, and begin to view themselves as 'experts' rather than 'novices' (Brody and Hadar 2015), and also cease to be learners in a formal, institutional sense, they may subsequently lose their awareness of their learner identity and hence be less open to listening to this learner voice.

The study posits that there were explicit links between experiences as a teacher and learner in relation to verbal feedback, as one experience informed the other. As learners, the participants' awareness of how distressing feedback could be informed their sensitivity around giving feedback as a teacher and verbal feedback was employed as way of softening this potential harm. Verbal feedback also became more valued as the participants recognised the pedagogical worth of discussing feedback in that it allowed for meaning to be communicated, constructed or co-constructed in greater depth and details.

Although Brown (2011) argues that teachers' conceptions are developed through their own experiences as a learner, in relation to the feedback cycle and the responsibility to complete it, the study found a somewhat schizophrenic understanding of feedback. For student teachers the *teacher* understanding did not always reflect that of the *learner*. Having said this, of course student teachers are learners at the same time they are teachers; they are learning about feedback and learning through their experiences of feedback. In reality, the teacher/learner roles overlap.

### 8.3.2 Teacher to Learner

Over the period of the study, a number of participants indicated how their understanding of feedback altered as they became more aware of the professional duties and responsibilities of

teaching and learning to be a teacher within the neoliberal performativity climate. As teachers, feedback was not solely to promote learning but was also a useful form of evidence in relation to the participant's ability to meet the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). For some participants, fulfilling and evidencing these expectations was motivating. Other participants retained a more critical approach to meeting these expectations, whilst still recognising that they needed to comply with them. The study asserts that the presence of performativity demands has distorted existing models of teacher development (Guskey 2002; Korthagen 2013; McLean, Bond and Nicholson 2014) resulting in sometimes superficial change where practice is different but underlying belief is not. The study also proposes that participant changes in relation to performativity and feedback were arguably evidence of Foucauldian bio-politics, where individual behaviour (including practice and, to some extent, belief) is governed by policy and the context and enforced through technologies of the self (Anderson and Grinberg 1998; Ball 2013). Indeed, the study argues that the increased prioritising of self-regulatory behaviour by the participants over time (in regard to feedback,) could be viewed more sinisterly: self-regulation is not necessarily learner-centric but reflects a technology of the self (Besley 2009) where subjects are effectively involved in panoptic self-surveillance, operating as part of the power and discipline machine. Yet, for student teachers, such self-policing helped them to be successful as they in effect monitored their own compliance against the standards.

Peer feedback was an area where understanding as a teacher appeared to shape understanding as a learner. Many participants only realised the potential of peer feedback as the study progressed. This was often because they made use of this approach in the classroom as a teacher, viewed it as valuable (because it was often a key feature of the school discourse in both policy and practice) and therefore started to reconsider their own understanding and conceptions of it as a learner. Some participants had expressed a degree of uncomfortableness when working with peers as learners, particularly earlier in the project. However, realising the value of feedback as teachers in schools, encouraged the participants to reevaluate their own views of peer feedback as learners and often came to understand that peer feedback did have value so was worth engaging with.

The duality of the experience of being both a learner and a teacher within a teacher education programme allowed for transfer between the economies to a greater or lesser extent. As such,



roles, identities and experiences influenced understanding hence the presence of learner and teacher within the conceptual model. Existing models of teacher development do not take full account of the inherent duality for student teachers.

Aside from the findings already outlined, there was an additional unanticipated finding from the study that fell outside of the original research questions. This is discussed below.

#### **8.4 An Additional Finding: Research Participation as Therapy/Catharsis**

In addition to the findings associated with the original research questions, and the subsequent conceptual model, the process also revealed a further finding in relation to the participants engaging in the research project. As was discussed within Chapter 6 (Relational Economies), the participants revealed the emotional consequence of feedback, suggesting it had almost traumatised them, as typified by the excerpt below.

*Evie: ...I mean I barely read it I was so embarrassed of it... I saw that there was a lot of writing and I thought 'oh that doesn't look good' ..I knew there would be a lot wrong with it for it to be half a page of writing of how to improve and what's gone wrong, so yeah I saw that and I was immediately 'oh I don't want to look at it' because I knew it was going to be bad...I had a brief skim through, but I didn't check back through my work because I was so put off....I should have re-read through before I started my next assignment, because that's a logical step isn't it, but I just couldn't bear to look at it again, but yeah I know that will negatively impact because I don't have those targets fresh in my mind, I probably couldn't even tell you what they were...I think if something doesn't go well I'm a bit...bury my head in the sand....if it was a paper submission I probably would have burnt it or thrown it out.'(Interview 3)*

Evie's comments above support the view that receiving feedback can feel like a 'personal attack' (Bing-You and Trowbridge 2009, p.1330) and be a traumatic experience, particularly if it damages one's sense of self. For Evie, her sense of trauma impacted on how the feedback itself was engaged with or valued (Bing-You and Trowbridge 2009; Sargeant et al. 2011; Dennis et al. 2018). Understanding feedback as trauma certainly has relational roots in that a view of the self is

formed in relation to social and experiential contexts but the literature argues that if a learner is able to process these feelings of trauma, the feedback could be re-engaged with and, as such, the sense of self persevered. For example, Sargeant (2011) suggests within his feedback model that 'addressing emotions' (p.745) should be step 1 of the process and similarly Dennis (2018) identifies the sharing of narratives as a key tool in making sense of emotions.

Within this study, although the relational economies identified that feedback could be traumatic, there was also an unexpected finding in that talking through these traumatic experiences within the research interviews proved to have particular therapeutic benefits. Participants implied they found it useful to talk about these experiences, often commenting that they felt better afterwards or stating that the interview felt like 'therapy.' This was generally post interview (and not recorded) and was often accompanied with non-verbal signals, such as a hefty sigh, indicating a form of relief. Of course, this could have been relief at reaching the end of the interview but generally the participants implied a form of relief at sharing these experiences.

*Evie: [in reference to earlier experience of feedback] ...I think I've moved on from it, just about. ... it definitely helps but I mean that's why people get counselling isn't it, talking therapy because you feel better once you've expressed it even if you said, oh no it was awful, then it's out there, isn't it?... (Interview 6)*

Furthermore, there were comments made in later interviews that indicated that the participants had come to terms with some of these experiences.

