

**Mitigating the disparity between theory and practice:  
EFL student teachers' perspectives and experiences of  
their professional development**

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**This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy of University College London.**

## **Declaration**

I, Chitose Yoshimoto Asaoka, hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own work. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

*This study is a qualitative investigation that examines the perspectives and experiences of student teachers who become secondary-school English teachers in Japan. The initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum the teachers follow faces some problems, such as a too-short period of school-based training and a lack of clarity in goals and standards. This inquiry employs a case-study approach, using six cases created from interviews and journals that draw out unique perspectives on teachers' professional development in ITE.*

*The findings of the study indicate that student teachers are affected by various factors, including schooling experiences, theoretical knowledge in ITE coursework, practical teaching experiences in both formal classroom settings and informal settings beyond the curriculum. What also emerged from the qualitative data is student teachers' struggle to adjust and apply theoretical knowledge to practical teaching experiences. Without systematic and consistent intervention from the ITE curriculum, they struggle to mitigate the disparity between theory and practice. They actively seek help for mediational means such as observing and emulating, which has been culturally endorsed in Japan, and interacting with experienced teachers and peers, rather than reconstructing their theories through directly testing their knowledge in a classroom. Furthermore, their individual struggle to find temporary solutions in mediating their teacher learning results in the variability of their experiences in ITE.*

*The conclusion of the study is that the process of EFL student teachers' professional development is not straightforward, as each mediational activity the teachers employ is not sufficient in itself. Working more closely with supervising teachers at schools, ITE in Japan should take a more significant role as a provider of appropriate and explicit mediation so that student teachers can develop their expertise as professional English teachers more efficiently and effectively.*

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## Contents

Declaration.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations.....	11
Chapter 1: Challenges that Initial Teacher Education in Japan Faces .....	13
1.1 Prelude .....	13
1.2 Overview of the Study.....	14
1.3 Statement of the problem .....	16
1.3.1 Educational reforms in Japan since the 1980s.....	17
1.3.2 The role of higher education institutes in Japan .....	25
1.3.3 The role of schools in Japan .....	30
1.3.4 Teaching culture in Japan .....	36
1.3.4.1 Emphasis on holistic teaching .....	37
1.3.4.2 Teaching as craft.....	39
1.3.5 Challenges that ITE in Japan faces .....	41
1.4 Descriptions of the study.....	45
1.4.1 Purposes and research questions .....	45
1.4.2 Settings and focus of the study.....	47
1.4.3 Significance of the study .....	47
1.5 Conclusion .....	48
Chapter 2: Developing Teacher Autonomy in Initial Teacher Education in Japan .....	50
2.1 Introduction .....	50
2.2 Professional development in initial teacher education .....	53
2.2.1 Teacher autonomy.....	54
2.2.2 Dimensions of teacher expertise.....	55
2.2.3 Dimensions of teacher expertise for English language teachers .....	58
2.2.4 The role of theoretical learning at HEIs.....	64
2.2.5 The role of reflective practices .....	68
2.3 A sociocultural perspective on initial teacher education .....	73
2.3.1 Defining a sociocultural perspective .....	73
2.3.2 Tools that mediate learning in initial teacher education .....	74

2.3.3 Peer interaction as a meditational tool.....	76
2.3.4 Apprenticeship in initial teacher education.....	79
2.3.5 Being an apprentice from a sociocultural perspective .....	80
2.3.6 Conceptualisation of apprenticeship in Japan .....	85
2.4 A model of expertise development in initial teacher education in Japan.....	91
2.5 Conclusion .....	95
Chapter 3: The Research Methodology of the Study .....	97
3.1 Introduction .....	97
3.2 Qualitative approach.....	98
3.2.1 Qualitative research design.....	98
3.2.2 Case-study approach .....	101
3.3 The selection of samples .....	102
3.3.1 Research site .....	102
3.3.2 The selection process of participants.....	106
3.3.3 The participants.....	109
3.3.4 Researcher role.....	111
3.4 The research process .....	115
3.4.1 The pilot study .....	115
3.4.2 The main study.....	118
3.5 Methods of data collection .....	119
3.5.1 Interviews .....	119
3.5.2 Interview process .....	122
3.5.3 Card-sorting exercises .....	125
3.5.4 Stimulated recall.....	127
3.5.5 Interviews with ITE tutors .....	128
3.5.6 Journals.....	129
3.5.7 Journal writing in the Japanese context.....	130
3.5.8 Journal writing process .....	131
3.5.9 Observations, field notes and documentation.....	135
3.6 Data storage and analysis .....	139

3.6.1 Data storage.....	139
3.6.2 Units of analysis .....	140
3.7 Ethical issues .....	141
3.8 Conclusion .....	142
Chapter 4: Student Teachers' Perspectives on Theory and Practice in ELT in Japan..	144
4.1 Introduction .....	144
4.2 Profiles of six cases .....	146
4.3 Student teachers' perspectives towards teaching the subject .....	148
4.3.1 Chiyo .....	149
4.3.2 Aya.....	157
4.3.3 Noriko .....	162
4.4 Student teachers' perspectives towards a holistic approach.....	168
4.4.1 Akira.....	169
4.4.2 Mayuko .....	180
4.5 Being a subject teacher in an upper-secondary school: Mari's case .....	187
4.6 Theory and practice: Evolving student teacher perspectives.....	193
4.6.1 The value of theoretical knowledge for student teachers .....	194
4.6.2 The improvement of the target language abilities.....	196
4.6.3 The role of practical experiences in teacher development .....	198
4.7 Conclusion .....	200
Chapter 5: Factors that Affect EFL Student Teachers' Professional Development.....	202
5.1 Introduction .....	202
5.2 Factors that affect early professional learning.....	203
5.2.1 Previous and current experiences as a learner .....	204
5.2.1.1 Student teachers' pre-existing perspectives of CLT: Saori's case..	206
5.2.1.2 Student teachers' pre-existing perspectives of CLT: Akira's case..	211
5.2.2 Theoretical learning in ITE coursework.....	214
5.2.2.1 Student teachers' knowledge of SLA theory: Mari's case .....	216
5.2.2.2 Student teachers' knowledge of learner-centred pedagogy: Akira's case .....	217

5.2.3 Practical learning in informal settings .....	220
5.2.3.1 Student teachers' informal teaching experiences of giving clear explanations: Noriko's case.....	221
5.3 Mediational tools that narrow the gap between theory and practice.....	225
5.3.1 Impact of mediational activities of observation and emulation.....	226
5.3.1.1 A successful case: Chiyo's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy .....	227
5.3.1.2 An unsuccessful case: Akira's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy .....	236
5.3.1.3 Uncritical Emulation: Mayuko's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy .....	239
5.3.1.4 Limitations of observation and emulation.....	244
5.3.2 Impact of peer interaction.....	245
5.3.2.1 Peers as co-meaning-makers.....	248
5.3.2.2 Peers as model providers .....	254
5.3.2.3 Limitations of peer learning.....	258
5.4 Conclusion: EFL student teachers' developmental processes.....	260
Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusion.....	269
6.1 Summary of the main findings.....	269
6.2 Student teachers' struggle in narrowing the theory/practice gap in ITE.....	271
6.2.1 The meaning of observation and emulation in ITE in Japan .....	274
6.2.2 The difficulty of developing reflective practices in ITE in Japan .....	278
6.2.3 The impact of others in ITE in Japan .....	281
6.3 Pedagogical implications .....	285
6.4 Directions for future research .....	288
6.5 Final conclusion .....	291
Bibliography .....	296
List of Appendices.....	309
Appendix A: Sample Informed Consent Form .....	310
Appendix B: Prompts and Guides.....	311



Appendix B-1: Interview Guides for the Participants .....	311
Appendix B-2: Interview Guide for the Tutors.....	313
Appendix B-3: Journal Instructions .....	314
Appendix C.....	315

## **Table of Figures**

Figure 1: A Dialogical Process of Theory and Practice in ITE in Japan .....	92
Figure 2: A Dialogical Process of Theory and Practice Revisited .....	264

## **Table of Tables**

Table 1: The Number of Course Credits Required in ITE in Japan .....	29
Table 2: Number of Licentiates and Number of Licentiates Who Became Teachers.....	104
Table 3: Description of the Participants.....	110
Table 4: Description of the Three Tutors .....	110
Table 5: The Timeline of the Pilot Study.....	116
Table 6: The Timeline of the Main Study.....	120
Table 7: Seven Key Principles in Becoming a Good English Teacher..	126
Table 8: Observations of the Participants' Teaching.....	138
Table 9: Examples of Each Theme .....	148
Table 10: Themes Emerged from the Journal Data and Their Frequency .....	315

## **Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

### **Japanese**

gakkyu hokai	breakdown in classroom discipline
hikidashi	drawer, talents (metaphorically)
ikiru chikara	zest for living, strength to live
kaiho-sei	initial teacher education offered as an open system
kaizen	making continuous improvements
kenkyu jugyou	a demonstration lesson toward the end of the teaching practice
kyoshoku katei	ITE programme at a higher education institute
jyuku	a cram school
nusumu	to emulate one's craft skills and knowledge
seito shido	student management and guidance
shujukudo betsu shido	ability grouping
soto	outside the group, outsiders
uchi	inside the group, insiders
yutori	free time

### **Abbreviations**

ALT	assistant language teachers
CK	content knowledge
CLT	communicative language teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
ELT	English language teaching
GPK	general pedagogical knowledge
HEI	higher education institutes
ITE	initial teacher education
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology
PCK	pedagogical content knowledge
PGCE	post-graduate certificate in education
QTS	qualified teacher status

SLA	second language acquisition
STEP	Society for Testing English Proficiency
TDA	Training and Development Agency for schools
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication

## Chapter 1: Challenges that Initial Teacher Education in Japan Faces

*'Making a lesson plan using content-based instruction was extremely difficult for me. No matter how much I thought, I couldn't make any progress, only time passing by. What you have never experienced as a student is very difficult to master, I guess.'*

[Akira, Fourth interview]

*'I want to observe experienced teachers because discussing ideas with cohort students doesn't always give me a clear understanding of concepts and skills unless I actually try them out in a classroom, the environment which we don't have. So instead I want to observe a class live, through which I believe I can make a new discovery. If I can observe a teacher who teaches using my ideal approach, then I can start by emulating her.'*

[Mari, Second interview]

### 1.1 Prelude

The main theme of this research study emerged from my own experiences and concerns as a teacher educator of English as a Foreign Language<sup>1</sup> (EFL hereafter) in an undergraduate-level initial teacher education (ITE hereafter) programme in Japan for the past fifteen years. I have always tried to best accommodate student teachers who are native speakers of Japanese, without any set framework of teacher expertise for them to accomplish upon graduation. On the one hand, there is a great amount of theoretical knowledge which needs to be transmitted to student teachers at higher education institutions (HEIs hereafter), while student teachers seem to be desperate for practical experiences rather than theory. On the other hand, I am remote from student teachers' actual school-based experiences and am only able to monitor their development through their teaching logs or stories

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<sup>1</sup> In Japan, English is taught as a foreign language since the majority do not have to use it in their everyday life, as opposed to ESL, English as a second language, by which it means that people need to learn English in addition to their own mother tongue in order to use it in their community, such as at school.

after teaching practice. The only chance open to me as a teacher educator is a single visit to observe the teachers' demonstration lessons towards the end of their teaching practice. In other words, it is rare to expect collaboration between HEIs and schools in developing student teachers' expertise in this specific context. In addition, as the preceding extracts of two student teachers indicate, student teachers themselves also seem to struggle; at HEIs, they learn about ideal teaching approaches and methods such as employing a communicative practice or a student-centred approach, or using English as a medium of instruction; whereas at schools, they face the reality of the classroom and are asked to adjust to school contexts, and thus cannot freely put theory into practice. They may also not have any previous experiences of learning English through such approaches; thus, they may find it a challenge to draw on their own learning experiences.

As a researcher and a teacher educator, I started to feel the necessity of re-examining what elements teacher expertise should be composed of in an EFL context in Japan and how effectively student teachers can develop this professional expertise during ITE. For them to become good English teachers, what qualities are necessary and what kind of support can ITE provide? These questions were the start of this research study.

## **1.2 Overview of the Study**

This is a qualitative study situated in a Japanese context. Employing a case-study approach, this study was conducted with the aim of exploring and interpreting EFL student teachers' development processes in their ITE programme. Through reflective journals and in-depth interviews, this study

aimed particularly to investigate how student teachers developed their teacher expertise, how their views on what makes a good English teacher shifted and developed, and what factors, such as interaction with or emulation of others, had impact on their learning to teach processes. As we shall see later in Chapter 5 (sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2), emulation of others, the implicit use of which is often criticised in professional development (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007) as it may not effectively allow student teachers to link their own pedagogical choices to abstract theory, turned out to be an important element in student teachers' expertise development in this study.

Seven participants who were pre-service EFL student teachers in an ITE programme at a Japanese university joined this study in April 2009. Six of them were lower-secondary-school<sup>2</sup> student teachers, whereas one was a prospective upper-secondary-school English teacher. The participants were followed over one year and a half, both in formal settings (e.g. journals, interviews, observation) and additional *ad hoc* opportunities such as observation of teaching which took place on a voluntary basis outside the statutory requirements. The data collection for this study was divided into two phases: training in an ITE programme at an HEI, and teaching practice at a secondary school. Multiple tools were employed for collecting the qualitative data which included interviews, journals and observation in order to maximize the validity and reliability of the research study.

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<sup>2</sup> In Japan, the compulsory education period is six years of elementary school and three years of lower secondary school called junior high school. The advancement rate in upper secondary schools called senior high schools (three years) is currently 97% according to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology ([http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/kaikaku/main8\\_a2.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/kaikaku/main8_a2.htm)).

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

In 1993, Hartley argued that ITE in the UK was anchored in a confusion in the theory-practice dichotomy, which is still true in ITE in Japan. On the one hand, HEIs are expected to transmit theoretical knowledge to their student teachers; this knowledge serves as their base for further professional development. However, what theoretical knowledge consists of is not always clear, while its uniformity and certainty often draws criticism from practitioners. On the other hand, schools are expected to provide practical teaching experience for student teachers, so that student teachers can apply their theory to particular contexts. Nevertheless, student teachers may try to conform to a particular setting without the ability to capture the entire picture of pedagogy (Holligan, 1997). Furthermore, political control may add more confusion to the theory-practice relationship, since plans initiated by the government often ignore the context of practices and participants' voices in these practices (Bowe & Ball, 1992).

When society is rapidly changing, school teachers are required to learn flexibility to enable them to adapt to new challenges, such as policy changes. Furthermore, school teachers ought to develop their autonomy so as to critically deal with those changes and make necessary choices. This study seeks to examine how EFL student teachers learn to develop their flexibility and autonomy in a classroom in the Japanese context. This has a significant implication for teacher education in Japan, a country which has been struggling to remain influential and competitive in a fast-paced globalised world where movement of people and information across international borders has intensified, while mastery of English as an international *lingua*



*franca* has become highly stressed. This chapter first explores the overall recent changes in educational policies in Japan, as well as those specifically referring to English language teaching (ELT hereafter), in order to reconsider the role of HEIs in training high-quality English language teachers. The current ITE system in Japan is examined in comparison to the educational reforms in the UK as a reference point. Finally, the challenges that ITE in Japan currently faces are clarified.

### *1.3.1 Educational reforms in Japan since the 1980s*

Bowe and Ball (1992) argue that policymaking is a continuous process that usually involves three dimensions. The first dimension is the *context of influence*, in which “public policy is normally initiated” (p.19). In many educational contexts, including that of Japan, educational policy reforms are often initiated by claims made by society, including parents, involving national bodies discussing issues and making recommendations to the government. The second dimension is the *context of policy text production*. This dimension implies that produced texts may allow some constraints on, or various interpretations by, the participants involved. The final dimension is the *context of practice*, in which responses and consequences occur. In educational reforms, the context of practice usually implies classroom teachers who are responsible for making changes in practice accordingly; these teachers are, in turn, held accountable for the outcomes of educational reforms.