*Nick: I was looking at something the other day. I can't remember which one it was [a previous assignment] and I was looking at it and thinking, I hated this tutor because of that....and now I'm like, they weren't being mean.... it was a rubbish essay. (Interview 5)*

As such, it is an additional finding of the study, that there are therapeutic (or at least cathartic) benefits to engaging in research interviews. Indeed, Gale (1992) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that research interviews can be more therapeutic than actual therapeutic interviews. This is because although there are differences, there are also similarities between the two (Drury, Francis and Chapman 2007). Both rely on a trusting relationship between the participant and the interviewer (Murray 2003) although the nature of the relationship is slightly different. For a

research interview to have therapeutic benefits, questioning and dialogue are not focused on fixing the issue but probing experiences and understanding to fully relate to the participant's point of view (Gale 1992; Murray 2003); the relationship can therefore feel more collaborative than the therapist/patient relationship.

In this study, the probing of the participant's understanding or experience could be interpreted as a genuine interest and care in the person and, given the dialogic nature of the interview, supports the development of the more desirable I-Thou relationship (Buber 2013). Furthermore, a feature of research interviews (particularly those that follow a phenomenological approach as in this study) that could encourage a sense of therapy, is that participants get to 'tell their story' (Murray 2003, p.238). There is obviously a clear link here between storytelling and Dennis' (2018) reference to the use of narrative as a way of dealing with feedback experiences. Murray goes further, when exploring interviews related to trauma, stating that 'by telling their stories, participants took the first step in making sense of what had happened to them' (2003, p.238) which is part of the recovery process. 'Telling stories' about feedback may not seem on the same level as stories about personal trauma but, as has been argued, receiving feedback can feel traumatic. It appears that speaking about the experience allows the participant to feel a sense of closure as emotional responses are revisited and explored and often alternative perspectives considered. The process encourages deeper reflection, evaluation, self-awareness and can help normalise experiences (Harper and Cole 2012). Indeed, maybe the participant simply values the opportunity to 'tell their story to someone who will listen' (Drury, Francis and Chapman 2007, p.384). Murray goes further stating that the interview process encourages the forming or reforming of identity and self as the participant gains 'new perception of their past experiences' (Murray 2003, p.238). Given the changes in identity that student teachers need to navigate as they move towards a professional teacher, this seems particularly pertinent. In addition, the challenging nature of some of the feedback experiences suggests they were experiences that benefitted from the new perceptions, or new understandings, that the interviews promoted. The study therefore found that the research interviews themselves were significant in this change.

To summarise, comments made by the participants within this study, support the claim that receiving feedback can be a traumatic process but also that the opportunity to talk about these

experiences enabled them to process and come to terms with the experience. The opportunity to explore the experience of feedback through research-based interviews is therefore not only useful but necessary.

## **8.5 Implications**

In the following section, the suggested implications for each of the three contexts (Higher Education, primary education and Initial Teacher Education) will be outlined.

### **8.5.1 Higher Education**

The use of National Student Survey (NSS) data within Higher Education as an indicator of the quality of feedback has resulted in a distraction of the debate. This study posits that policy makers and practitioners should reframe the discourse away from processes related to compliance with University systems and re-examine how feedback is conceptualised and experienced by the students. Becoming focused on procedural aspects has led to ‘a prescriptive approach which inhibits learning....leads students away from the most important aspect of what they should be doing- critical engagement with complex knowledge’ (McArthur 2018, p.46). Similarly, the new prize for HE, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF<sup>33</sup>), ‘measures everything but excellence in teaching’ (Benn 2018, p.95). Many ‘quality<sup>34</sup>’ processes run the risk of stripping out all the possible quality in teaching, assessment and feedback and should not be used to judge effectiveness. Indeed, the study concludes that the quality of feedback should be informed by the experience of the receiver of feedback, as it is only this person who is able to comment on the impact of the feedback.

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<sup>33</sup> A national exercise for UK Higher Education which rates universities with the award of gold, silver or bronze (Office for Students 2018)

<sup>34</sup> Quality Assurance (QA) processes

The study also proposes that feedback needs to be framed as a relationship between the giver and receiver. Practices such as anonymous marking should be re-examined to see how it influences the development, or not, of a relationship. Indeed Pitt (2018) argues that far from increasing perceptions of fairness, such practices ultimately reduce views of fairness because of the negative influence they have on the feedback relationship. A more critical discussion of the far reaching consequence of feedback practice, beyond compliance with the 'quality' agenda, is necessary within the sector. The importance of the relationship between teacher/tutor and learner was significant in the value and engagement participants attributed to feedback. The study therefore proposes that Higher Education provision should re-direct funding from efficiency processes to time for feedback relationship building. Investment should allow for learners to meet with tutors or peers and engage with feedback in a personal and dialogic manner. Arguably such a mechanism exists within the wellbeing services offered at universities but, as has been argued, it is difficult to compartmentalise the relational and the pedagogical. This study suggests that opportunities for tutors and students to meet on an individual basis to discuss feedback, clarify meaning and minimise emotional consequences will increase the value of feedback.

### **8.5.2 Primary School Education**

The study found that within primary schools there was evidence of feedback being strategized into a series of 'gimmicks' (Ward 2008). For example, participants discussed approved formulaic techniques such as: 'green for growth and tickled pink' marking policies; the 'feedback sandwich' approach to giving feedback messages or the use of verbal feedback stamps. These practices were usually enforced at a school level, so student teachers needed to engage fully with them to adhere to school policy. Based on the evidence provided by the student teachers, such techniques presented a rather superficial and mechanistic approach to feedback, without a corollary critical understanding of the underlying principles, consequences and conceptions of feedback. The study therefore suggests that in primary schools, the mechanics of feedback have sometimes taken over from the principles and purposes of feedback. The study proposes that such a technical approach to feedback is a consequence of performativity where teachers need to be seen to do 'more feedback' leaving little time to really examine what good feedback is. Indeed this is supported by the Department for Education (2016, p.6) who acknowledge that

feedback has become a measure of 'teacher performance' (Department for Education 2016, p.6) rather than necessarily teacher or indeed learner effectiveness. Against this background, Boyle and Charles (2010 p. 287) argue that formative assessment has been reduced to a 'shopping list of things to do which teachers are trained to operationalise' and this study finds this is also true for feedback.

As such, this study asserts that schools should try to develop as sites for critical debate about what feedback is, what is experienced and understood about feedback and what the implications are for the classroom. However, schools do not exist in vacuums and any change away from the 'quick fix' approach to educational development must be supported by those who measure and judge the effectiveness of the school, for example, in the UK, Ofsted. It is only if the performativity shackles are released from schools that they will have time and confidence to critically examine key areas of pedagogy. This means risk-taking which is not encouraged in a high-stakes testing culture. There is some change in the air within the recently published draft Ofsted framework (Ofsted 2019). Amanda Spielman (chief inspector) commented recently that 'inspection may well have unintentionally contributed to the shift by reinforcing the focus on measures. Measures only ever provide a partial picture: inspection should complement, not duplicate, that picture' (Spielman 2017, p.4). The extent to which twenty years' worth of performative focused educational practice can be let go of remains to be seen.

A related implication of the study is that schools should actively discourage any dichotomous discourse associated with school policy and practice. Strategies are often actioned because they are now valued as 'good' practice and in direct opposition to what came before. This increases the speed of change by encouraging a rather knee-jerk response and a reductive view of pedagogy. Schools should evaluate any change carefully and accept that feedback is not black and white but complexly grey with lots of co-existing conceptions that have differing merits. Furthermore, the study suggests that changes to school practice ought to be research informed and very carefully evaluated whilst recognising the difficulties inherent in some of these suggestions in the current high stakes policy climate.

A last suggestion relates to verbal feedback. This was identified as a positive form of feedback for the participants, but practice did not necessarily reflect truly dialogic principles (or indeed

those from dialogism). The study suggests that verbal feedback is a powerful form of feedback but that its potential is often not realised. As a result, the study recommends that primary schools re-examine what they take to be dialogic practice, in light of the theoretical principles of dialogic teaching/dialogism and the research findings in this area. This debate should go beyond the pedagogical objectives of a dialogic approach but also consider the relational and emotional consequences to discussing feedback, for example, the potential for discussion to bring closure to emotionally challenging feedback experiences. Furthermore, the study would encourage schools to continue to/extend their use of peer feedback with carefully modelled and scaffolded training for the pupils regarding how to give and receive effective feedback to/from a peer. The study hopes that this could also apply to secondary schools to avoid some of the more negative conceptions developing around peer feedback, as was evidenced by the early interviews with the participants.

### **8.5.3 Initial Teacher Education**

The study proposes several recommendations for Initial Teacher Education policy and practitioners. Firstly, students benefitted from having explicit opportunities to discuss, reflect upon and debate complex concepts. It is suggested that in doing so, threshold (and therefore trickier) concepts are able to be breached. The study also posits that conceptions of feedback are informed primarily through experiences as a learner. This should be explicitly presented to student teachers as a vehicle for encouraging them to face, reflect upon and critique these pre-course and subsequent developing conceptions.

It was interesting to note how the language of the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) became part of the educational discourse communicated by the participants over the course of the study. This was rarely done critically; the language of the Standards (DfE 2012) was interpreted as good practice, informed professional identity and was therefore given value. Largely this was in reference to the participants' conceptions as teachers, implying a degree of buy-in to the standards discourse within the role of teacher (but not necessarily in their role as learners). During the interview process, participants sometimes made connections between the two roles of learner and teacher with one often influencing a reconceptualization of the other. The study therefore recommends that Initial Teacher Education programmes should include more critical

debate of the standards discourse and encourage reflective and reflexive links between the statements in the standards and student-teachers' experiences as a both a teacher and as a learner. This should include reasoned debate about some of the value laden terminology and associated practice contained in the standards. This is not to say the Standards (DfE 2012) should be dismissed but that they should be engaged with and understood on a more critical, deep and reasoned level. Only by doing so can Initial Teacher Education providers play a greater part in developing transformative future professionals rather than merely promoting compliant technicians (Clarke and Phelan 2017). Teacher Education practitioners should exploit this unique time in student teacher development by encouraging experiences, conceptions and the teacher development narrative to be viewed from both of these perspectives. After all, a teaching career will hopefully extend well beyond the lifetime of the current Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) and associated policies and practice.

## **8.6 Limitations of the Study**

Despite the findings and implications outlined above, the study inherently brings with it certain limitations. Although the research was longitudinal, and included six interviews per participant, the number of participants was relatively small. In addition, the voluntary approach to engaging with the research meant that the participants were not fully representative of the cohort, for example, only one male participant completed the study and there was a significant number (larger than would be representative of the cohort) of mature students. Furthermore, the student teachers were all from the same Higher Education institution and were enrolled on the same route into teaching. Research with other providers and routes, for example, school based programmes, may have not necessarily led to the same results.

In addition, there was potentially a methodological limitation that was not anticipated at the outset. Comments made by the participants indicated that their involvement in the research study had been significant in developing their understanding of feedback.

*Jenny – [in reference to the influence of the project] I'm more conscious of it... Loads more conscious of feedback. Whether it's giving it,*



*receiving it, I think I've kind of understood how feedback can either be valuable or it can be detrimental. (Interview 6)*

*Lilly: It's [the project] definitely influenced my understanding and my practice because it's encouraged me to reflect on feedback, on its uses within the classroom, and it's encouraged me to develop my own understanding and belief of feedback....I don't think I would have... maybe not noticed it or picked up on it as much as I have done. By doing the project, it's encouraged me to notice on differences or things that have since developed my understanding. (Interview 6)*

As such, the methodological approaches used influenced the participants' understanding of the phenomenon and their future experiences of the phenomenon; understanding of the phenomenon was not necessarily distinct to the original lived experience as is the basis of phenomenology (Creswell 2012) but was often reconceptualised, or at least understood better, through the interview process. The study has led to a better understanding of student teacher conceptions of feedback, and, through the process of the research itself, promoted a better understanding of feedback in the participants themselves. This is an example of Heisenberg's (1927) uncertainty principle where the act of observation effects the object of observation.

## **8.7 Recommendations for Future Studies**

The purpose of the study has been to explore the conceptions of feedback that student teachers held as learners and teachers, and how these develop over time. In many ways, it feels as if the study has opened something of a 'can of worms,' which has highlighted how fluid, dynamic and complex these conceptions are. Whilst the findings are useful, and should inform student teacher education programmes, primary education and Higher Education, there are also several areas which could now be investigated further.

Chapter 7 (Participant Stories) highlighted how many conceptions exist at the start of student teacher education and remain throughout as well as how some become more nuanced and developed. A natural progression of this study would be to see how these change during a teacher's first few years in the profession when they are fully exposed to school and national

discourses around feedback. Given that there may be less opportunity to critique these discourses, it would also be useful to see if particular participants become less critically reflective over time.

The participants were able to identify experiences from school where they gave or encouraged feedback with the pupils. A future study could investigate how the pupils engaged with, or conceptualised, this feedback. It would be interesting to track both similarities and differences between the conceptions of student teachers and their pupils. At the other end, a comparison between the conceptions of feedback held by mentors / teacher educators and student teachers would be useful in order to establish whether one feeds the other. This may result in a broader study which identifies how understanding around feedback is initially developed, reinforced or altered through all levels of the education process.

The study asserts that performativity-oriented policy has a significant influence on the way student teachers conceptualise feedback. A further study focused on unpicking this in greater depth is recommended, raising and investigating questions about how the national policy agenda has altered the discourse within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and then subsequently the thinking of the student teachers themselves. One wonders whether this discourse is then fed back into schools with Initial Teacher Education being a more significant part of the performativity movement than previously thought. Are ITE providers really able to develop reflective, critical and transformative practitioners within such an all-consuming discourse? If they are, what are the meaningful approaches that make the difference?