To take Japan as a case, there has been a series of educational reforms since the 1980s. According to Hooghart (2006), this series of educational reforms was carried out when Japanese society was struggling through a

stagnant economy, which put pressure on children who were fighting to pass entrance examinations and get into prestigious universities, since entering reputable institutions was considered in Japan as a guarantee of a good job and a good life. This pressure, partly due to economic concerns, led to a cramming system of education as well as excessive competition for entrance examinations. Students who studied mainly for instrumental purposes, including English, were often called “study robots”. This resulted in many at-risk students, those who were left behind in examination competition. It also led to serious education issues, such as bullying, school violence or children unwilling to go to school. In trying to respond to the changing situations in education, a report entitled *National Commission on Education Reform* was compiled in 2000, prompted by then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. After careful consideration of the recommendations in the report, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter simply “MEXT”) then produced the *Education Reform Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* in 2001, also known as the “Rainbow Plan” (MEXT, 2001). The plan clearly delineated specific measures and issues of educational reforms to be taken. The following list enumerates seven priority strategies mentioned in this reform plan:

1. Improve students’ basic scholastic proficiency in “easy-to-understand classes”.
2. Foster open and warm-hearted Japanese through participation in the community and various programmes.
3. Improve the learning environment to one which is enjoyable and free of worries.
4. Promote the creation of schools trusted by parents and communities.
5. *Train teachers as “educational professionals”.*
6. Promote the establishment of world-class universities.

7. Establish a new educational vision for the new century, and improve the foundations of education. (My italics)

These seven strategies indicate that the reform aimed to foster a community where schools would be more open to external participants from the community, where problems would be solved jointly between these participants and students, and where students, who were so-called “study robots” studying to meet their instrumental purposes, would learn in a more stress-free setting and enhance their individuality and acquire skills which would be useful in a global economy. Above all, the major reform which actually took place after these recommendations was the implementation of a new national curriculum in 2002<sup>3</sup> (MEXT, 2003a), with the introduction of a new “integrated study” course for both primary and secondary schools, which stresses more individualized, cross-curricular thematic projects, as well as the reduction of instructional content and classroom hours, with the emphasis more on *yutori*<sup>4</sup> (literally, *having the free time and space for relaxation*) for students so as to foster *ikiru chikara* or “zest for living”<sup>5</sup> in English (MEXT, 2003a). The younger Japanese, more skilful, innovative and independent, were expected to have the strength to live in a global society and reinvigorate the Japanese economy, whereas teachers were expected to be responsible for implementing these reforms and achieving these goals.

Educational reforms under the Rainbow Plan (MEXT, 2001) covered a

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<sup>3</sup> The national curriculum was re-revised in 2012 for lower-secondary schools and in 2013 for upper-secondary schools in response to the criticism for a decline in scholastic ability that the lighter curriculum invited. The revision in ELT includes an increase in the number of target vocabulary and an introduction of a teaching-English-through-English approach at the upper-secondary level.

<sup>4</sup> Yoshida (2001) explains that *yutori kyōiku* can be interpreted as pressure-free education.

<sup>5</sup> The original expression in Japanese for ‘zest for living’ is *ikiru- chikara*. The literal translation for this expression is ‘capacity (*chikara*) to live (*ikiru*).’

wide range of educational issues, and improvement in teacher training was certainly one of the issues to be tackled. The recommendations specifically made for training teachers to become more “educational professionals” were threefold:

1. Introduce a commendation system and special increases in the salaries of excellent teachers.
2. Take appropriate measures for teachers who lack teaching abilities (e.g. not letting them teach until improvements are made).
3. Improve the teacher qualification system, establish a new teacher training system, and increase the opportunities to undertake work experience in the community.

Responding to these measures, particularly the second point, a new law, the *Licensing Act of Educational Personnel*, was enacted in the Diet<sup>6</sup> on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2007, and the teaching certificate renewal system was implemented in April 2009. The government then was headed by the Liberal Democratic Party. Under this law, currently practising secondary school teachers are required to renew their qualifications every ten years by participating in conferences and seminars for 30 hours. Although this change seems to have more of an impact on practising teachers, it also entails some impact on pre-service teachers in that they are made aware that teaching is a lifelong profession, and that teachers must continue to work on their professional development throughout their careers. However, what the expression “teaching abilities” means was not been clarified in this plan. Asaoka (2008, 2012) criticises the vagueness of the goals for student teachers to achieve that are described in the governmental documents. The goals set by the government do not specify what kind of knowledge base or pedagogical skills need to be cultivated, and

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<sup>6</sup> Diet is a legislative body of Japan at a national level, similar to the British Parliament.

do not show whether abstract theory or practical skills should be stressed more. Additionally, the Democratic Party of Japan, which was a ruling party between September 2009 and December 2012, reviewed and proposed a possibility of introducing a six-year ITE programme including a two-year graduate-school-level training, and completely abolishing the teaching certificate renewal system. Consequently, these new policy changes have created more confusion on the part of teachers in Japan, both in-service and pre-service, with no clear directions provided by the government. Furthermore, in response to the third point above, the longer length of school-based training and one-week-long hands-on experiential training were enacted in the ITE curriculum. These newly implemented measures will be elaborated in detail later in section 1.3.3.

Some drastic changes, specifically in ELT, were also proposed in Japan in early 2000s. For instance, the Japanese government formulated and published an action plan (MEXT, 2003b) which urged society to upgrade the general level of English education in order to compete with other countries in global society, by which they presumably meant that English is essential as an international *lingua franca*. In addition to globalisation as a reason to promote this plan, Honna and Takeshita (2005) assert it was promoted based on the idea that English should belong to all Japanese citizens and not only to an elite few. The authors (2005) argue that every person in Japanese society needs to be encouraged to learn English as an additional language so as to fill the gap created by the so-called “English divide”, a gap between people who can afford to pay for English language education and those who cannot. This English divide is a phenomenon currently seen across many regions in

Asia such as China, South Korea and Taiwan (Chang, 2004; Kang, 2008; Tsuda, 2008). For example, in South Korea, when the ex-president Lee Myung-Buk, was elected in early 2008, one of the policy pledges he made was the introduction of immersion education, in which all English classes, including those in primary schools, would be taught fully in English. Although this pledge faced stiff opposition from various quarters, the original reason for its implementation was due to the divide between rich families who could afford private education and who could provide English teaching for their children from an early age, and those who were not able to do so. The 2003 action plan in Japan also arose from this rationale; as a result, the government hoped to provide better English education for all through public education.

In order to upgrade the overall English teaching system, it was necessary to upgrade the quality of Japan's English teachers. Thus, in this action plan, four goals regarding English teachers were established to be achieved before 2008:

1. Almost all English teachers will acquire English skills (STEP<sup>7</sup> pre-first level, TOEFL 550, TOEIC 730 or over) and the teaching ability to be able to conduct classes to cultivate communication abilities through the repetition of activities making use of English.
2. Centring on leading teachers at the local community level, the improvement of English abilities in the community will be enhanced.
3. A native speaker of English will participate in English classes at junior and senior high schools more than once a week.

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<sup>7</sup> STEP is an English language proficiency test conducted by a Japanese non-profit organization, the Society for Testing English Proficiency. Both TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) are offered by Educational Testing Service in the US. TOEFL is often used as an admission requirement for English-speaking universities, while TOEIC evaluates a learner's English abilities in a workplace. TOEFL 550 is based on their paper-based test.

4. People living in the local community proficient in English will be positively utilized.

In accordance with the Rainbow Plan by which fostering a community open to external participants was encouraged, hiring more assistant language teachers<sup>8</sup> (ALTs hereafter) or using people with high English proficiency in the community was also proposed as an easy solution. In addition, the improvement of the teaching abilities of prospective English teachers is one issue to be achieved in the action plan. The plan recommends that secondary school English teachers attain a certain proficiency level of English, such as a TOEIC score of 730.

This proposal, however, needs more consideration: English language proficiency is not necessarily equivalent to teachers' high-quality professional expertise, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3). Additionally, similarly to the Rainbow Plan, the MEXT's proposal does not elaborate on what kind of teaching abilities teachers should acquire. According to a study conducted by JACET Special Interest Group on English Education (2005), although a quantitative survey's results tentatively showed that some high school teachers expect student teachers to have achieved a certain level of English proficiency demonstrated by the TOEIC or STEP before they start their teaching practice, the same study also suggested that among practising junior high school teachers, many placed greater importance on the student teachers' willingness to work with ALTs and their ability to conduct a class in English, rather than their high English language

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<sup>8</sup> ALTs are native-English-speaking teachers hired through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme on a contractual base. They are not usually regarded as a teacher but an assistant since they may be hired without a teaching certificate of Japan. Currently, English teachers with a teaching certificate are mostly Japanese natives.

proficiency or subject knowledge. This indicates that there is no general agreement, even among practising teachers in Japan, about what professional expertise is necessary to become an effective English teacher in Japan, let alone among student teachers.

The Japanese government has been trying to respond to claims concerning educational issues made by society. Nonetheless, it can be tentatively concluded that, although longer-term effects ought to be monitored, not many specific improvements have been observed regarding ITE except for a slight extension of school-based training. In these plans, no common goals or standards of teaching ability for student teachers to attain have been set yet, unlike core professional standards for teachers in England<sup>9</sup>. There has not even been any discussion on developing more collaborative partnerships between HEIs and schools or on training school mentors.

The quality of education cannot exceed the quality of teachers; thus, teacher education should assume a higher responsibility than currently. In the next two sections, the current ITE system in Japan, as an important construct in teacher education, will be elaborated by referring to the system in the UK as a reference point in order to explore possible improvements for Japan's future ITE.

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<sup>9</sup> The core standards for teachers in the UK to achieve can be obtained at: [http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/pdf/standards\\_core.pdf](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/pdf/standards_core.pdf). See section 1.3.5 later in this chapter for more details on this issue.



### 1.3.2 *The role of higher education institutes in Japan*

Before the World War II, teacher education was conducted exclusively at so-called normal schools<sup>10</sup> in Japan. This benefited students from poor family backgrounds since the tuition was free and a teaching position was guaranteed upon graduation. However, this system was criticised on the basis that there was a tendency to create teachers who blindly submitted to authority and who were not critical enough against the nationalism prevalent in Japan during the WWII (Jinnai, 2008). As Jinnai (2008) discusses, in the teacher education system then, teachers were regarded as “a government official whose duty is to serve one’s country” (p.11), not as professionals who were responsible for public education. Thus, after the war and in light of the past failure, ITE was changed to lose its exclusivity and became available through liberal arts education at any general university with a curriculum meeting the prescribed conditions (M. Sato, 2008). The aim was to train teachers who served the people rather than the nation.

Through the new ITE system, it was expected that teachers would become more intellectually independent and contribute to building a solid foundation for democracy and rebuilding a society through education. This new system will be referred to as an “open” system (*kaiho-sei* in Japanese) throughout this study, which means that ITE is not restricted to colleges and institutes of education, and HEIs in Japan that offer ITE still enjoy relative autonomy because of the decentralised teacher training system, unlike the

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<sup>10</sup> Normal schools were institutions specialized for teacher education. According to Kobayashi (1993), normal schools were regarded as institutions of secondary-education level and for becoming elementary school teachers, while higher normal schools were institutions of higher education level without granting degrees and for becoming secondary school teachers. After WWII, they were transformed into colleges of education which can now grant bachelor’s degrees.

system in the UK.

In order to become a school teacher in Japan, students first are required to attend an ITE programme offered at undergraduate-level at HEIs and acquire a teaching qualification upon graduation. There is usually no specific requirement in order for students to join ITE programmes at universities, although this is often criticised because students who are less committed can enter the programme. It should be also pointed out that in becoming an English teacher, there is usually no specific requirement of living or studying abroad experiences. In fact, most of the EFL student teachers in Japan are non-native speakers of English without any experience of studying abroad; thus, many are likely to lack cultural knowledge and confidence using English. ITE can be further divided into two levels: one for primary school teachers and one for secondary school teachers. ITE for secondary school prospective teachers is provided in various subject areas. These issues are explored in this study which focuses specifically on the pre-service training for secondary school teachers whose subject area is English language teaching.

As previously mentioned in this section, one of the characteristics of ITE in Japan is its “principle of openness” (Ota, 2000), which is similar to many other regions in East Asia, such as Taiwan or South Korea (Asaoka & Ito, 2006; Chang, 2004; W. J. Kim, 2005). To be more specific, ITE for secondary school teachers is mainly offered at undergraduate level by ITE programmes at more than 800 universities across Japan<sup>11</sup>. With a bachelor’s degree, a first-class certificate is given, whereas with a master’s degree, the advanced certificate is awarded. At a two-year junior-college-graduate level, the

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<sup>11</sup> This includes institutes of education as well as universities with and without colleges of education.

second-class certificate is issued. Most Japanese teachers hold first-class certificates: in 2004, for example, 73.9% of upper secondary school teachers held these certificates, while 25.1 % held advanced certificates, and 0.4% held second-class certificates. Regarding lower secondary school teachers, 90.3% held first-class certificates, whereas 4.0% held advanced certificates and 5.4% held second-class certificates (MEXT, 2005). These figures show that most secondary school teachers receive ITE at the undergraduate-level in Japan, whereas in the UK system, for example, the majority of prospective secondary school teachers receive their pre-service training at the post-graduate-level programme called Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)<sup>12</sup>. The major route into teaching in England is an initial teacher training course, either school-led or university-led, although there are a number of other routes to becoming a teacher, such as a more employment-based training route called School Direct or a more classroom-based training route called School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) (Department for Education).

In Japan, in line with its open principles, the content of ITE programmes is at the discretion of each HEI. Ota argues that “a degree of academic freedom has been maintained” (2000, p.46) at HEIs, while this variability may cause inconsistency among student teachers’ experiences in professional development although the minimum requirements of the curriculum, prescribed by the *Educational Personnel Certification Law* and the *Regulation for the Establishment of University Standards*, ought to be met for accreditation. For instance, student teachers are required to meet specific

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<sup>12</sup> See footnote 24 in this chapter for the newly-introduced teachers’ standards in England.

qualification criteria in order to be licensed by a local government upon exiting the programme, which is usually four years long, starting at their matriculation. Under the current system in Japan, proposed in 1997 and partially revised and implemented in 1999 and 2000 by the Educational Personnel Training Council (EPTC)<sup>13</sup>, student teachers in ITE programmes are required to complete 31 credits<sup>14</sup> regarding general education-related courses at a minimum, such as educational psychology, educational philosophy or moral education. These student teachers are also required to earn 20 credits of subject-specific courses as a minimum, including target language skills, literature, and linguistics in the case of becoming an English teacher. At the research site, at the time of this study, student teachers had to complete two methodology courses<sup>15</sup> (two credits each) in their subject-specific areas, each lasting for one semester. These methodology courses are counted as a part of their general education-related courses in the current curriculum. Table 1 shows the number of credits currently required in ITE programmes at the secondary-school level in Japan.

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<sup>13</sup> The document is available only in Japanese at <http://www.monbu.go.jp/singi/yosei/0000135/>.

<sup>14</sup> Two credits are usually provided after attending a 14-15 week-long content course in Japan, meeting once a week for 90 minutes. Earning 20 credits is roughly equal to the completion of five one-semester-long courses.

<sup>15</sup> The curriculum at the research site was revised in the academic year 2013 so as to take three methodology courses as requirement in order to promote student teachers' subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge.

**Table 1: *The Number of Course Credits Required in ITE in Japan***

Courses	Lower-secondary school level	Upper-secondary school level
Subject-specific courses	20	20
General-education-related courses	31	31
Electives <sup>16</sup>	8	16

Before the legislation for teacher certification was revised, the minimum requirement for subject-specific courses was 40 credits, much more than that in the current situation. However, the post-revision minimum requirement for general education-related courses has increased in the current ITE system, mainly to address the criticism from society that many teachers do not possess enough general pedagogical knowledge or generic teaching skills to deal with various problems in the classroom, such as bullying or class disruption, also mentioned as issues to be tackled in the Rainbow Plan. The increase in general education credits was also a result of the recommendations made by the EPTC, approved by the Ministry of Education in 1996, which says that by “creating a new kind of teacher” (Ota, 2000, p.47), serious social problems such as bullying or school phobia need to be resolved by their new capabilities.

However, there is a caveat that the shift toward acquiring generic teaching skills was effected at the expense of a decrease in subject-specific courses.

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<sup>16</sup> Student teachers can take either subject-specific courses or general-education-related courses as electives.

This is one of the more significant components of teachers' professional expertise (San, 1999), particularly for upper secondary school teachers. Shulman (1987) asserts that the central feature of teachers' knowledge base with which they make choices and actions in the classroom must be the blending of knowledge on subject matter *and* pedagogical skills (see section 2.2.2 in Chapter 2 for more discussion on the constructs of professional expertise). In many cases, absorbing theoretical knowledge and consolidating one's knowledge base take place at HEIs (Eraut, 1989). With a decreased emphasis on subject-specific courses, however, student teachers may lose some sources of their knowledge base for teaching, and hence find it more challenging to cultivate their ability to teach the subject. For example, a lack of appropriate pedagogical content knowledge on teaching methods for reading skills, such as schema theory or top-down processing (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Grabe, 1993), may result in an inability to teach reading properly. As was the case with two of the participants of this study, when teaching reading skills, student teachers may depend on the traditional grammar-translation method without critically analysing the benefits of using the method. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4 (sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3).

### *1.3.3 The role of schools in Japan*

As was stated earlier in this chapter, one of the challenges that ITE in Japan faces is the theory-practice dichotomy (Hartley, 1993). While a theoretical knowledge base provided through HEIs is significant in student teachers' expertise development, the quality and quantity of time student teachers actually spend in school also has some influence on student

teachers' professional expertise. In the case of the UK, after major educational reforms in the late 1980s and 1990s, the length of school-based training is currently extended to 120 days for prospective secondary teachers in one-year PGCE courses. In addition, usually serial and block practice is carefully implemented during school-based training so that student teachers can regularly go back to HEIs for both academic and emotional support and follow-up (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000).

In comparison, in Japan, while experiential training in ITE has been considered to be more important than previously in order to teach more effectively and deal with new challenges in education, the level of teaching practice is still peripheral. In 2001, one week of hands-on experiential training at a facility for the elderly or at a school for children with disabilities was implemented as a requirement during student teachers' third year of training. This hands-on experience is assumed to provide prospective teachers with work experience so as to enable them to understand and effectively deal with problems which challenge traditional values of Japanese society, such as juvenile delinquency or students with developmental disabilities. Another change implemented in 2001 was the extension of the length of the teaching practice. During their fourth year, student teachers are required to go to a local secondary school of their choice for a teaching practice. This spanned only two weeks for both upper and lower secondary schools until 2000; however, for the same reasons mentioned above, the length of time was extended to four weeks for lower secondary school teachers in order to gain a better understanding of the work of schools (i.e. administrative work, student counselling, supervision of extracurricular activities) and of various problems

such as bullying, non-attendance at school or class disruption, which more commonly take place at lower secondary schools. As we shall see in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1), the slight extension of teaching practice may raise student teachers' awareness of the reality of the workplace; however, it may not directly enhance the quality of training as a subject teacher.

The length of teaching practice in ITE in Japan is two weeks for upper secondary schools and four weeks for lower secondary schools as a minimum requirement. Thus, on the one hand, colleges and institutes of education may offer a longer period of teaching practice with the cooperation of affiliated schools. For example, one university of education in northern Japan offers a one-week class observation and participation period at school during the first and second year, then a three-week classroom-based training period during the third and fourth years. On the other hand, secondary schools may make their own interpretations of the new law, as Bowe and Ball (1992) argue, and these schools are allowed to take student teachers for only three weeks, not four, owing to their various work circumstances. As a result, the majority of student teachers, particularly those who are in ITE programmes at universities without strongly established partnerships with schools, seem to experience a teaching practice of only three weeks. In this way, a lack of consistency in student teachers' expertise development is found not only in the ITE curriculum across HEIs but also in student teachers' teaching practice experiences.

Longer-term practical experience could possibly provide student teachers with more opportunities to try out their ideas in specific contexts, communicate with pupils, reflect on their actions and teaching techniques,



and gain confidence as a teacher. Considering other contexts in which student teachers gain longer-term school-based experiences, such as six months in Taiwan (Chang, 2004) or at least one month in South Korea (Asaoka & Ito, 2006) or at multiple sites, such as in the UK (Lawes, 2004), the ITE system in Japan does not seem to offer enough practical experience. San (1999) asserts that this shortcoming is partly due to the fact that “the university faculty values liberal arts more than teaching skills in teachers’ preparation” (p.17). Moreover, with no additional financial incentives, schools are unwilling to accept student teachers for a longer term, since “supervising trainees will increase the workload of teachers” (p.18). School teachers’ unwillingness to mentor student teachers also arises from the fact that not many student teachers will actually enter the teaching profession after graduation<sup>17</sup> (M. Sato, 1992). Hence, the educational policy changes in ITE is an example which fails to understand the school contexts, as Bowe and Ball (1992) assert, and has led to a more challenging problem (Ota, 2000, p. 53) to be handled in ITE in Japan, such as finding suitable schools and supervising teachers for school-based training.

The following description elaborates a typical process of school-based training in Japan. It is usually student teachers who choose which school to go to for their teaching practice. In most cases, they return to a school at which they were previously educated although this may result in limiting a range of experiences that student teachers can experience. Prior to the teaching practice, student teachers are provided with a series of pre-teaching-practice induction sessions at HEIs for asking questions and

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<sup>17</sup> There was no national-level information available on this issue. For the specific information at the research site, see Table 2 in Chapter 3.

sharing concerns. Very often, experienced teachers in the local community or teachers who are graduates of the programmes are invited to share their expertise and experiences. During the teaching practice, each student teacher is assigned a supervising teacher who can coach subject instruction as well as overall classroom management. Student teachers are required to keep logs in Japanese in which they keep a record of what they do each day (e.g. observing teachers and peers across subjects, preparing for lessons, reflecting on teaching classes, supervising students, homeroom activities<sup>18</sup> and club activities, getting feedback from peers and supervising teachers). Note that the nature of teaching logs during the teaching practice, as opposed to reflective journals, will be further elaborated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.5.8). Student teachers receive written feedback from their supervising teachers at the end of each day. A tutor from an HEI normally pays a visit during a teaching practice, observes his or her *kenkyu jugyou* (final demonstration lesson) and has a meeting with a student teacher and a supervising teacher afterward for feedback. If a student teacher is from a remote town, however, nobody from the HEI may go to observe his or her lesson. After the teaching practice, a post-teaching-practice session is provided by the HEI, in which student teachers share with cohort students their experiences and reflect on their own teaching practices. An assessment of the teaching practice is first provided by supervising teachers and HEI teacher educators finalise the grades based on the supervising teachers' assessment. There is usually no discussion between a supervising teacher

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<sup>18</sup> According to Ito (2011), homeroom activities include daily class meetings, school events like sports days or school festivals where students work together on art or drama projects, serving and eating lunch together, and daily classroom cleaning.

and an HEI teacher educator, either over student teachers' professional development or on finalising their grades. This lack of partnership between schools and HEIs, along with fewer established expectations for supervising teachers' roles in school-based training, are other challenges that must be taken into account in a Japanese context so as to improve ITE.

Another challenge, in addition to the length of the teaching practice and a lack of partnership systems between schools and HEIs, is the wide range of school experiences that each student teacher undergoes. Although the typical process of the teaching practice is as described above, each school has a different context in terms of school characteristics and students; consequently, student teachers often go through various experiences during the teaching practice. For instance, schools may ask student teachers to teach a number of different grades. Student teachers may be asked to teach only the first grade, while other student teachers may have to teach all of the grades, from the first to the third. Furthermore, the number of classes to teach in two to four weeks varies considerably, ranging from four or five, to more than 30 in total. Some may be asked to team teach with ALTs in English, while others may have to teach solely in their mother tongue, Japanese. The great variability in student teachers' experiences with school-based training may result in difficulty with respect to standardising student teachers' final assessment. How the variability of student teachers' experiences influences the quality of their experiences should be questioned as well.

As we can see, school-based training in Japan currently faces many problems. The role of school and supervising teachers are not yet clearly defined; student teachers do not have a long enough time to be exposed to

classroom practices to test their theories received at HEIs. During the teaching practice, not much partnership between HEIs and schools is exercised. Lastly but not the least importantly, student teachers' experiences during the teaching practice tend to vary vastly, although how the variability of their experiences influence the quality of their expertise development has not yet been fully investigated.

#### *1.3.4 Teaching culture in Japan*

Previous research in teacher socialisation has indicated that the culture of teaching deeply reflects its contexts (Lortie, 1975). This section explores the teaching culture in Japan at the junior-high-school level, paying particular attention to two areas deeply ingrained in its culture: holistic teaching and teaching as craft. This section also argues that goals in teacher development in Japan have been set and defined only vaguely, which has caused confusion among teachers and student teachers.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, in spite of the economic imperative to raise students' English language abilities in order to stay competitive in a global market, the primary educational goal for students to achieve in primary and secondary education in Japan is to foster "zest for living" (MEXT, 2003a) (see section 1.3 in this chapter). Or, to go into a little more depth, in order to live in a rapidly changing society, students in Japan are expected to enhance the following three qualities in a balanced way<sup>19</sup>: solid academic abilities (to acquire basic knowledge and skills, to utilize them

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<sup>19</sup> This is based on the website of MEXT titled "Fundamental philosophy of new Course of Study" at [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/new-cs/idea/index.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/idea/index.htm), retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2012.

and think, judge and express, to deal with and solve various problems); well-rounded character (self-discipline, collaboration with others, consideration for others); and health and physical strength. The second quality particularly belongs to personal and social education, as Robson, Cohen & McGuinness (1999) argue. Thus, it is clear that a high emphasis is placed on social, personal and affective domains of education, not only the cognitive domain, in the culture of teaching in Japan. The dilemma between the emphasis on personal and social aspects of education, along with the need to raise the level of English language abilities due to economic imperatives, results in the two characteristics of the culture of teaching in Japan: holistic teaching and teaching as craft.

#### *1.3.4.1 Emphasis on holistic teaching*

In response to the educational goals above, particularly that of fostering a well-rounded character, one of the major characteristics of teaching in Japan is its holistic nature. This is more salient especially at the primary-education and lower-secondary-education levels in Japan (Shimahara, 2002; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992). Unlike in the case of primary-school teachers, junior high school teachers specialise in academic subjects, such as English as in this study; however, they are responsible for holistic teaching at the same time, and in fact, it is often more dominant in teachers' lives in Japan.

As we shall see in later in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2), among the seven categories of the knowledge base for teaching classified by Shulman (1987), the knowledge base that enables holistic teaching can be referred to as "general pedagogical knowledge", which means "principles and strategies of

classroom management” (p.8). More specifically, as Shimahara (2002) and Ito (2011) argue (see footnote 18 as well), holistic teaching in Japan includes giving educational guidance such as placing students in high schools<sup>20</sup> as well as offering *seito shido* (literally translated as “student guidance”) to students. So-called student guidance in the context of Japan can be defined as educational activities in and beyond the curriculum (Inagaki & Inuzuka, 2000). It concerns every aspect of student life in school, ranging from counselling students on behavioural and emotional problems, which belongs to a domain of specialised counsellors in the US (Shimahara, 2002), to supervision of extracurricular club activities, student government, school cleaning, school lunch, or homeroom activities. It also includes planning for relevant activities out of school, such as school picnics and trips, sports festivals, chorus contests, or patrolling after school and on weekends. In this manner, junior-high-school teachers in Japan are expected to be involved in all aspects of student life and development, which is believed to, in turn, enhance their classroom management skills. As a supervising teacher of a student teacher in Shimahara’s study suggests, “classroom management is key to teaching effectively. Its purpose is to develop *shudan* [a group] and an environment where children can express their problems openly,” (2002, p. 118). This resonates with the beliefs of the supervising teachers of some participants’ in this study, which will be elaborated in Chapter 4 (sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Furthermore, all the efforts to become a holistic teacher are

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<sup>20</sup> According to Shimahara (2002), placing students in high schools would involve consultation with students and parents, performance assessment based on school records and tests, selection of high schools, preparation and filing of applications, among others.

geared toward achieving the objective set by MEXT (1981)<sup>21</sup> that claims that each individual student's personality should be respected and developed while becoming empowered in order to foster "a zest for living", already mentioned earlier in this section.

Although holistic teaching is a significant quality for student teachers in any teaching context to acquire in the process of learning to teach, there is obscurity as well. The process of how student teachers can acquire this quality is not clearly explained in the literature and placing more emphasis on holistic teaching may overshadow the process of becoming a good *subject* teacher. In fact, two of the supervising teachers of the participants' of this study put holistic teaching before cognitive domain teaching, which largely affected how they interacted with the student teachers. This point will be further elaborated later in Chapter 4 (section 4.4).

#### 1.3.4.2 *Teaching as craft*

In the teaching culture in Japan, another salient characteristic is the view of teaching as craft. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, in response to the criticism against the view of a good teacher as a rational-autonomous professional (Elliott, 1993), a new perspective emerged. The newer view based on behaviourist principles assumes that a good teacher is a competent practitioner (Furlong et al., 2000), equipped with observable competences and skills, and teaching is considered as craft knowledge that can be learned and transmitted from one teacher to another.

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<sup>21</sup> MEXT. (1981). *Seikatsu shido no tebiki (kaitei ban)* [A handbook for student guidance (revised edition)].

The competency-based view of a good teacher has been also criticised, however, mainly for two reasons: the implicit and mere acquisition of a set of behaviours will not necessarily lead to creative teacher development (Moore, 2000; Pring, 1995), nor will mere behaviour emulation enable novice teachers to cope with new situations and future contexts later in their careers (Furlong et al., 2000). In other words, implicit and mere acquisition of craft may not contribute much to teacher creativity and autonomy.

Despite the criticism toward the view of teaching as craft, the view has been traditionally more positively accepted in the culture of teaching in Japan. As Shimahara (2002) points out, teachers in Japan are likely to believe that classroom teaching is a craft that teachers learn through experiences. Shimahara (2002) further argues that in-service teachers in Japan do not consider craft knowledge in teaching equal to mere habitual practice. Rather, through reflective practice that should be discussed later on (see section 2.2.5 in Chapter 2), craft knowledge is not only learned and transmitted as it is, but reformulated so as to add new meanings to their practice.

As will be discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.6), the view of teaching as craft is often observed not only in the process of teacher socialisation but also in various other forms of training in Japan. For instance, in the traditional art of *noh*<sup>22</sup>, one learns by observing the way one's superiors perform; training is considered as a recursive process based on practical experiences. It is thought getting the outward form correct can eventually lead to deeper cognitive understanding, which Hare describes as a "transcendent freedom" (1996). This implies that once one masters a set of forms, then one could be

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<sup>22</sup> *Noh* is a form of classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed since the 14th century. Many characters are masked.



creative and add his or her own meanings to the forms. Lewis (1992) also agrees with this point by saying that learning by repeated practice as well as by mastery of set forms are major features of education in many traditional Japanese arts and trades<sup>23</sup>.

Shimahara's argument that teachers in Japan observe, transmit and regenerate craft knowledge is similar to what many other scholars and practitioners in education in Japan have advocated (San, 1999; K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004); Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) affirm that in-service high school English teachers in Japan typically learn craft knowledge through observing peer teachers' craft. Teachers observe and emulate techniques of a good model and regenerate forms so as to apply to their own teaching in a particular teaching context.

As discussed so far, an idea that recursive practice and mastery of craft will eventually add a new perspective to teaching should be considered as one salient characteristic of the culture of teaching in Japan (see section 2.3.6 in Chapter 2 for further discussion). However, how a new perspective is added has not been fully examined in the previous literature. This point will be further elaborated in section 5.3 in Chapter 5 by referring to the more specific data of the participants of this study.