There are so many different routes into teaching that it would be interesting to conduct a comparable study with student teachers on a school-based training route. These students are potentially more influenced by school discourse and practice related to feedback as this is where the majority of their training takes place. If there are differences in understanding across these routes, what are these and why do they exist? Higher Education Initial Teacher Training often argues that it is distinct in its attention to reflective critical practice and research, aiming to produce reflective practitioners ready for the workplace. There is not necessarily the time or space for this in a school-based route. If this is so, it would be useful to explore if student

teachers approach feedback in a more critically and research informed manner according to route.

It would also be interesting to explore the therapeutic benefits of one to one interviewing further, not only in reference to feedback but in reference to any experience that feels unsettling as a learner within Higher Education. It may be that building in opportunities to talk through such experiences would allow students to process them more quickly before learning becomes affected.

This conclusion has summarised the main findings of the study in relation to the research questions. In addition, it has highlighted unanticipated outcomes not related to the questions, i.e. the therapeutic benefits of engaging in research interviews. The chapter has also recognised possible limitations of this small-scale study and has identified ideas for future related research to continue the discussion further. The implications of the research for the three differing contexts (primary education, Higher Education and Initial Teacher Education) have been discussed with reference to the development of policy and practice. Finally, personal reflections on the research process will now be discussed.

### **8.8 A Personal Reflection**

As a practitioner with a long-standing interest in assessment and feedback, the experience of this research study has resulted in me rethinking not just how others conceptualise feedback but also how I have conceptualised it in the past. Listening to the participants tell their own feedback stories made me reconsider how feedback is often viewed through the eyes of the feedback giver when it is the receiver who should be studied. Fully recognising the complexity of feedback, its effects and how it is intertwined with the social and cultural context has made me determined to continue to study the area, refine my own understanding and practice and fundamentally support student teachers in doing the same. I am motivated to alter the feedback discourse as both a practitioner and a researcher.

Engaging in research at this level has been a personal learning curve bringing both tremendous highs and frustrating lows. The only comparable experiences I have had are giving birth and running a marathon; both were hard work, never-ending but ultimately incredibly rewarding. Both required a degree of bloody-mindedness and dogged determination. Embracing the identity of a researcher and realising I had something to say was perhaps one of the biggest challenges but listening to the participants speak and feeling the spark of new ideas was a great motivator. Reflecting some of the findings of the study, it has been good for me to remember how it feels to be a learner as well as teacher. To summarise, engaging in this work has provided me with greater insight of both the subject but also an insight into myself. It has been both professionally and personally an extremely rewarding experience.



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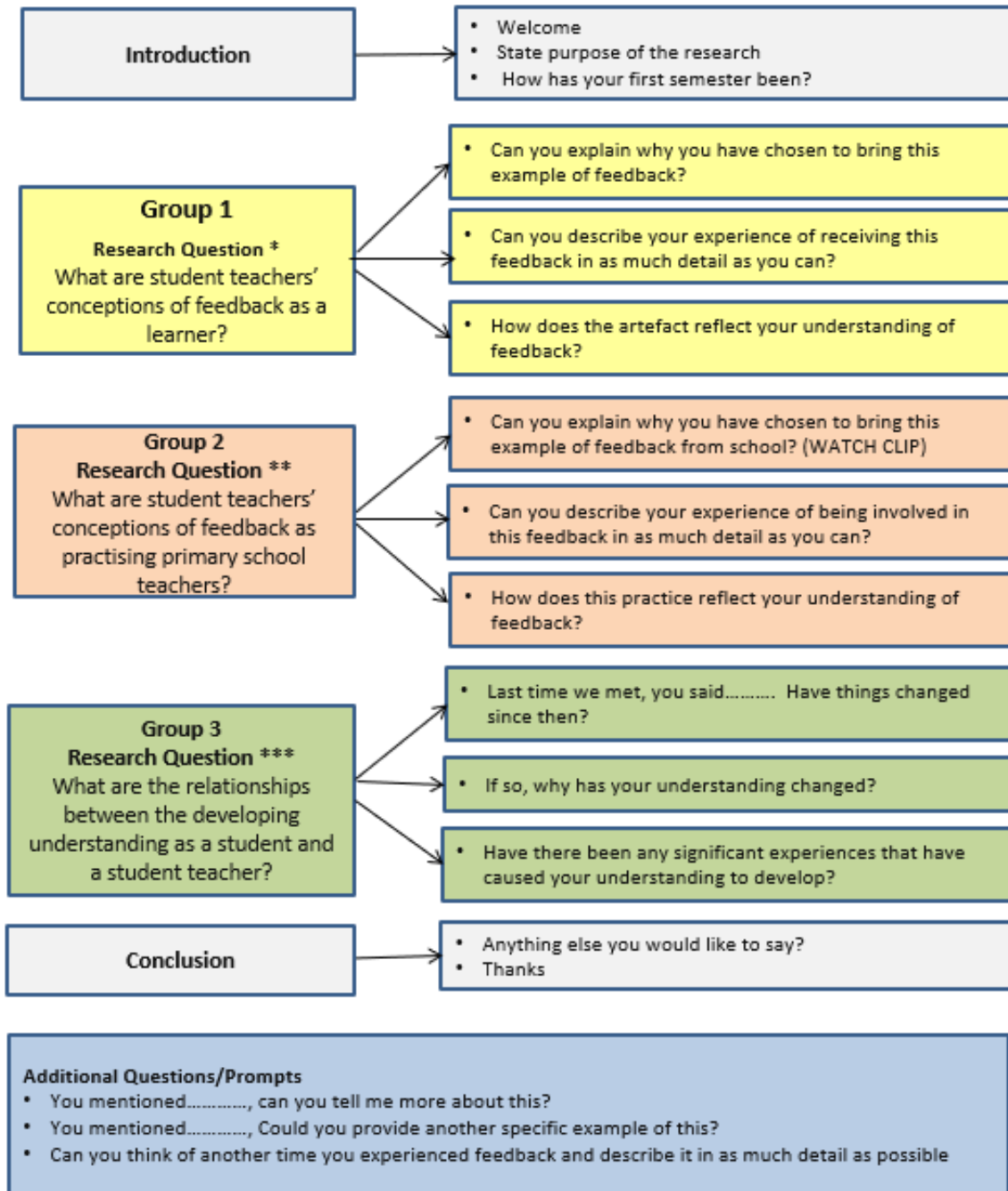
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# 10. Appendices