### *1.3.5 Challenges that ITE in Japan faces*

Furlong et al. (2000) assert that student teachers' experiences with ITE may vary in terms of skills, knowledge and values to which they are exposed.

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<sup>23</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that an intellectually-based understanding of the craft is considered unnecessary in the process of *noh* training, which plays a significant role in the teacher socialisation process.

As was stated earlier in this chapter, the variability of student teachers' experiences is one of the major issues that ITE in Japan currently faces. For instance, it is up to each HEI to decide the contents of the curriculum in the ITE programme within its guidelines. Furthermore, student teachers' experiences in school-based training may greatly vary as well. For example, as some of the participants in this study experienced, their supervising teachers prioritised holistic teaching over subject teaching (see sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 in Chapter 4); as a result, the student teachers' professional expertise that they can develop, their overall experiences with ITE, as well as their values as teachers, may vary. In addition to institutional differences, individual teacher educators', as well as supervising teachers' interpretations and values, may lead to various professional expertise and experiences to which student teachers will be exposed. Although student teachers' practical experiences may vary greatly, they are isolated because they are usually allowed to experience teaching practice in one school context only. Student teachers in Japan are not usually provided with ample opportunities to experiment with their ideas, reflect on their teaching, and apply revised ideas to different contexts.

These challenges in ITE in Japan can be attributed to unclearly defined goals and standards to achieve. The goal of ITE in Japan stated by MEXT is to grow the *minimum necessary* qualifications and abilities of course instruction and student counselling and guidance. The Central Council on Education in Japan (2006) states a little more specifically that there are three goals at which Japanese pre-service student teachers should aim. These are "passion for teaching," "professional expertise," and "a well-rounded

character.” The term, “professional expertise” is nevertheless not clearly defined by the Council. They provide five constructs as elements of professional expertise for a good teacher: (1) an understanding of child development; (2) student guidance; (3) group leadership; (4) class management; and (5) practical expertise in teaching. However, there seem to be no set common goals yet agreed and established for prospective EFL teachers in Japan. Therefore, both teacher trainers and supervising teachers during the teaching practice, in addition to prospective student teachers, are not clear in terms of what to expect from ITE programmes, and what is necessary for student teachers to achieve before they become teachers.

In contrast, to cite ITE in the UK as an example, the standards to be achieved are explicitly stated for teacher trainees in *Teachers’ Standards*<sup>24</sup> (Department for Education, 2011) and they are also used to assess trainees and teachers. The standards are divided into two categories: the standards for teaching (part one) and the standards for personal and professional conduct (part two). The standards in each category are divided into separate headings, accompanied by sub-headings. For example, under the first category of the standards for teaching, there are eight headings:

A teacher must:

1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils.
2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils.
3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge.
4. Plan and teach well structured lessons.

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<sup>24</sup> The new *Teachers’ Standards* (Department for Education, 2011) was published by the Secretary of State for Education and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 replacing the QTS standards and the core professional standards previously published by the former Training and Development Agency. The new standards apply to all teachers regardless of their career stages.

5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils.
6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment.
7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment.
8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities.

The first heading, for instance, is further divided into three statements:

- Establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils, rooted in mutual respect.
- Set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions.
- Demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behavior which are expected of pupils. (p.10)

All teacher trainees are expected to understand these rational statements and meet the appropriate standards in order to achieve QTS standards. In addition to teacher trainees, all stakeholders in ITE, including school mentors and HEI teacher educators, ought to have a clear understanding of what these statements imply and what it means for trainees to meet these standards. This system entails quality control by the government.

This strict quality assurance system based on competencies in the UK, however, is not without criticism. Although it is an attempt to create more uniformed experiences as a national programme, many researchers and teacher educators argue that it is impossible to prescribe one single set of skills that can be used in such diverse teaching contexts (Pring, 1995). Some argue that teacher trainees should be allowed to experience alternative and idiosyncratic skills and approaches in order to accommodate themselves to various teaching contexts, especially later in their careers when standards are redefined. In addition, Moore (2000) claims that the universal model of

competencies will deprive teacher trainees of their creativity in teaching; he argues that “there is no one model of good teaching, any more than there is any one model of the good student or the good school” (p.127). Moreover, Elliott (1993) argues that this approach is supported by a social-market view, which implies that teacher education needs to produce teachers with “desired behavioural outcomes in the form of practical skills and competencies” (p.15). In this view, teachers may become merely deliverers of a set curriculum and “technical operatives” of craft knowledge (Elliott, 1993, p. 15).

Criticism of competency-based teacher training suggests that student teachers should develop a theoretical knowledge base with alternative views and approaches, which can mainly be provided by HEIs, in order to flexibly modify or adapt their knowledge and skills to practical contexts as occasion demands. Thus, the principles of “openness” and “flexibility” of ITE in Japan, as was previously mentioned in section 1.3.2 in this chapter, could become one of the strengths of the system in creating such a professional teacher if other conditions are improved. Whether and how the principles of “openness” and “flexibility” in ITE are influencing student teachers in Japan will be another issue to be explored in this study.

## **1.4 Descriptions of the study**

### *1.4.1 Purposes and research questions*

The major purpose of this study is to explore student teachers’ professional development during their initial teacher education for becoming a secondary-school English teacher in an EFL context in Japan. The student teachers’ experiences during their training at HEIs as well as at schools were

investigated in order to examine what factors (e.g. theoretical knowledge transmission, observation and emulation of an expert teacher, reflection, actual teaching) impacted on their expertise development and how student teachers themselves reflected on their own development.

The main purpose of this study is to explore in-depth student teachers' *experiences* and *perceptions* of their own development in ITE. Hence, the methods employed to collect and analyze data were based on the principles of qualitative studies (A. Brown & Dowling, 1998; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Silverman, 2000) since qualitative research allows more descriptive and interpretive inquiry and focuses more on a detailed picture of the particular (see section 3.2.1 in Chapter 3 for more discussion on qualitative research design). The main overarching research question formulated at the initial stage of the research that guided this research study was:

1. How do pre-service EFL student teachers in Japan perceive their professional expertise development over time?

However, as the data analysis proceeded along with the data collection, more specific key concepts emerged from the data, which led to the articulation of some sub-questions. These remained general in character but gave more specific directions to this research study:

2. How do student teachers perceive theory and practice in their training? Which factors do they find more influential in shaping their professional expertise development?
3. How do student teachers' perceptions of theory and practice change over time?
4. Do student teachers perceive that there is a gap between theory and

- practice? If so, how do they address the problem?
5. If student teachers see it as a problem, how do they mitigate the disparity between theory and practice? What are the tools (i.e. emulation, reflection) that they employ and why?

#### *1.4.2 Settings and focus of the study*

This study was situated in an EFL context in Japan in which the emulation of craft knowledge has been valued in various forms of training (Hare, 1996), and plays a part in in-service teacher training (K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Shimahara, 1998; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992). The main research site was a private university in Japan, with the population of slightly less than 9,000 students, as of March, 2013. This university offers an ITE programme in which approximately 100 undergraduate students enroll annually.

The focus of the study was the development processes of six cases of Japanese undergraduate students who enrolled in ITE at the institute (one male and five females). All of the participants aimed to become secondary-school English teachers after graduation.

#### *1.4.3 Significance of the study*

In previous teacher education research (D. Freeman, 1989; Roberts, 1998), several conceptual models of teacher expertise of a good English language teacher have been proposed. However, the majority of research was conducted in ESL<sup>25</sup> contexts; how teachers develop their teacher

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<sup>25</sup> In a context of ESL, English as a second language, people need to learn English in addition to their own mother tongue in order to use it in their community, such as at school. On the other hand, in an EFL context such as Japan, English is taught as a foreign language since the majority does not have to use it outside a classroom. It should be also noted that most student teachers in this context are non-native speakers of English, many of who do not have any experiences of living or studying in English-speaking countries.

expertise in an EFL context is still under-researched. In addition, in an EFL context in Japan, most of the research studies in teacher learning and development is conducted on in-service teachers (K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Shimahara, 1998; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992; Suzuki, 2013), but not much on prospective teachers (Nagamine, 2008). The qualitative research in pre-service teacher training in Japan has been particularly scant. Hence, in this qualitative study, EFL student teachers' perceptions and experiences were examined; particularly the changes of their perspectives from students to student teachers, then, to novice teachers, were followed for one year and a half. This study is significant in that the researcher was able to enter the community as a member to reveal what actually goes on inside the group as an emic view (Merriam, 2001), in a context where becoming a member of a community helps more easily building rapport and sharing emotions among its members. The role of the researcher and an emic view will be further discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.4).

## **1.5 Conclusion**

One of the universal challenges that teacher education faces across cultures is the balance between theory and practice. Initial teacher education in Japan is not an exception. This chapter first elaborated recent educational reforms and the current ITE system in Japan in an attempt to elucidate major problems that ITE in Japan currently faces under the theory-practice dichotomy. The major challenges in educating prospective secondary school English teachers in Japan are twofold.

First of all, due to its "open" principles, a variability in student teachers'



experiences in terms of the content of the ITE curriculum across HEIs is one major challenge, although academic freedom in providing ITE is one of the merits that HEIs in Japan still enjoy. The variability of student teachers' experiences can also be found in school-based training. These are not only variable but also isolated and limited to one school context. The variability of quality of student teachers' experiences implies that there is a lack of consistency across the ITE curriculum.

A lack of consistency leads to another problem in terms of teaching as a lifelong career. Currently, there is no standardisation, or at least, general agreement of goals to achieve in professional development among each stakeholder in teacher training. The term "teaching abilities" used in many governmental documents is not clearly defined and often referred to equally as teachers' language proficiency levels. Both teachers and student teachers at present cannot see a clear direction in terms of what content of professional expertise they should aim to develop. For example, by the recent ITE curriculum change, the government has made a slight shift away from learning subject knowledge toward acquiring generic teaching skills and practical experiences. However, with the reduced quantity of theoretical knowledge, how a teacher can become more autonomous in critically making professional choices and adapting effectively to new changes is not suggested. Thus, novice teachers in Japan are likely to be left confused.

With the understanding of these challenges that ITE in Japan confronts, this study will seek to investigate how EFL student teachers in ITE in Japan perceive their own expertise development processes and mitigate the disparity between theory and practice.

## Chapter 2: Developing Teacher Autonomy in Initial Teacher Education in Japan

### 2.1 Introduction

One important goal for student teachers to achieve in ITE is to develop their teacher autonomy (discussed in section 2.2.1 of this chapter) so they are ready to manage and lead a class from their first day as a professional teacher. At the same time, student teachers are learners themselves who still need to learn to take control of their own learning, continuously monitoring their progress in the process of learning to teach. Similar to the process of learner autonomy, which is defined as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” according to Benson (2001, p. 47), student teachers also ought to develop metacognitive strategies that enable them to control, evaluate and be more actively engaged in their own learning, although what kind of learner training, as Sinclair (1996) would call, is more effective in ITE has not been fully established yet. The process of learning to teach is so far understood as a *long-term* process in which teachers struggle throughout their career to become intellectually independent, meaning that they will learn to have the capacity to take control over their teaching, make professional decisions, and adapt to new changes flexibly and effectively as needs arise (Benson, 2001; Little, 1995). In other words, ITE is only the initiation stage of their lifelong career. Furthermore, as many researchers in teacher education have argued, learning to teach in order to develop teacher autonomy is a *dialogical* process that integrates abstract conceptualization, experience and action with the help of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001; Schön, 1983; Tsui, 2003). In teacher education, reflective practices, in

other words a set of specific activities that student teachers employ for reflection, have been advocated as one solution to bridge the gap between theory learned at HEIs and practice at schools (McIntyre, 1993; Schön, 1983), via theorising declarative knowledge and adjusting it to a specific teaching context by reflecting while teaching; in other words, through “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1983, p. 49). With regard to reflective practices in ITE, see section 2.2.5 later in this chapter. In ITE, student teachers are also expected to develop teacher expertise by constructing, linking and reconstructing its various elements with the help of reflective practices (see section 2.2.4 in this chapter for the further discussion on the dialogical process of professional development).

However, as Borg (2006) argues, the process of learning to teach is often depicted as a cognitive process within an *individual* teacher. It is a self-contemplating and internal process by which a teacher deepens and reconstructs their knowledge base through reflection. The process focuses to a considerable extent on the teacher. Such a process is suitable for describing more experienced teachers with much theoretical knowledge and classroom experience, but not so much for novice teachers, and thus, more research should be conducted to elucidate the process of student teachers who have recently joined a community of practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These teachers will have to learn to fully participate in the community practices through the interplay between them and cohort student teachers, their supervising teachers and students with whom they interact. This is especially true in the case of ITE in Japan where there is little opportunity for actual teaching experiences or appropriate training for reflection is usually not

provided much during their training (see section 1.3.5 in Chapter 1 on the challenges that ITE in Japan faces).

This study examines and tracks how secondary-school EFL student teachers in Japan with such challenges struggle to develop their teacher expertise and what aspects may help, or constrain, the process of developing teacher autonomy. As Lamb (2011) notes, when learners develop autonomy, they are likely to be fragile and vulnerable; thus, the learning environment that nurtures and protects them ought to be ensured. Similarly, in the process of teacher autonomy, the learning environment in which student teachers operate takes on great significance. In order to more deeply understand the process and the learning environment of student teachers' professional development, the current chapter presents the theoretical foundation drawn upon for this particular research. Since becoming a more autonomous teacher is an ultimate goal in teacher education, this chapter first explores the various dimensions of teacher expertise. In addition, the dimensions of expertise peculiar to English language teachers will be explored, since being a good teacher slightly differs from being a good language teacher, although the two do share many things in common. Then, current approaches to teacher expertise development, especially the role of theoretical learning at HEIs and the role of reflective practices, will be investigated. The final section will elucidate a sociocultural perspective on teacher professional development in order to argue how individual and internal process of student teachers' professional development can be mediated by external and social interactions with other members of the learning community. As Lantolf and Johnson (2007) contend, human cognition is formed and developed through social

activities, and thus student teachers' cognitive development can be understood as a dialogical process, mediated by context and social interaction. The current chapter also explores how participating in social activities such as emulating and interacting with others (e.g. other pre-service teachers, more experienced teachers) benefits, or becomes detrimental to, student teachers in developing their professional expertise and becoming more autonomous.

## **2.2 Professional development in initial teacher education**

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the goals set for student teachers is to develop their teacher autonomy and become more professional during ITE. Hence, it is important to examine how student teachers learn to take control of their own learning in ITE and what factors are more influential on their process of teacher development. This section will first discuss what it means to become an autonomous teacher. Then, the dimensions of knowledge bases that student teachers need to develop and later draw on in making professional judgments will be discussed. In this study, the following dimension, content knowledge (*what* to teach) (Shulman, 1987), is of particular importance among the constructs of teacher expertise for EFL student teachers; for, unlike in other subjects, the subject matter is not only the content to teach, but also the medium through which students learn the subject (Nunan, 1999). Pedagogical content knowledge (*how* to teach) (Shulman, 1987) is also of interest to this study, since a subject specialist is not always a good teacher; rather, a good teacher needs to be able to select the most effective approach to present a content area, catering for a

particular teaching context. Furthermore, this section will explore not only the role of theoretical learning but also the role of reflective practices and social interactions. This study takes the stance that student teachers' professional development is constructed not only at an individual and internal level but also claims that how the constructs dialogically interact with each other in the process is of particular interest.

### *2.2.1 Teacher autonomy*

Though there are many ways of defining teacher autonomy, Borg (2003, p. 81) has argued that language teachers should be “active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs”. In order for student teachers to develop as such effective autonomous teachers, it is crucial for them to develop a willingness to engage in professional development and attain capability to make professional judgments in a classroom (Lamb, 2008; McGrath, 2000). Lamb (2008) further discusses that teacher autonomy can also be interpreted as being free of constraints and able to teach in the way that a teacher wants to teach. Even when a teacher is able and willing to make judgements in a classroom, there may be some internal or external constraints. For example, curriculum or institutional constraints can be a challenge which can inhibit novice teachers from developing their teacher autonomy. Thus, these elements of freedom, capacity and willingness should be brought together in the exploration of ways of supporting student teachers in developing their autonomy.

In addition, Smith and Erdoğan (2008), in trying to further unpack the different dimensions of teacher autonomy, argue that in the literature on teacher education, it has not been fully discussed yet how specifically trainees can learn to develop such capacities and willingness to self-direct their own learning, such as the ability to identify when and from what sources they can and should learn. In one way, eliciting experienced teachers' constructs (for example, Tsui 2003) might be one means to clarify this issue, but there is also a need for further empirical study on student teachers' perspectives on their professional development in order to more fully understand the teacher autonomy theory.

### *2.2.2 Dimensions of teacher expertise*

In order to develop their teacher autonomy, student teachers need to develop professional expertise to draw on in making professional judgements and actions in practical classroom experiences. Many researchers in the field of teacher education and development have used various terms and components in order to describe professional expertise that teacher trainees should attain (Borg, 2005; Borg, 2003; Elbaz, 1981; Richards, 1996, 1998; Roberts, 1998; Shulman, 1987; Wallace, 1991). One of such terms, *teacher expertise*, for example, is defined by Tsui (2003), who argues that the teacher expertise of second language teachers is a process by which teachers consciously theorise their practical knowledge through reflection and transform their 'formal knowledge' (p.261) into practical knowledge. In other words, it is a constant and reciprocal process between theory and practice, and a teacher trainee plays a central role in meaning-making.

Shulman (1987), among others, discusses the complexity of what Tsui would call 'formal knowledge' that trainees typically acquire in the ITE programme. According to Shulman, there are seven dimensions of teacher knowledge: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK hereafter), knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and philosophical and historical background:

*Content knowledge:* central feature of the teacher knowledge base, substantive and syntactic structure of a subject

*General pedagogical knowledge:* principles and strategies of classroom management

*Curriculum knowledge:* knowledge of curriculum, materials and programmes

*Pedagogical content knowledge:* knowledge that blends content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues can be presented comprehensibly to learners

*Knowledge of learners and their characteristics*

*Knowledge of educational contexts:* knowledge of groups, classrooms, schools, communities, and cultures

*Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and value*

(L. Shulman, 1987, p. 8)

PCK is particularly of value to this study, as Shulman (1987) defines, "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interest and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p.8). This implies that a subject specialist is not necessarily a good teacher; rather, a good teacher should be able to determine the best and most effective approach to present a content area, catering for a particular group of learners'



needs and interests.

Pachler, Evans, and Lawes (2007) criticise, however, that Shulman's constructs including PCK were largely cognitive and individual and thus do not elucidate how the constructs interact with each other in the process of professional development; rather, in Shulman's thinking, they are to be achieved at the individual level through reflection on individual cognition and experiences. Concerning this individualised aspect of professional development, Shulman himself admitted later that a teacher is "a member of a professional community who is ready, willing, and able to teach and to learn from his or her teaching experiences" (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p. 258), and should learn from both individual experiences and those of others, if student teachers are to be regarded as learners who try to achieve professional autonomy through actively engaging in social practices, and influencing, or being influenced by, them (Paiva, 2011). This is particularly crucial for EFL student teachers in Japan with a limited amount of engagement in practical experiences, already criticised as one of the problems that ITE in Japan faces (see sections 1.3.3 and 1.3.5 in Chapter 1). As sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.2 in Chapter 5 will discuss, the student teachers' engagement in social practices during informal practical experiences and through peer interaction greatly contributed to the development of their teacher expertise in this study. The social aspect of professional development will also be further elaborated later in this chapter (see section 2.3).

### 2.2.3 Dimensions of teacher expertise for English language teachers

In Japan, as previously illustrated in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1), the improvement of English language proficiency is a pressing need of society. As MEXT (2003b) addressed in their five-year action plan on English language education in Japan, in order to improve English language education, one action to be taken is the improvement of teaching ability of English teachers, which precedes the improvement of learners' language competences. Therefore, for this study, it is important to examine how student teachers develop their expertise as English language teachers, not only teachers in general terms, and how theoretical principles that they learn in ITE can be translated into practice, as it greatly influences pedagogic decisions that EFL teachers make and strategies that they employ in teaching English. Firstly, the dimensions of teacher expertise which are particularly relevant to EFL student teachers in Japan will be discussed in this section.

Similar to Shulman's categories of teacher knowledge discussed in the previous section, it is widely understood that second/foreign language student teachers are also expected to build various categories of knowledge bases in ITE although different studies may use different terms and labels to describe them or categorise them differently. As previously mentioned, among the constructs of teacher expertise for EFL student teachers, *content knowledge* is particularly important in teaching the English language, for, unlike in other subjects, the subject matter is not only the content to teach, but also the medium through which students learn the subject (Nunan, 1999). Student teachers of social sciences, for example, take Japanese-medium content courses in social sciences. When they teach during school-based training,

they teach in Japanese. However, EFL student teachers in Japan ought to understand how the English language is structured, learned and used, while they also have to become able to use it competently themselves. Therefore, becoming EFL student teachers in Japan is often more challenging than becoming other subject teachers; these teachers cannot cease to make efforts for developing their own knowledge of culture and the English language competence even after they join ITE, as they are mostly non-native speakers of the English language and culture<sup>26</sup>. On the one hand, student teachers learn content knowledge on, for instance, the English language system, second language acquisition (SLA) and second/foreign language teaching; on the other hand, they are to improve their competence in the English language by applying what they learn as content knowledge to their performance. In addition, student teachers' *curriculum knowledge* as well as *knowledge of educational contexts* are closely related to the student teachers' English language competence. For example, in the case of ELT in Japan, very recently it was officially announced for the first time in the Course of Study that in principle English language teachers are expected to use English as the medium of instruction for upper-secondary schools as of April 2013<sup>27</sup> (MEXT, 2010a). In this way, constructs of teacher expertise of EFL student teachers are closely intertwined with one another, and thus, their professional development is no doubt a complex and multi-faceted process.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that teachers' cognition and experiences inform their *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) as well as

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<sup>26</sup> As previously indicated in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.2), studying abroad is not a requirement of the ITE curriculum and many student teachers of EFL do not have an experience of spending time in an English-speaking country.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1) for the details of reform directives from MEXT.

their actual teaching practices. As already discussed in this chapter (section 2.2.2), a good teacher is not only a subject specialist but also one who can adjust teaching methods and approaches in order to adapt to a particular group of learners' needs and wants and particular teaching contexts. This is also true with EFL student teachers in Japan. For example, they typically learn in ITE courses on PCK that there was a shift in approaches in teaching a second/foreign language from the grammar-translation method, which many of the participants in this study experienced as a learner (for example, see section 4.3.2 in Chapter 4 on Aya's case), more toward communicative language teaching (CLT hereafter). As a foreign language teacher, they learn that they themselves need to make pedagogical choices between the two methods of teaching English, drawing on their PCK.

As often discussed in the literature on second language teaching and learning (Brown, 2007b; Nunan, 1999; Savignon, 2005, 2002), up to the 1960s, language was considered as a system of descriptive rules for the coding of meaning (J. Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this structural view, language learners were to master these rules and syntactic structures, such as phonological units (e.g. phonemes), grammatical units (e.g. phrases, clauses, and sentences), and vocabulary items. The most suitable teaching approach for this, particularly in Japan where teacher authority has been highly valued due to Confucianism and filial piety<sup>28</sup> (Shimahara, 2002), was a grammar-translation method in a teacher-centred fashion, in which the form of the language was more stressed, while meaning was considered less important. However, during the 1970s, researchers and linguists started to

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<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Shimahara (2002) also insists that teachers in Japan have to address a problem of students' resistance to authority much more than before.

see language more as a tool for expressing functional meanings (J. Richards & Rodgers, 2001) where learners are agents who interact, negotiate and co-construct meanings by using language (Nunan, 1999). CLT, an approach which focuses on learners as well as developing their communicative competence (Savignon, 2005), became more accepted and learners were expected to create social relations and build the linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy. Moreover, in a CLT class, teacher roles and student roles significantly differed from those in earlier methods and approaches. The role of a teacher is that of a facilitator, not an all-knowing expert, whereas students are encouraged to engage in linguistic interaction with other students and collaboratively construct meaning, “under the guidance, but not control, of the teacher” (Brown, 2007b, p. 47).

The view of language as a system for expressing and negotiating meanings in social context has had a significant impact on second/foreign language teaching as well as on second/foreign language teacher education. As a result, in many cases, teachers have attempted to respond to make changes in ELT in accordance with reform initiatives from the Ministry of Education. This has also informed ELT in Japan greatly, where student teachers also need to be aware as PCK, knowledge of educational contexts, begins as well as knowledge of educational ends. For example, MEXT<sup>29</sup> in Japan introduced a communicative syllabus at secondary-school levels in 1980s in order to “prepare students to cope with the rapid pace of change toward a more global society” (Wada, 2002, p. 32) (see section 1.3.1 in Chapter 1 for more details on the reform initiatives by MEXT), although in

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<sup>29</sup> The name, Ministry of Education, was changed to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (abbreviated as MEXT) in 2001 in Japan.

reality, it is often reported that there has been a dilemma between teachers' "ideas of communication-oriented English and a hidden goal of examination-oriented English" (K. Sato, 2002, p. 54). Sato notes that many in-service teachers in his study found it a challenge to place total emphasis on the development of communicative competence in English because of entrance examinations:

To the surprise of the researcher, although in their first interviews they expressed their individual ideas about communication-oriented English, a majority of them conformed to an established pattern of teaching with heavy emphasis on grammar explanation and translation....These new ideas and activities remained marginal and had little impact on instruction in regular English classes. (Sato, 2002, p.58)

Even when teachers acknowledged the need for teaching how to use English communicatively, they stressed the centrality of explicit grammar teaching due to contextual factors. Nishimuro and Borg (2013) add other contextual factors such as learners' low proficiency and motivation, a lack of time as well as collective targets in explaining Japanese EFL teachers' pedagogical choices of explicit grammar teaching over CLT, although, as Nishimuro and Borg admit, their choices and practices were largely experiential, not well informed by formal theory or methodological concepts in ELT. A similar dilemma can be found among EFL student teachers in ITE as to how they should approach their own teaching practices during the teaching practice, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. They may also base their professional judgements on their language learning experiences of explicit grammar teaching in previous schooling, although they learn in ITE as PCK that CLT is currently one of the ideal teaching approaches in ELT in Japan.

Of course, CLT is not unproblematic and the only teaching approach in ELT. As resistance encountered from many EFL teachers in Japan as above shows, there are some problems, which student teachers need to learn as part of PCK. According to Savignon (2005), for instance, the methods for properly assessing learner achievement in CLT are not well defined. Additionally, the previous research findings in second language acquisition indicate that the acquisition of the target language is not largely affected by classroom instruction in CLT. Thus, it should be stressed that PCK, “the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interest and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), is particularly significant in the development of teacher expertise for EFL student teachers.

In sum, EFL student teachers in Japan are expected to learn theory on the subject as well as approaches of teaching the subject, while they are themselves *learners* of the language that they are to teach, having learned in various learning environments and approaches and informed by former teachers and former school contexts. They are non-native-speaking teachers who may not be very proficient yet in the target language to be able to teach effectively. As we shall see in section 5.4 in Chapter 5, student teachers’ pedagogical choices may be still fluctuating, since they are in the middle of the development of the dynamic and multi-faceted process of internalising various constructs of teacher expertise and developing teacher autonomy.

#### *2.2.4 The role of theoretical learning at HEIs*

In teacher education, not to mention second language teacher education, the rationalist view, one of the major philosophical views that underpin current teaching practices, provides an image of a good teacher as a rational-autonomous professional (Elliott, 1993). In this view, the notion of rationality and universality is underscored by the recognition that teacher behaviour ought to be underpinned by theories and academic disciplines. Student teachers in ITE are expected to develop theoretical knowledge and understanding of the target subject as well as teaching and learning, and become autonomous professionals who can take control of their own behaviour in classrooms by applying generalised theories and rules critically to particular situations.

In most cases, absorbing theoretical knowledge and consolidating a professional knowledge foundation take place at HEIs. As Eraut (1989) argues, the main aim of HEIs in ITE should be to provide a theoretical base for student teachers. At HEIs, student teachers are exposed to the generalisations, or “scientific concepts” as Johnson and Golombek (2011, p. 2) would say, which will then function as “guidelines for understanding particular situations” (Elliott & Labatt, 1975, p. 59) when they have to make professional choices and take concrete actions in classrooms. Even from a sociocultural theoretical perspective, which will be discussed in section 2.3 in this chapter, ITE at HEIs is a valuable context in which concept development emerges out of instruction and student teachers learn to connect everyday learning with scientific concepts. Consequently, in this view, the role of ITE at HEIs is to assume the weighty responsibility of transmitting disciplines and



train prospective teachers to function appropriately in concrete and practical teaching contexts.

Regardless of the recent emphasis on hands-on experiences and reflective practices in ITE, including the one in the UK (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1), one of the core aims of ITE should be to establish firm theoretical foundations. Becoming a teacher is not merely a process of acquiring a set of standards and competences. Teachers need disciplines to draw back on in reflecting upon their teaching and in interpreting particular teaching contexts. The results of a study conducted by Furlong et al. (2000) in the late 1990s supports this claim. The study investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively whether there were any changes in student teachers' perspectives on schools and HEIs in their professional training after the emphasis was shifted more toward school-based training in the UK. The results show that the majority of trainees saw both schools and HEIs as important elements in their professional development. In particular, the majority responded that HEIs played a significant role in the development of their professional expertise.

However, academic disciplines transmitted through ITE at HEIs have also faced criticism. For example, in the UK during the 1980s, the majority of trainees criticised their initial teacher training for two reasons (Furlong et al. 2000). First, there was not enough time for school-based training where trainees could experience practical teaching skills in a classroom setting. In addition, trainees believed that the theories they learned in HEIs were too academic and often not relevant and practical enough to apply to teaching contexts (Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996). In this context, theory is

understood as an objective knowledge base that is unchanging and certain—in one sense, “non-personal” (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2002, p. 35); thus, it is difficult to apply to diverse practical contexts. Johnson and Golombek (2011) also criticise that the persistent theory and practice divide remains in ITE and scientific concepts that student teachers are exposed to at HEIs are adversely disconnected from actual teaching in practical contexts. They discuss that what student teachers learn as *content knowledge* of the subject matter (Shulman, 1987) at HEIs, such as theories on the system of the English language and second language acquisition in the case of ELT, is separated from *general pedagogical knowledge* and *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, 1987) (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 in this chapter), and thus, novice teachers often do not have the “essential procedural knowledge to confront the realities of the classroom” (Johnson and Golombek, 2011, p. 2). For example, EFL student teachers in Japan might understand the forms and rules of active/passive voices in the English language but may not possess the ability to effectively explain to students about the usage of the two voices and encourage them to use them in actual contexts. The criticism against non-personal and objective characteristics of theory and the separation of theory from practice eventually led to a recent asymmetrical balance in ITE in the UK between theory at HEIs and practice at schools; as was noted in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3), student teachers in the one-year PGCE programme in the UK usually obtain classroom experience by spending time and teaching at two schools for a minimum of 120 days (24 weeks/six months). The programme usually starts in September and ends in June; thus, the time left for student teachers to learn at the university or

college is approximately four months only.

In addition, many studies conducted in ITE argue that theory itself cannot have a major impact on student teachers' expertise development. The role of theoretical learning at HEIs is limited. For example, Holligan (1997) asserts that a majority of student teachers in his study perceived theoretical knowledge as an essential component in teacher expertise, while many also considered becoming professional as becoming a technician by "acquiring a set of standards which you have to adhere to" (p. 541), rather than rationally critiquing and reinterpreting theory through practice. This implies that when student teachers are to conform to a certain practical context, they may not be able to effectively integrate conceptual knowledge that they acquire at HEIs into their meaning-making system. Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) further explain that student teachers' pre-existing beliefs are not influenced drastically by ITE at HEIs. In their case study, the participants used the information acquired through ITE to reconfirm their pre-fixed, often incorrect, beliefs, rather than to confront or correct them. In other studies in ITE, such as those by da Silva (2005) or Peacock (2001), it is also mentioned that student teachers in ITE often find it challenging to deconstruct their old perceptions of teaching that they established prior to ITE, and construct new ones supported by theories.