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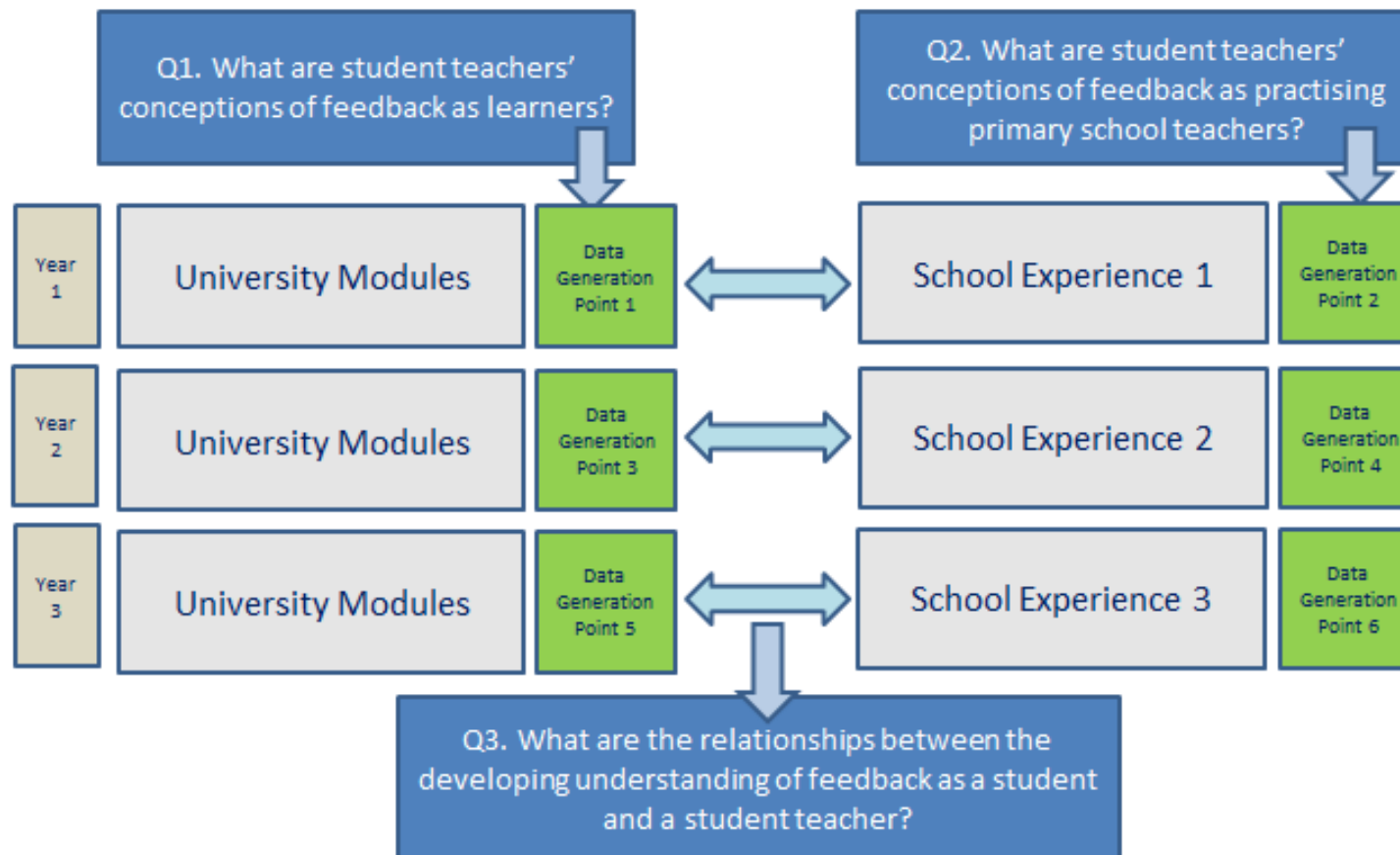


## 10.1 Interview schedule





## 10.2 Data Generation Points



### 10.3 Ethical Approval Request

<b>Title of research:</b>	The development of student teachers' understanding of feedback
<b>Name of researcher:</b>	Caroline Elbra-Ramsay
<b>Status:</b>	Postgraduate research programme (e.g. PhD) / staff
<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:c.elbraramsay@yorksj.ac.uk">c.elbraramsay@yorksj.ac.uk</a>
<b>Telephone number:</b>	01904876523
<b>Student / staff ID:</b>	10401

#### The Initial Screening Checklist

##### Subject area

*If the research involves matters of social, political or personal sensitivity you need to be aware of the boundary between legitimate academic enquiry and unnecessarily offensive or illegal behaviour.*

**Will the research require the collection of primary source material that might possibly be seen as offensive or considered illegal to access or hold on a computer? Examples might be studies related to state security, pornography, abuse or terrorism.** Yes

No

**Will the study involve discussion of or the disclosure of information about sensitive topics?** Yes

*This may involve legal issues that are nonetheless sensitive (e.g. sexual orientation, or states of health), or topics where illegal behaviour could be revealed (e.g. abuse, criminal activity, under-age drinking or sexual activity).*

No

## Participants: recruiting and consent

*If the research involves collecting data from people you need to be aware of issues related to ensuring that they are able to give informed consent to participate where appropriate. This means being aware of how people are recruited, and whether they understand what information is being collected and why. In some cases data collection has to be covert, or informed consent is not possible from the participants themselves. These require particular attention.*

<b>Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper to give access to, or to help recruit, participants?</b>	Yes
<b>Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge or consent at the time?</b>	No
<b>Will the study involve recruitment of patients through the NHS?</b>	No
<b>Will inducements be offered to participants?</b>	No
<b>Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?</b>	Yes
<b>Data collection</b>	
<b>Will the study require participants to commit extensive time to the study?</b>	Yes
<b>Are drugs, placebos or any other substances to be administered to</b>	No

participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?

If there are experimental and control groups, will being in one group disadvantage participants? No

Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved? No

Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants? No

Is pain or more than mild physical discomfort likely to result from the study? No

Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? No

Date: 8/12/14

Q#	Question:	What you need to show:	Your response :
3	<p>Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper to give access to, or to help recruit, participants?</p> <p><i>(delete row if 'no' answer in initial checklist)</i></p>	<p>Show how gatekeepers will be instructed and that undue coercion will be avoided. Demonstrate that informed consent and rights to withdraw will be made clear to all participants.</p>	<p>The research will involve 12-15 student teachers on the 3 year UG Primary Education programme ; the researcher (gatekeeper) is the Head of Programme for this course. Coercion will be avoided using the following strategies:</p> <p>Recruitment will be through Admin (rather than the Researcher) via email (see appendix 1)</p> <p>The researcher will not act as an Academic Tutor or Link Tutor for the participants. The researcher will not take part in Case Consultations or Standards Reviews for any of the participants.</p> <p>An information sheet (see appendix 2) will be provided clarifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the relationship between the programme and the research</li> <li>-advantages and disadvantages of participating</li> <li>- anonymity</li> <li>-the right to withdraw</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- roles, responsibilities and boundaries</li> <li>- the fact that participants will not be disadvantaged by refusing to take part or by opting out during the project (this will not be noted on the student record or passed on to Academic Tutors.)</li> <li>-how ethical concerns will be mitigated e.g. timing of data-collection (post summative assessment period), storage of data etc.</li> </ul> <p>The headteacher of the placement school will also act as a secondary gatekeeper. Consideration of this will be dealt with in the response to question 7.</p>
7	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?	<p>If children, show how parental consent will be obtained, or why it may not be needed (e.g. for some older teenagers).</p> <p>For other vulnerable adults if they can give consent show how will this be obtained to ensure that it is informed</p>	<p>As part of the research, student teachers will be filmed during school experience teaching a lesson of up to 1 hour. Although the focus of this filming will be the student teacher (and it will serve as a prompt for an interview rather than a source of data in itself) consent will be sought from the headteacher and parents of the children.</p> <p>Filming will take place during an assessed placement which is a significant and stressful part of the programme. Given this somewhat 'charged context, 'every opportunity to mitigate against student teacher anxiety related to securing and completing the placement. For example, if securing the filming of the lesson in any way makes the student teacher vulnerable then a lesson plan and notes will be</p>

			<p>used as a stimulus for the practice based interview.</p> <p>Headteacher consent will be gained for student teacher observation. This will include videoing which will necessitate parental consent. An information sheet will be provided for parents in light of this detailing the project, arrangements for opting out and use / storage of data etc. Implied consent will be used for the parents of the children in the class. This is a deliberate decision because:</p> <p>gaining informed consent from the class of children will result in additional administration for the host school and as such increased risk for the student teacher in securing and continuing with the placement;</p> <p>if opting out was the chosen approach, any unreturned forms would result in the children having to be removed from the lesson and accommodated elsewhere in the school. This would impact on the children's learning and would be another difficulty for the school potentially impacting on the placement.</p> <p>the focus of the filming is the student teacher. If children appear on screen they will be as bystanders. The participants are the student teachers.</p> <p>The researcher will detail how the data will be stored, used and deleted N.B. the intention is for video footage to be used as interview stimulus not for</p>
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			<p>further analysis so can be deleted.</p> <p>The YSJ Policy on Safeguarding Data will be adhered to at all times Appendix Three details how data security will be maintained throughout the filming process.</p>
8	<p>Will the study require participants to commit extensive time to the study?</p>	<p>Justify the required commitment in terms of research outcomes.</p> <p>Show how participants will be fully informed of what will be required to participate.</p>	<p>The project measures understanding across the programme therefore will necessitate a three year involvement for the student teachers (4 hour commitment per year - 2 x 1.5 interviews and 1 hour preparation time x 3 years = 12 hours in total)</p> <p>To mitigate against this:</p> <p>Additional participants will be recruited to allow for dropout rate (12-15 in total) See comments within first box</p>

**Date:** 14/1/15

**Researcher signature:**





Supervisor signature: (if applicable):  \_\_\_\_\_

## **10.4 Ethical Approval**

**From:** [Esther McIntosh \(E.McIntosh\)](#)  
**To:** [Caroline Elbra-Ramsay](#)  
**Cc:** [Jelena Erstic \(J.Erstic\)](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Faculty Research Ethics Committee: CER Research Ethical Considerations Form  
**Date:** 05 March 2015 13:41:12

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Thanks Caroline.

Approved as Chair's action: [REF ET/05/03/15/CER](#)

All the best,  
Esther

Dr Esther McIntosh  
Lecturer in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics and Chair of Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
Education and Theology  
York St. John University  
Lord Mayor's Walk York YO31 7EX  
Please note that Vicky Nesfield is taking over the editing work for the *International Journal of Public Theology* <http://www.brill.nl/ijpt>

## **10.4 Participant Volunteer Email**

Dear Year One,

Are you interested in being part of a research project that looks at your development as a student and student teacher? We are seeking to recruit participants to a three year project focused on the development of student teachers' understanding of feedback.

Being involved will allow participants to:

- gain additional reflective opportunities and, as such, develop skills as a reflective practitioner;
- contribute to future understanding and practice around feedback;
- gain wider experience beyond the programme;
- develop own understanding of feedback;
- see first-hand how real research works.

If you would like to know more, please reply to this email and we will forward further information about the project.

Best wishes

## **10.5 -Information Sheet for Participants**

**Research Title: *An analysis of the development of student teachers' understanding of feedback***

### **Key Questions**

#### ***What is the project about?***

The project will seek to answer:

- \* How do student teachers develop understanding of feedback during their course of study at University?
- \* How do student teachers develop understanding of feedback as practising teachers during placement at University?
- \* What are the relationships between developing understanding as a student and teacher?
- \* What are the key influences within this and is there contextual variation?

#### ***When will the research project take place and how long will it last?***

The project will collect data from January 2016 until June 2018.\*

#### ***Who is able to participate?***

Participants need to be student teachers in Y1 of the BA (QTS) Primary Education Programme. 12-15 participants are required in total.

#### ***How will participants give consent and what happens if they change their mind?***

Participants will be asked to sign a declaration form before the research begins and this will be counter signed by the researcher. Participants will have the right to withdraw at any point.; continuing consent will not be assumed by the researcher and will be re-established as necessary throughout. Participants will not be disadvantaged if they choose to withdraw (or not to participate); this will not be noted on student records or passed onto the relevant Academic Tutor.

#### ***What will participants be required to do?***

Participants will need to:

- Take part in a 1 hour open ended interview with the researcher -Semester 1;
- Video themselves teaching a lesson of your choice during teaching placement and then take part in a follow up 1 hour open ended interview with the researcher- Semester 2;
- Repeat these activities during Y2 and Y3 of the programme

***How will this impact on the assessment or participants (academically and during School Experience)?***

- Data collection (interviews) will take place after academic and SE judgments have been made and will not influence assessments/grades. In addition, video evidence will not be used to determine SE grades. The researcher will ensure that objectivity and confidentiality will be maintained and a 'value free' stance employed throughout. In addition, the researcher will not take part in Case Consultations or Standards Reviews for any of the participants.

***Will participants need to negotiate their involvement with the project with the placement school?***

The researcher will manage all communication with the school about the project including gaining consent. The participant's ability to secure and pass a placement will not be compromised at any point by the project.