Based on these various views on the role of theoretical learning in ITE, one of the key issues discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 in this study is whether in the Japanese context, in which the balance of theory and practice is roughly seven to one (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1), providing theory at HEIs is effective enough for student teachers in developing their teacher expertise

and becoming professionally autonomous.

#### *2.2.5 The role of reflective practices*

As discussed in the previous section of 2.2.4, the process of learning to teach by theoretical learning alone has faced widespread criticism. Indeed, as Freeman (2004) discusses, non-personal and objective theoretical knowledge are the same. That is, in the case of English language teaching, the content knowledge that defines what a language is and how it is learned based on the theory of linguistics and second language acquisition is the same knowledge that teachers need to use in teaching the language. It is, in turn, the same knowledge that students need in learning the language. Acquiring such non-personal and objective theoretical knowledge only results in a theory and practice divide, not fully understanding the particulars of specific classroom contexts.

Reflective practices have been advocated as one solution to bridge the gap between theory learned at HEIs and practice in schools (McIntyre, 1993; Schön, 1983), via theorising declarative knowledge and adjusting it to a specific teaching context by reflecting while teaching; in other words, through “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1983). This means that teachers must learn not only content knowledge but also other knowledge bases such as PCK in order to make their explanations relevant and understandable to their students, depending on specific contexts. Thus, L2 teacher education also needs to emphasise personal understanding and interpretations of particular situations with the help of reflective practices.

The concept of reflection is well established and has already been

practised in many teacher training programmes, both in in-service teacher training (see, for example, Richards & Lockhart, 1994) as well as in pre-service teacher training (Grenfell, 1998; LaBoskey, 1993; McIntyre, 1993; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2007; Tann, 1993). Underpinned by Dewey's theory of experiential learning (1938), Schön (1983) introduces and defines the notion of "reflecting-in-action" – that professionals engage in reflective conversation with practical situations – setting problems while working on tasks, testing out new solutions and readjusting. Both Dewey and Schön view learning as an adaptive process. Through reflection-in-action, a tacit and unobservable element of professional expertise, which Schön refers to as "artistry" (p. 276), can be made explicit; as a result, it is easier to adjust or modify one's teaching, if necessary (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Tsui, 2003; Wallace, 1991). Hartley (1993) maintains that the strength of reflective pedagogy is that "they have practical relevance, that they are grounded in everyday situations, and that they render problematic that which hitherto had been merely habitual" (p. 85), for example, in a competency-based approach. As Dewey (1916) expresses, "Thinking is the method of an educative experience," (p.162) in this approach. Learning to teach is the dialogical process that integrates knowledge, experience, action and reflection, and in this cycle, reflection is viewed as the bridge that helps narrow the gap between cognition and examination of the concepts, principles and experiences (Kolb, 1984) through which teachers test ideas, solve problems, and adapt to new situations.

Many researchers, including Wallace (1991), Richards and Lockhart (1994), or Tsui (2003), suggest that this reflective approach is effective in foreign language teacher education programmes, in which teachers are

provided with opportunities to reflect on their theoretical knowledge and the experiential knowledge gained through microteaching or teaching practice. However, this reflective approach has not escaped criticism, in particular, in ITE.

For example, as LaBoskey (1993), Heilbronn (2008), Suzuki (2013) and Nagamine (2008) point out in their respective studies, the use of the term *reflection* is not always clear or consistent among researchers, practitioners and teacher educators; thus, concepts, topics, skills or tasks used or emphasised in reflective practices in ITE vary. The confusion is not just the term loosely used by researchers and practitioners. As Akbari (2007) criticises, there is not much evidence yet to show improvements in teachers' or students' performance due to teachers' reflective practices. The results of many of the studies above indicate that the participants developed better reflective skills; however, this does not necessarily imply that teachers became better at teaching with a better understanding of the theoretical concepts and disciplines. Additionally, reflection may not always bring about ideal results, whereas there also may be *bad* reflection (Moore, 2000) that may reinforce wrong values or behaviours of student teachers.

The most notable challenge for novice teachers in the teacher-as-a-reflective-practitioner approach is that reflective discourse assumes a certain *a priori* sophistication in the skill of introspection (Atkinson, 2004); therefore, novice teachers may not be ready for quality reflection. The learner is assumed to have a transcendent and rational subjectivity before experiencing reflective tasks, while reflection may be challenging for student teachers because they usually do not have enough of either a knowledge

base or “intuitive knowing” (Schön, 1983, p. 276) or practical experiences to draw upon. This is a major challenge for novice teachers, especially in a context where reflective teaching approaches in ITE are just beginning to be developed, such as in Japan. As Kojima stresses, reflection is a new skill for student teachers in ITE in Japan, which requires specific instruction and support, such as setting aside specific times for reflection (Kojima, 2008). Funaki (2008) also points out that ITE in Japan has not developed a yearning for autonomous learning fully enough; thus, many student teachers in ITE lack an inquiring mind and problem-solving abilities, as can be seen in Mayuko’s case in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.2), which are essential for reflection. Additionally, as Suzuki (2013) points out, when the term *reflection* is translated into Japanese, the term *hansei*<sup>30</sup> is often used which emphasises “a negative form of reflection” (Suzuki, 2013, p.86). Both terms, *reflection* and *hansei*, involve looking back at one’s thoughts and behaviours; however, while *reflection* is expected to result in a new perspective, *hansei* does not necessarily. Thus, confused with the concept of *hansei*, student teachers in Japan may focus more on negative aspects of their ideas and practices, rather than generating newer insights and perspectives based on reflection.

Furthermore, what Schön (1983) refers to as reflection-*on*-action, reflecting on teaching *afterwards*, is also challenging for student teachers without the vocabulary to articulate their experiences (Kennedy, 1993). Student teachers are usually more concerned with self-image and acquiring routines (Akbari, 2007) rather than critically evaluating their own teaching or teaching contexts. Without a knowledge base to critically analyse teachers’

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<sup>30</sup> Suzuki also explains that there is no agreement in terms of the translation of the word ‘reflection’ into Japanese although *hansei* is often used.

experiences in a particular teaching setting, “teacher education can lapse easily into an almost narcissistic, self-reflective mode” (Hartley, 1993, p. 85). In addition to lack of a rational subjectivity, established routines and practical experiences, other constraints, such as emotional pressure and time constraints to get through ITE may also hinder pre-service teachers’ reflection (Kerr, 1994).

The current section discussed the importance as well as the challenge of reflective practices for novice teachers’ professional development, especially when there remains a disparity between theory and practice. Learning to teach is ideally a dialogical process that integrates knowledge, experience, and action through reflection. In this cycle, reflection is viewed as the bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical classroom experiences (Kolb, 1984), with which student teachers test ideas, solve problems, adapt to new situations, and improve their teaching. However, what has become clear so far is that the reflective model of professional development focuses on the individual, not the dynamic nature of interaction among student teachers, their peers, colleagues and supervising teachers, and students. Student teachers may not possess capacity and willingness, which are essential qualities for the development of teacher autonomy (Smith & Erdoğan, 2008)<sup>31</sup>, to critically reflect on their own teaching cognition and practices. In contrast, as Johnson and Golombek (2011) point out, from a sociocultural perspective, cognitive development does not take place individually, but rather it should be fundamentally informed and shaped by engagement in social interactions, as we shall see in the next section.

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<sup>31</sup> See section 2.2.1 on the development of teacher autonomy.



## **2.3 A sociocultural perspective on initial teacher education**

### *2.3.1 Defining a sociocultural perspective*

In the present section, sociocultural theory will be discussed as another potential perspective on elucidating teacher professional development. Sociocultural theory originates in Vygotsky's contention that "human cognition originates in and emerges out of participation in social activities" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 1), rather than only in the minds of individual human beings (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). Vygotsky states that "any higher mental function was external and social before it was internal" (1960/1997, p. 67); thus, human cognitive development is understood as a highly social process of the mind from a sociocultural theoretical perspective. As was already discussed in this chapter (section 2.2.4), one of the major challenges that remain in ITE is the theory and practice divide in which theoretical principles and scientific concepts that individual student teachers are exposed to at HEIs are often dissociated from everyday classroom experiences. When there is a discrepancy between content knowledge (*what to teach*) and pedagogical content knowledge (*how to teach*) (Shulman, 1987), without the stance of a sociocultural theoretical perspective, student teacher's struggle in tackling complex realities in the classroom may seem individual and internal to those who have enough subject knowledge with little procedural knowledge and understanding of particular teaching contexts. Hence, a sociocultural theoretical perspective is helpful when understanding the complex process of teacher development more fully. This is because in this approach cognition development is understood as not necessarily an internal and individual

process, but emerges through socioculturally-mediated activities, and social interactions are central to the development of new forms of thinking.

### *2.3.2 Tools that mediate learning in initial teacher education*

Vygotsky (1978) differentiates biological development from sociocultural development, suggesting that higher-level cognitive development is naturally social, while participation in culturally organised practices impacts cognitive development greatly. He also argues that humans use various tools to mediate their activities and develop their cognition. This process is referred to as “internalization” (Johnson, 2009, p. 18), or transformation from external to internal and from social to psychological, from a sociocultural theoretical perspective. This means that human cognition is initially and largely shaped by specific social activities that a learner engages in, but later on he or she learns to control and regulate his or her activities as he or she learns to reconstruct resources, such as time management, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of learners and their characteristics in the case of ITE.

The process of internalisation does not take place independently and instantly. It requires time and also depends on the learning environment. Thus, mediation is essential in the internalisation process. Vygotsky (1978) argues that humans use various tools to make sense of their learning and adults teach these tools to children in their joint activities so that children learn to regulate their behaviour. These mediational tools include cultural artefacts and activities, concepts and social relations with others (Johnson, 2009).

According to Johnson and Golombek (2011), cognitive development

through mediation is not limited to children. In teacher education as well, mediational tools of scientific concepts, cultural artefacts and activities, and social relations with others are essential for teachers and student teachers to develop their expertise and narrow the gap between theoretical concepts and actual teaching in a classroom. Those mediational tools include, for example, textbooks, which have been culturally developed over time and socially designed with specific purposes. Teachers use the textbooks to create a certain kinds of instructional activities in a classroom in order to meet specific purposes and contexts. Materials that teachers create to go with the textbooks are also an example of cultural artefacts. These are created with a particular purpose and considering the particular needs and levels of students. By utilising these tools, teachers engage in various social activities embedded in the communities of practice, such as in classrooms, teacher education programmes and schools, and through acting and interacting there, they construct and reconstruct teachers' knowledge and values. The concepts reconstructed through such socially-mediated activities become "the psychological tools that enable teachers to instantiate not only locally appropriate but also theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices for the students they teach" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 5), transforming from external and social interactions to internal and psychological elements.

### 2.3.3 Peer interaction as a meditational tool

In addition to cultural artefacts, social relations with others - another meditational tool - is also paramount to an understanding of teacher expertise in the development of student teachers', particularly concerning the role of peer interaction in this study. Human mediation enables student teachers to transform scientific concepts that they acquire in ITE to "locally appropriate but also theoretically and pedagogically sound" classroom practices in particular teaching contexts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p.5). In this study, the role of peers is of particular importance in mediating learning, as student teachers in Japan are more exposed to peer interaction through ITE coursework at HEIs, due to the imbalance of theory and practice which is seven to one (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1 for more explanation on this issue). Student teachers in ITE in Japan do not have many opportunities to actually enter classrooms, interact with students and teachers, interpret real contexts, and make professional judgments about what and how to teach until they engage in school-based teaching practice in their fourth year into the ITE programme.

Johnson argues that novice teachers are often mediated by a "temporary other" (2009, p.25) including peers, and peer interaction is important in L2 teacher education as peers are not necessarily more capable experts but they collectively go through cognitive struggle in the process of expertise development. This can be further explained by one of the most investigated Vygotskian concepts in the educational literature, the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). The ZPD is defined as: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the

level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). It concerns the difference between what an individual learner can perform by himself/herself and what he or she can achieve by working collaboratively with others or experts. Lantolf (2000) describes the concept as a “metaphoric space where individual cognition originates in the social collective mind and emerges in and through engagement in social activity” (p.17). It is also a space where what a person can do with others’ assistance can be observed, which Johnson (2009) calls “an arena of potentiality” (p. 6). As a matter of fact, it is important to note that the assistance within the ZPD is not only provided by more capable peers or experts, but also by cohort peers; learners can mutually construct assistance in a similar manner to the way experts assist and lead the development of novices.

The following studies on peer interaction from a sociocultural perspective have shown that peers can scaffold one another and mutually construct meaning because “differences in peers’ experience and expertise are not fixed, but fluid, dynamic and contingent on how and what is being accomplished in and through the group’s activities” (Johnson, 2009, p.100). For example, Verity (2011) focused on MA TESOL students in a pedagogical English grammar course and argued that peer interaction enabled the novice teachers to develop self-regulation. The course offered peer-oriented activities such as a small group discussion and a collaborative poster session through which the student teachers learned to mutually construct assistance and practise co-constructing “clear and helpful explanations of technical concepts” (p. 161) and to practise providing and evaluating peer feedback. As

a result of peer interaction during the coursework, one student even labelled the classroom in the MA programme as “a community of learning” (p.164). Moreover, Nagamine (2008) used a collaborative journal in order to identify EFL student teachers’ beliefs and their development processes. As a result of the “social nature of textual interactions” (p.82) of the journal as well as bi-weekly group discussions with peers, he concluded that the participants succeeded in reconstructing their beliefs both at individual and group levels. Particularly at the group level, the participants developed a similar collective identity to professional teachers; for example, “establishing a good teacher-student relationship” turned out to be a common essential element (p.177) of being a professional teacher among the participating student teachers. The results of these studies imply that peer interaction is significantly influential on the professional development of student teachers and peers serve as co-meaning makers who can construct assistance with each other and provide constructive feedback. From a sociocultural perspective, the quality of the human mediation, even when it is mediated by non-expert others, is critical to understand the teacher expertise development of student teachers in ITE.

There are other concepts among social theories which are closely related to sociocultural theory and can contribute equally to the understanding of student teachers’ professional development. For example, Lave and Wenger’s “community of practice” (1991) is an application of Vygotsky’s ideas about human learning and actions. While Vygotsky focuses on the relationship between the individual and society with regard to development of the mind, Lave and Wenger pay less attention to cognitive processes and

focus more on how social practices shape the practices of an individual. The authors are understood in this study to both share the common thought that people learn and develop through interaction and complement each other in many ways.

Another aspect that has much in common with sociocultural theory is a social constructivist model, which is based on a constructivist view of learning (Williams & Burden, 1997). In this model, the learner plays a central role, being an active agent who makes meaning and solves problems in order to construct his knowledge and understanding. Similar to sociocultural theory, in this model, learning never takes place in isolation but arises from social interactions with others, such as teachers, learners and tasks, within a social context. In this approach, teacher development can be considered as a dynamic and constantly-changing process. Although Lantolf and Thorne (2006) criticise the fact that some social constructivists wrongly interpret Vygotsky's concept of *internalisation*<sup>32</sup>, in this study they are complementary and both are understood that they basically agree cognitive development is a process through which individuals participate with others in social interaction and transform what is internalised through mediational activities.

#### *2.3.4 Apprenticeship in initial teacher education*

Rogoff (1995) discusses that *apprenticeship* is another kind of human mediation in human learning, in addition to peer interaction. This means that models are provided by experts to a novice learner so that the learner

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<sup>32</sup> Lantolf and Thorne (2006) explain that internalisation means a transformative process in which a person transforms what is internalised and through mediational means derived from socioculturally organized concepts and activities impacts the self and the community, and they discuss that social constructivists wrongly interpret Vygotsky's internalisation as an independent cognitive activity.

emulates the tasks that a model performs and eventually learns to perform it autonomously. This can be observed not only between a parent and a child but also in teacher education, as this study will discuss, and of special note is that emulating a model is considered as one possible transformative activity (from external/social to internal/psychological), not mindlessly copying, in novice teachers' cognitive development. Following Vygotsky's (1978) discussion on the concept of emulation in children's cognitive development, more studies in teacher education could be useful which investigate if and how student teachers' internalisation occurs through emulation of "expert others"(Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 8) and "temporary others" (Johnson, 2009, p.25) and if emulation is a complex and transformative process or not from a sociocultural theoretical perspective (see section 2.3.6 later in this chapter for more discussion on emulation in teacher education).

### *2.3.5 Being an apprentice from a sociocultural perspective*

Growing up is a process of social learning, and children are expected to develop their cognitive abilities through participation and interaction with people surrounding them (Rogoff, 1990). Children are, in one sense, *apprentices* in the process of socialisation. From the day they are born, their apprenticeship starts; they observe peers and adults, imitate their behaviours, interact with them, and jointly solve problems. Imitation in child development is considered to be one of the most important tools for "enhancing human competence and the strength of attachment among human beings" (Yando, Seitz, & Zigler, 1978, p. 156). Through participation, imitation and interaction, children learn a language, learn cultural norms, and acquire cognitive thinking



skills. Events and activities children take part in may be supported and guided by adults; for example, adults may adjust the activities or language they use to suit the developmental level of children. However, adults do not take the entire responsibility for children's learning. As Dewey (1916) explains, in order to play an effective role in the community, a child needs to imitate others' actions and behaviours of his own will. Although the infinitive "to imitate" may imply an unconscious aspect of copying the "ends" of actions, Dewey asserts that one imitates not only to conform to the patterns of others and to be accepted by the group, but also to voluntarily improve the situations in which actions take place. Thus, child cognitive development is a two-way process in which both participants—children and adults—can benefit from participation, albeit differently, since this is a lifelong process, and adults are at a higher stage of cognitive development.

In some ways, socialisation in child cognitive development is similar to teacher socialisation. Novice teachers learn to teach and develop professional expertise through participation, observation and interaction with experienced teachers, peers, and pupils. They are *apprentices* in the teacher socialisation process, learning behaviours and routines, language and norms appropriate within a professional culture. However, there are some differences between these two socialisation processes that are important to acknowledge. The major difference between the two processes is that teachers' participation, observation and interaction have to be based on their theoretical knowledge basis, which children do not. As Kagan (1992) argues, what distinguishes professional from nonprofessional people is "a stock of esoteric knowledge and skills not available to the layman" (p.136). Teachers,

as a profession, are expected to depend on their professional expertise to plan, teach and evaluate their teaching through an intellectually dialogical process between theory and practice. Novice teachers, as apprentices, are also expected to acquire theoretical knowledge while trying it out in practice as a foundation of their professional development, as was already discussed in section 2.2.4.

The notion of “apprenticeship” in teacher education is not favourably accepted, however. Lortie (1975) argues that pupils spend quite a long period of time in the classroom unconsciously observing how their teachers teach and deal with pupils, the process of which he claims as “apprenticeship of observation”, regardless of whether or not pupils want to become teachers themselves, and these experiences have a major influence in shaping student teachers’ thinking about teaching and their own teaching performance. Due to this implicit process of apprenticeship as a pupil, many are likely to enter their profession with pre-fixed beliefs about teaching, strongly influenced by their former teachers, without critical examination of their models (Almarza, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Similarly, in many contexts, teacher training has been traditionally considered as “best accomplished by sitting on the job, watching others and absorbing what they do, and so slowly being inducted into the skills of the craft” (Grenfell, 1998, p. 7), which promotes merely the implicit process of apprenticeship, even after becoming a teacher. An apprentice teacher learns to teach through an implicit process of observing expert teachers without critically examining how they teach. Thus, teachers in a traditional apprenticeship approach are not considered to be fully equipped with either theory to draw back on or critical thinking skills with which they can

analyse teaching.

Lortie is not the only author who claims this kind of apprenticeship is intuitive and implicit. It is implicit in that the thinking process of experienced teachers is often tacit and difficult to observe for student teachers. Therefore, student teachers may observe and copy what experienced teachers do in practice, which may lead to the acquisition of craft, but may not necessarily lead student teachers to an explicit understanding of what teachers actually think or how they plan, monitor and evaluate their teaching (Alexander, 2002; Zeichner, 1983). Wallace (1991) also asserts that imitative and static craft knowledge of teaching do not allow for theoretical knowledge intervention. Student teachers' beliefs about learning to teach established through this intuitive process of apprenticeship are considerably strong; as a result, these beliefs are unlikely to be modified through ITE (Kagan, 1992; Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996). As was previously mentioned in this chapter (section 2.2.5), student teachers' pre-fixed perspectives are difficult to change even through reflective practices. Thus, the traditional notion of apprenticeship cannot provide teachers with abilities with which they can critically examine their particular practices and seek improvement in them.

Apprenticeship may carry a different connotation in different times and contexts, however. In some of the more recent streams of teacher education literature, an "apprenticeship" model has been used more favourably. Roberts (1998), for instance, argues that in the case of a stable society that values seniority and tradition, an apprenticeship may be effective at least for ITE. Tomlinson (1995) further asserts that apprenticeship can be powerful if mentors can effectively lead student teachers to "experimental imitation"

(p.48) by supporting student teachers' observations at every step, from planning to reflection. Similarly, in a sociocultural approach, the process of student teachers' learning to teach as an apprentice is not the uni-directional one from a master/mentor to a student/mentee. They may be still considered as peripheral participants of the learning community, as Lave and Wenger (1991) would call, but the concept of apprenticeship can be broadened to focus more on a community of practice in which novice members of the community grow as they engage in social interaction and activities with other members of the community. Furthermore, emulation can be understood as one mediational activity in this approach, as Dunn (2011) argues in his study on second language teacher education; in his study, being asked to explain the theoretical concepts student teachers learned in the workshop, they used the ideas that they discussed with peers during the workshop by connecting newly-learned concepts with their prior experiences, not only simply copying ideas and concepts that they acquired, and he called this as a "creative form of imitation" (p.56).

This newer approach to apprenticeship will be further discussed in the next section. Particularly in ITE in Japan, where seniority and tradition are more valued, emulation is culturally endorsed in some forms of professional training (Hare, 1996; Ota, 2000). How apprenticeship in teacher training is conceptualised in Japan, and how teachers try to reduce the disparity between theory and practice with the help of emulation and reflection, will be also discussed.

### 2.3.6 Conceptualisation of apprenticeship in Japan

In the Japanese language, a verb for “to learn” is *manabu*, which originally comes from another verb for “to emulate,” *manebu*.<sup>33</sup> This indicates that learning and emulation are historically very closely linked with each other, both linguistically and culturally in Japan. In this study, the term *emulation* will be used instead of imitation, which is defined as the imitation of skills and thinking processes of experts and peers, which are observed either implicitly or explicitly, usually followed by a critical examination of imitated actions, as was previously explained as a “creative form of imitation” (Dunn, 2011, p.56) in order to make improvements. Emulation can be a mere copy of craft knowledge if effected without an intellectual examination of the theory behind specific actions and behaviours. At the same time, it can be a powerful mediational tool for learning a great deal from expert teachers and peers, especially if the goals and means are clearly recognised by student teachers. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) assert that understanding the goals and the means is central to emulation in cognitive development.

According to Hare (1996), in the training of the traditional arts of *noh*<sup>34</sup> drama in Japan, for example, younger actors are required to observe, emulate and master a set form of physical skills from the senior actors in order to proceed to the next level. At the next level, they will learn another set form of skills through emulation until they gradually reach the final level of liberation and freedom. This is recursive and experience-based training, and this gradual approach of observing seniors’ performance and mastering their

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<sup>33</sup> The historical background of the word *manabu* is taken from a dictionary, *Kojien* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), edited by Izuru Shinmura (Iwanami-Shoten, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> *Noh* is the oldest dance drama in Japan, originating in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. See also footnote 22 in Chapter 1.

physical behaviours leads to a cognitive understanding of the art, which is not learned through a “rational, and intellectual process” (p. 337) of didactic teaching of *noh* drama. This idea of *noh* training and emulation in the training process indicates that there are some differences in the perception of apprenticeship between Japanese and Western pedagogical ideologies. In *noh* training, through the process of observation and emulation, apprentices are expected to learn without any explicit teaching, although the model is explicitly provided. Lewis (1992) supports this point by stating that in the arts and industry in Japan particularly, mastery of set forms through emulation and repeated practice “may have a very different relationship to creative endeavor in Japan” (p. 403) than in other contexts, such as in the United States. In this learning process, at the final stage after learning craft knowledge through emulation, trainees are highly expected to develop autonomy even without an explicit teaching of the theory behind specific actions and behaviours.

Hare’s and Lewis’ arguments are based on apprentice training in the arts and industry. The process by which an apprentice learns through observation and repeated emulation, without rational or intellectual examination of the theory of arts, is culturally and traditionally more accepted in Japan. Similarly, but not as extensively researched yet, in the culture of teaching in Japan, some research studies indicate that apprenticeship is often perceived differently in Japan from Western pedagogical ideologies. More specifically, in-service teachers in Japan are expected to learn from their peers or senior teachers through apprenticeship of observation and emulation (for example, Shimahara and Sakai, 1992) as well as “the power of collaboration” (Howe, 2006, p. 293) among colleagues. As we shall see in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.1),

emulation is not simply copying of others' behaviours as children usually do, but is a more complex process of analysing teacher thinking and improving teaching skills. How in-service teachers in Japan learn from their peers or senior teachers will be discussed next.

Shimahara and Sakai (1992) explain this point by saying that the process of induction training<sup>35</sup> in Japan is viewed as “an apprenticeship in which interns learn to teach by observing and interacting with other teachers” (p. 371). Experienced teachers who are mentors for novice teachers are likely to treat the new teachers as equals and do not offer any explicit advice or guidance. Instead, novice teachers in induction training are expected to “steal”<sup>36</sup> ideas and skills from experienced teachers by observing, emulating and interacting with them in a more informal context such as sharing ideas in meetings and in the teachers' rooms. Additionally, in emulating others, novice teachers are expected not only to adhere to routines and patterns of others and to fit in the group, but also to voluntarily improve the situations in which they teach, which is similar to what Dunn calls a “creative form of imitation (2011, p.56). Similar to Dewey's assertion (1916) in section 2.3.5 in this chapter that a child imitates not only to conform to the patterns of adults, but also to make improvements in the situations in which actions take place, in-service teachers in Japan also go through trial-and-error attempts in order to improve their practices. As one novice teacher in Shimahara and Sakai's study above claimed, “I do not imitate everything. I imitate only the things that

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<sup>35</sup> Novice teachers in the first year of teaching at a public school in Japan are all required to undergo one year of teacher training, usually offered by each prefecture's board of education.

<sup>36</sup> To 'steal' is a literal translation of a Japanese verb, *nusumu*, which implies a positive connotation of emulating somebody's, usually experts' ideas or strategies, without his or her consent.

are relevant to my concerns” (p. 375). This suggests that these novice teachers try to develop a cognitive process that enables them to make professional judgments and adapt themselves to specific teaching contexts, not just imitating their senior teachers uncritically. As Howe (2006) discusses, they learn greatly from experienced teachers through informal contact as well: “Rather than working in isolation, Japan’s teachers recognize the power of collaboration” (p.293). In one sense, they are still novices but allowed to be autonomous in making choices and negotiate meaning in their expertise development as a peripheral member of the shared culture of the craft of teaching, although their training may be done without explicit guidance by experts.

In contrast, in another case study conducted at a private high school in Japan (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004), some in-service teachers admit that they rely on their own second language learning experiences in developing as a teacher, which they confirm is “vague” and “personal”, as was discussed in Chapter 1. Since there were no clear, established goals of teaching to achieve, novice teachers in the case study above are likely to have no alternative but to imitate their former teachers, as well as their colleagues, and then adapt and tailor their styles to their specific teaching contexts. In line with the results of this case study, other scholars also argue that emulation may possibly lead novice teachers to “merely imitate” (Alexander, 2002, p. 26) experts’ skills, even when the quality of their practice is not as good, in order to adapt to the patterns of teaching in a particular school and conform to a school culture rather than to improve their own teaching. This conformity to a particular school setting has been examined by Hooghart (2006), for example. Hooghart



asserts that ideally, practising teachers in Japan may enjoy relative autonomy in professional development because of its decentralised teacher training system with no explicit goals. On the other hand, Hooghart also finds that, in in-service teacher training in Japan, models are sometimes explicitly provided as demonstration lessons, which are made public to peers as well as to teachers at other schools, and these models are expected “to be imitated in exact detail” (p. 297). Despite a lack of empirical evidence, Hooghart argues that the public nature of demonstration lessons may compel teachers to “make their practice conform to the expectations of the staff group that collaborates to develop the lesson” (p. 297). Thus, explicitly providing a model to imitate may also increase pressure to conform to established forms, which may possibly hinder teacher autonomy. Hooghart’s claim indicates that the role of theory to inform teachers’ judgements and think objectively needs to be more emphasised in in-service teacher training in Japan.

As has been discussed so far in this section, in the context of Japan, where learning to teach has been highly linked to emulation culturally, in-service teachers are allowed to be autonomous to some extent in making choices and negotiating meaning in their expertise construction through emulation even without explicit guidance by experts. In contrast, there has been some criticism of this approach. Teachers may pursue a model to emulate without critical analysis, or they may struggle with pressures to follow uncritically well-established forms of experienced teachers, which may adversely affect their teacher expertise development. This issue of the impact of emulation on their professional development is not well researched yet; whether emulation can be one effective shared social activity which greatly

contributes to participants of the learning community or not needs to be investigated further. What is at least clear from previous studies is that currently one of the major problems in teacher training in Japan is that teachers are likely to depend on emulation without any proper training, where proper training can in fact result in its more effective use in order to link theory and practice.