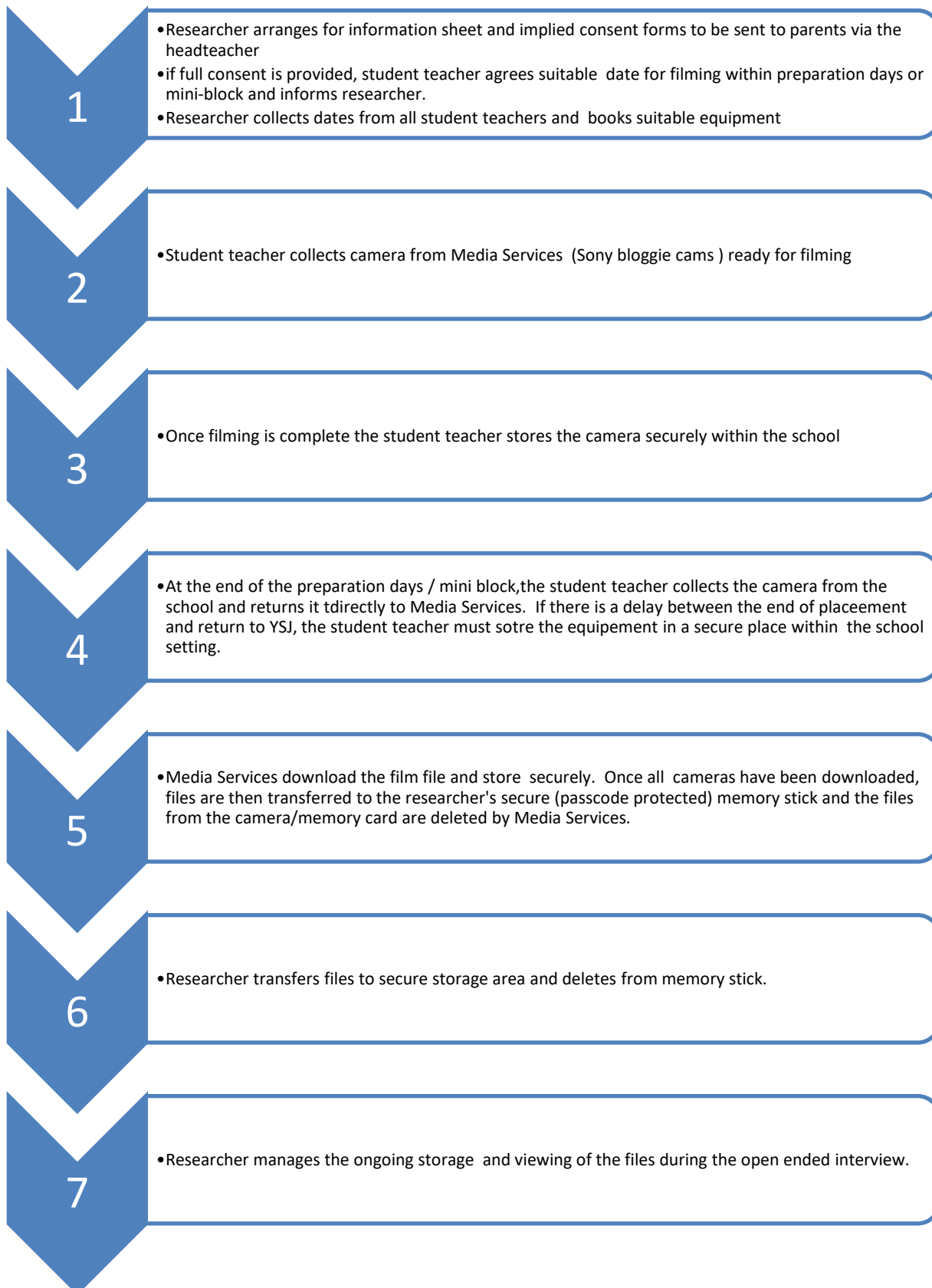
***Will participants be named in the project?***

The researcher will ensure that confidentiality and anonymity of all the contributors (including the schools) will be preserved throughout the collection, analysis and dissemination of the project. Pseudonyms (false names) will be used throughout.

***How will data be stored?***

Data will be stored via password protected storage and all participants will be anonymized. A transcriber will be used for the interviews.

## 10.6 Lesson Video Process



## 10.7 Headteacher email

Dear -----,

I hope you don't mind me contacting you but I am emailing from ----- in reference to ----- who is soon to be an SE student at your school.

----- is a participant in a three year research project as part of my PhD. The project is focused on how student teachers come to develop an understanding of effective feedback throughout their initial teacher education with a view to ultimately improving practice. As part of the project, I am interviewing students about their experiences of receiving feedback at University and also giving feedback to the children they teach. The second of these interviews needs to be school based and, as such, I am asking all participants to video themselves teaching a lesson or part of a lesson, that they think illustrates effective feedback. They will then need to select a small section of this to bring to the interview to act as a prompt for the discussions. We are now in the final year of the three year project so the same activities happened during her last two placements as well.

As----- will soon be on placement at -----, I am writing to ask your permission for this to take place. Strict ethical guidelines will be complied with throughout e.g. data will be anonymised and confidential and the video data will be held securely and then deleted following the interview. The attached document details this process further.

Although the focus of the videoing will be the student teacher, rather than the children, I also have a draft information letter for parents (attached) to provide further background information for them and also the opportunity to 'opt out' should you wish to send it information.

I will of course completely understand if this is not possible or am happy to discuss things further over the telephone if that would help.

## 10.8 Letter for Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Caroline Elbra-Ramsay and I am the Deputy Head of the School of Education at York St John University. In addition to my professional role, I am also in the process of studying for a part-time PhD. The study itself is focused on assessment and feedback, based on my experience in both primary schools and Higher Education. Its title is *'An analysis of the development of student teachers' understanding of feedback'*

The study involves talking to student teachers about how they understand feedback and also how they give feedback to the children they work with. As student teachers spend some of their training in placement schools, understanding is often focused on these experiences. The student teacher working in your child's classroom has agreed to participate in this project, so I am writing to give you further information about what this will involve and also seek your consent.

Data for the project is collected through interviews with the participating student teachers. To prompt these discussions, student teachers are asked to film one of their lessons and then talk to the researcher about the lesson and the teaching decisions within it. This will mean that at some point, ----- will film a short section of lesson of herself working with your child's class to use in a later interview.

The study has been approved according to the research ethical guidelines at York St John University and will adhere to these throughout. As such, the filmed lesson be treated confidentially; the only people who will view it will be myself, the student teacher and possibly my supervisors/examiners. Anonymity will be preserved throughout the project so the school, student teacher's name and children's names will all be removed. The focus of the lesson will be the student teacher rather than the children in the class and it is likely that not all children will be visible. Furthermore the video will be stored securely until a time when it is no longer needed when it will be destroyed.

I hope this clarifies some of the questions you might have about the project. If you are not willing to agree to your child being filmed as part of this video, I would appreciate it if you could sign the attached form and return it to school.

Many thanks for your help.

Caroline Elbra-Ramsay



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**PHd Research Project**

**An analysis of the development of student teachers' understanding of feedback'**

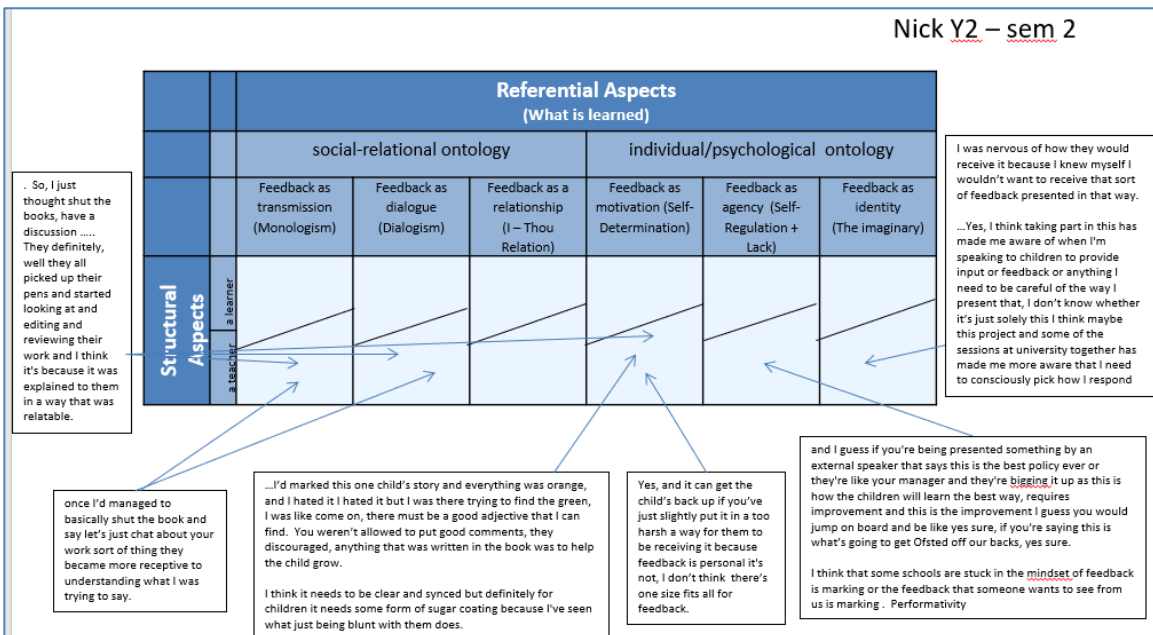
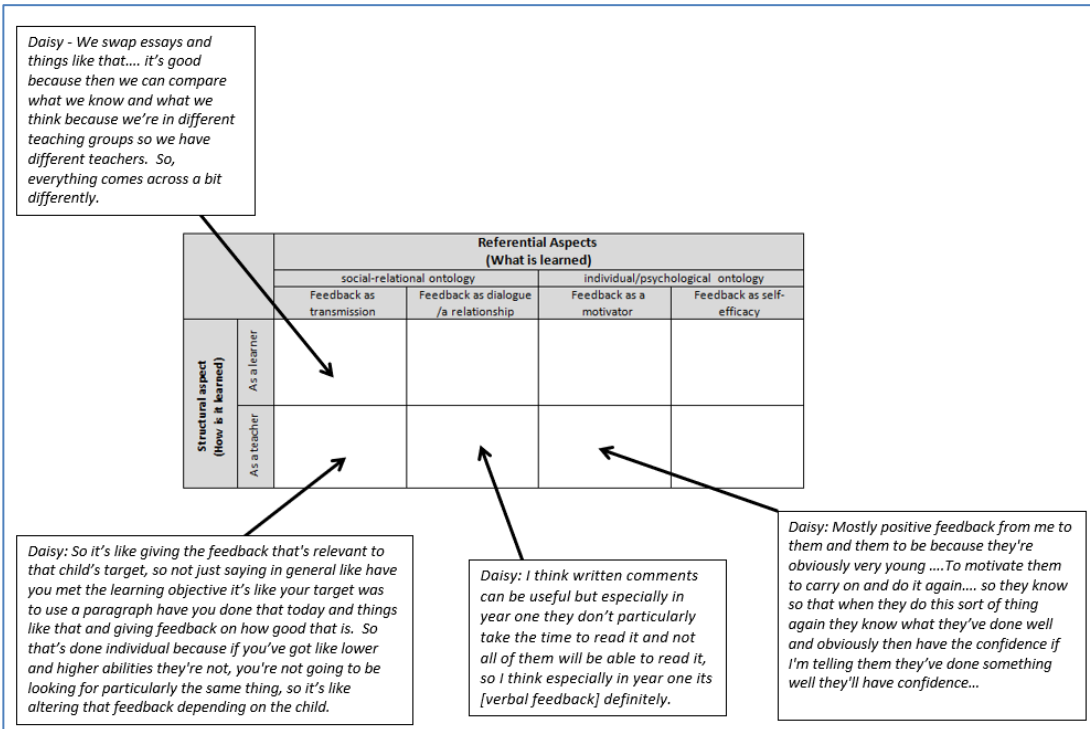
I am aware that the student teacher in my child's class has agreed to participate in this research.

I **do not** wish my child to be filmed as part of this project.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian

## 10.9 Example Outcome Matrices



**10.10 Participant/Analysis Reference Matrix**

Participant	Interview	Chapter 4 - Pedagogical Economies	Chapter 4 - Relational Economies	Chapter 4 -Moral Economies
Jenny	1		✓✓	
	2		✓✓	
	3	✓		✓
	4	✓		
	5		✓✓	✓
	6		✓	✓✓✓✓
Lottie	1	✓		✓
	2			
	3	✓✓✓	✓	
	4	✓✓✓		
	6	✓✓		✓✓✓
Anthony	1	✓✓		
	2			
Daisy	1	✓	✓	
	2			
	3	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓
	4			
	5	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
	6			✓✓
Nick	1	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓✓
	2	✓✓✓		
	3		✓✓✓✓	
	4	✓✓	✓✓	
	5		✓✓	

	6		✓	✓✓✓
Evie	1		✓✓✓	✓
	2	✓	✓	✓
	3	✓		
	4	✓	✓✓✓	✓
	5			✓
	6			✓
Lilly	1	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
	2			
	3	✓✓✓	✓✓	
	4	✓✓	✓✓	
	5	✓✓	✓	
	6	✓✓		
Eleanor	1	✓	✓✓✓✓	✓✓
	2		✓	✓✓
	3	✓	✓✓✓✓	✓
	4	✓		✓✓
	5		✓✓✓	
	6	✓✓	✓✓	✓

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