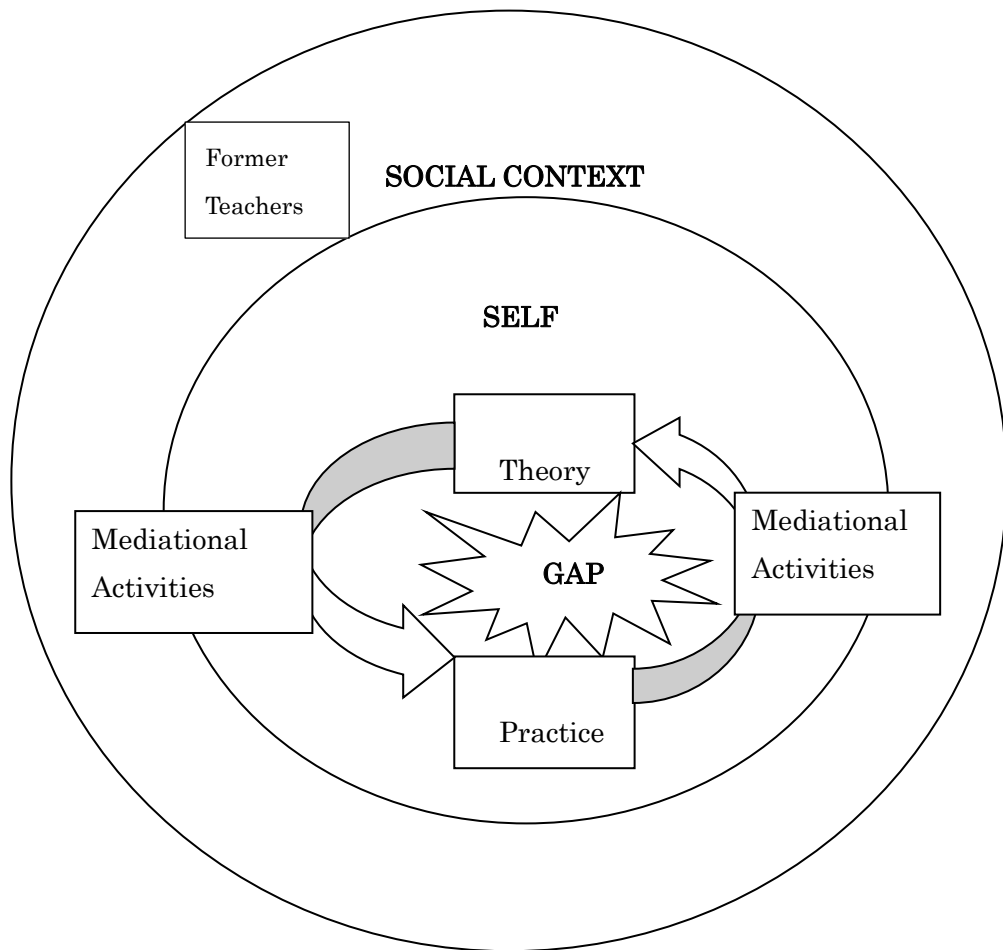
One critical issue which should be pointed out in the present section is that in-service teachers are more aware of the jargon and routines established in their professional culture, since they work in practical teaching contexts on a daily basis, and they are equipped with a firmer theoretical knowledge base to draw back on so as to further develop their teacher expertise. As was already noted in this chapter (section 2.2.5), self-initiated reflective practices are a major challenge for novice teachers for various reasons. To make the matter worse, as was discussed in Chapter 1, school teachers in Japan are not very willing to mentor student teachers during their teaching practice periods for many reasons, and often expect student teachers to implicitly emulate their craft without providing any explicit guidance (San, 1999; M. Sato, 1992). Thus, the urgent problem is if and how pre-service student teachers in Japan can go beyond being an apprentice teacher typically found in the traditional approach, to put it another way, merely copying experienced teachers without reflecting on their practices and reconstructing their expertise, and creatively use emulation as a mediational means to build a bridge between theory and practice.

Thus far, possible effects of emulation as a medium in the process of acquiring one's professional expertise in ITE have been discussed, whether

positive or negative. Although early teacher training is assumed to have a lifelong impact on teachers (Collinson & Ono, 2001; San, 1999), the impact of emulation in ITE in Japan has not yet been fully investigated. Also so far, very little qualitative data regarding ITE in Japan have been collected (LeTendre, 1999; Nagamine, 2008) or systematically examined from student teachers' perspectives in Japan (Collinson & Ono, 2001). Thus, it is urgent to explore student teachers' perspectives of their experiences, particularly those of apprenticeship, in ITE in the Japanese context, in order to further enhance student teachers' professional expertise development.

#### **2.4 A model of expertise development in initial teacher education in Japan**

In previous studies on teacher education, many researchers and teacher educators proposed a model of expertise development for teachers, among others which included Korthagen et al. (2001) and Borg (2006). Borg's (2006) model, for example, describes various psychological factors and constructs which are used to describe language teachers' cognition. The constructs include student teachers' prior experiences and beliefs such as schooling, professional coursework, as well as contextual factors such as classroom practices. Borg argues that practices and cognitions are mutually informing, and cognitions continue to have an impact on teachers throughout their career. In addition, Korthagen et al. (2001) propose a process model of the five phases of the cycle of learning to teach. In their cyclical model of acting and learning from that acting, student teachers engage in the process of becoming aware of essential problems and alternatives in their teaching, which results in learning at a higher level.



**Figure 1: A Dialogical Process of Theory and Practice in ITE in Japan**

With the supervising teacher’s help, student teachers also learn to use this model independently. It is fundamentally a self-discovery process aiming at the promotion of reflection. However, as was already argued in section 2.2.5, the models above commonly regard professional development as an individual self-directed process of cognitive development. In the present thesis, the following model is tentatively proposed as an alternative which

focuses more on the dynamic nature of interaction among the participants in the community of practices. Figure 1 shows the schematic representation of the dialogical process of theory and practice in ITE in Japan with the help of mediational activities, such as potentially, observation, emulation and reflection, although which socially-mediated tasks are more effective is the issue which will be examined later in this study based on the qualitative case studies.

The figure illustrates the beginning stage of teacher expertise development. Firstly, student teachers are influenced by former schooling experiences; whether positively or negatively and the extent of the influence will be explored in this study. Student teachers also learn abstract concepts, theories and principles at HEIs. Among various kinds of knowledge bases, content knowledge (*what to teach*) is the central feature of the teacher knowledge base. As prospective EFL teachers, they ought to learn theoretical principles on the English language system, its culture, second/foreign language acquisition, and second/foreign language teaching. In addition, they are expected to learn pedagogical knowledge (*how to teach*), especially what Shulman (1987) calls pedagogical content knowledge as was previously mentioned in this chapter (section 2.2.2) on dimensions of teacher expertise. Then, student teachers try to theorise knowledge bases in order to adapt to new classroom contexts. For instance, in classroom practices, student teachers may ask themselves reflective questions, such as “Why didn’t it go well?” or “What could I have done differently?” in order to improve their teaching by referring back to the theoretical knowledge that they acquired at HEIs.

However, in the case of ITE in Japan, because of the theory and practice divide, student teachers often find there is a gap between what they know and what the actual classroom context is like. Since professional development is not an individual process of cognitive development in this model, student teachers are considered as being situated in a social context and are the peripheral members of their learning community. How student teachers try to bridge the gap between theory and practice and what kinds of mediational activities and social interactions are useful (or not useful) for them will be delved into in this study.

The schematic representation in Figure 1 is still a tentative one: it will be further developed and revised as the data analysis proceeds. Of course there are many other aspects which are deeply related to teacher development in ITE but not currently shown in the figure, such as previous beliefs and experiences or contextual factors. These are excluded from the figure at this point since where to situate these elements was not clear, either as an individual factor or as a social contextual factor at the start of this study. What kind of social activities are in fact employed in ITE is not well examined yet either. Therefore, this study will revisit the model in Chapter 5 by referring to the previous studies and the data of the main study and indicate what factors are more influential in connecting theory and practice in the case of EFL student teachers in Japan (see section 5.4).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The present chapter elaborated on dimensions of teacher expertise necessary for EFL student teachers as well as approaches for student teachers' expertise development, particularly from a sociocultural theoretical approach. In a sociocultural theoretical approach, student teachers' expertise development is regarded as being situated in a social context and they are to learn to teach through social interactions with others, such as teachers (expert others) and peers (temporary, non-expert others). The chapter also discussed how student teachers in Japan struggle in order to bridge the divide between theory and practice. In the model of teacher expertise development provided in section 2.4 (see Figure 1), mediational activities, such as observation, emulation, reflection, and social interaction are considered as possibly significant constructs in the development of the dialogical process of theory and practice. For example, student teachers may emulate an expert's teaching behaviours and thinking processes behind the stages of teaching, followed by a critical examination of their emulated actions, whereas student teachers may also tacitly imitate an expert's teaching skills, without critical reflection on the way they teach.

In order to become a teacher who can make professional judgments and take control of one's teaching, it could be argued that a teacher should first acquire theoretical knowledge at HEIs, and then experience practical contexts so that he or she can critically analyse his or her own teaching and its contexts. However, in the case of ITE in Japan, where there is little opportunity for practice, and student teachers are not fully familiar with reflective practices yet, three or four weeks of practice teaching is not long

enough to get them ready for a professional culture. Some mediational activities which enable them to form their teacher thinking and link theoretical knowledge and practical experiences are necessary. In a culture where mastery of set forms through emulation of experts' behaviours and thinking processes and repeated practice have traditionally been highly valued (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Shimahara, 1998; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992), student teachers' awareness of the importance of mediation such as emulation and reflection can be a key to successful teacher expertise development in ITE, although the effects of mediational tools should be investigated further.



## **Chapter 3: The Research Methodology of the Study**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study is a qualitative enquiry into perspectives and experiences of pre-service teachers in ITE in Japan on their teacher expertise development. Chapter 2 shows that this qualitative study is situated in a context where emulation is rather highly encouraged in mastering professional knowledge and techniques, particularly in traditional arts training (see section 2.3.6 in Chapter 2). The data for this study were mainly collected at a private university in a medium-sized city within a commuting distance of Tokyo, Japan. This study, employing a case study technique, consists of two major components: semi-structured interviews with EFL student teachers and their reflective journals on their expertise development. By concentrating on six cases, this study was able to explore individual perspectives and experiences of student teachers in ITE who were non-native speakers of English. It also provided a rich description of the process of EFL student teachers' professional development in Japan. In addition, the following tools, observation of student teachers' teaching both at HEIs and at school where they experienced their teaching practice, interviews with their ITE tutors, as well as course documentation and student teachers' written course work, provided further insights into student teachers' experiences. This depth of descriptions of individual cases and the layers of the triangulation method of using multiple research tools and sources of data (Duff, 2008; Patton, 1980; Silverman, 2001) have strengthened the validity and reliability of this case study.

## 3.2 Qualitative approach

### 3.2.1 Qualitative research design

The enquiry began with the researcher's observation and direct interaction with graduates of the ITE programme, as well as future teachers of the programme where the researcher of this study has been teaching as a teacher educator for over fifteen years. As Chapter 1 noted, with no set standards of teaching competences such as in the UK (see section 1.3.5 for the discussion of Teachers' Standards in the UK), and with no established system of reflective practices such as European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)<sup>37</sup> in Europe, the contents of ITE programmes in Japan are at the discretion of each HEI due to the principle of openness<sup>38</sup>, the decentralised teacher training system. Thus, both teacher educators and student teachers often feel disoriented and, even after they become teachers, as was previously discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.6), this problem seems to be carried over to in-service teacher training (K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). In addition, there has not been much research conducted yet regarding ITE in Japan, particularly student teachers' perspectives and experiences (Nagamine, 2008). Thus, this qualitative enquiry will greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of the learning community which the researcher belongs to and has witnessed as a teacher educator.

Since the purpose of this research study is to explore student teachers' layered *experiences* and *perceptions* of their own development in ITE, the

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<sup>37</sup> The EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) is a document which describes in a comprehensive way what language teachers ought to learn to do in order to teach learners effectively.

<sup>38</sup> An open system refers to a system which allows any university in Japan, even without a department of education, to offer an initial teacher education programme if it meets the accreditation criteria. See Chapter 1 (section 1.3.2) for more details.

methods used to collect and analyse data were based on the principles of qualitative inquiry which allows a researcher to examine individual characteristics and differences in depth (Friedman, 2012) and prioritises “the study of perceptions, meanings and emotions” (Silverman, 2000, p. 10) of participants being studied. The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to understand the variety of the perspectives of pre-service teachers as well as the sense-making processes of their individual contexts and experiences, while it also allowed the researcher to make “fuzzy” generalisations (Bassegy, 1999, p. 52) among these perspectives. In addition, there has been limited qualitative research studies in teacher education in Japan, particularly in the area of ITE (Collinson & Ono, 2001; Danzi, Reul, & Smith, 2008; LeTendre, 1999; Nagamine, 2008).

Based on the following three characteristics of qualitative research, namely, examining in a naturalistic setting, generating the detailed description of particular cases, and theory-building from the detailed description of particular cases, it was considered that a qualitative research design was the most suitable for this study to employ. First of all, according to Hatch (2002), one of the purposes of qualitative research is to examine “the lived experiences of real people in real settings” (p.6). The primary goal of this study is also to explore how an individual student teacher behaves in the course of their everyday activities including classrooms at the university and at school and makes meaning of his or her experiences and expertise development in their teacher education programme, which is deeply situated in context. Furthermore, “to understand the world from the perspectives of those living it” (Hatch, 2002, p.7) is another overall objective of qualitative

research. Therefore, not just how an individual student teacher *behaves* but how he or she *feels* about his or her ITE experiences was explored in this study. Utilising research tools such as interviews and journals, the perspectives or views of student teachers were also elucidated and the meanings which they constructed in order to participate in their learning community will be described in details and interpreted in this particular study (regarding the pros and cons of qualitative research tools, see section 3.5 in this chapter). In addition, qualitative approaches are often associated with inductive (Hatch, 2002) and theory-generating (Merriam, 2001) research. Qualitative studies do not necessarily begin with hypothesis or theories to test; rather, they collect “as many detailed specifics from the research setting as possible, then set about the process of looking for patterns of relationship among the specifics” (Hatch, 2002, p.10). As Corbin and Strauss also rightly put it (2008), one of the main purposes of conducting qualitative research is “to discover rather than test variables” (p.12). Thus, this study also began with the examination of the individual participants as they were in natural settings as much as possible, allowing the focus of this study to emerge during data collection and analysis, and then a whole picture of the current ITE situation in Japan was constructed by examining parts and looking for patterns or relationships among them.

In qualitative research, researchers are also considered as a main research instrument themselves. Therefore, one major drawback to qualitative research is the “subjectivity” of researchers (Croker, 2009, p. 11). As they go into research settings and collect and analyse the data, their own personal background and life experiences that they take with them, such as

age, gender, ethnicity, educational background and cultural background, greatly affect how they see, interpret and reconstruct the data. However, the subjectivity of the researchers is a strength of qualitative research at the same time, as the researchers are the participants of their own enquiry who can reveal the meanings and the interpretations of their experiences with “insider perspective” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). In order to mitigate the problem of the subjectivity, though, the researcher of this study attempted to constantly reflect on her impact on the participants and the research settings through keeping the field notes, and employed a process called triangulation. Triangulation is the process of qualitative research through which multiple research methods and sources of data are applied to the analysis (Friedman, 2012) so as to reveal a fuller picture of a case or a system and increase the validity of research. In this study, for example, the data were obtained from a variety of individuals (for example, interviews with ITE tutors of the participants), and different data collection methods such as interviews and observation were used.

### *3.2.2 Case-study approach*

This study employed a case-study approach (Duff, 2008, 2012) due to the nature of the research study: focusing on a small number of participants and studying them closely over an extended period of time. In this study, multiple cases (ITE student teachers) were jointly examined in order to investigate a phenomenon (ITE in Japan).

A “case” is usually defined as a “bounded system” (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). This means that it is an individual such as a student or an entity such as a

language programme or a school that a researcher wishes to investigate. Case studies are highly exploratory and descriptive and can offer in-depth insights about a phenomenon (Dörnyei, 2007). The primary goal of the case-study approach is not to prove something and establish rules across cases, but rather to deeply and holistically understand particular cases. Due to the possible variability of student teachers' perspectives and experiences<sup>39</sup>, this study employs a case-study approach by examining particular cases and creating "rich description" of the cases and the context (Friedman, 2012, p.182). The researcher then brings the individual cases together and interprets the importance of these phenomena so as to "make broader inferences"(Silverman, 2005, p. 126) about the current ITE practices in Japan.

As a case-study approach is one major qualitative research methodology, its potential shortcomings overlap those of the qualitative research which were already discussed in the previous section.

### **3.3 The selection of samples**

#### *3.3.1 Research site*

In Japan, the current situation is that in order to become a secondary school English teacher, students are required to attend an ITE programme called *kyoshoku-katei* offered at the undergraduate-level at an HEI, while pursuing a bachelor's degree in their own majors, and acquire a teacher's qualification upon graduation<sup>40</sup>. Although the contents of ITE programmes are at the discretion of each institution due to the decentralised teacher training

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<sup>39</sup> The issue of the variability of student teachers' experiences in ITE in Japan is previously discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>40</sup> For the more detailed description of ITE in a Japanese context, see Asaoka (2008).

system, ITE programmes in Japan usually begin upon matriculation, and for the first two years, student teachers are required to take general-education-related courses in ITE such as educational philosophy, educational psychology or moral education in addition to courses related to their majors, such as linguistics, literature or international relations in the faculties they belong to. Then, students in the third year of the four-year ITE programme typically enrol in a course called Methods of Teaching English<sup>41</sup>. According to the course guidelines at the research site, some key objectives of the course are to explore various teaching-English-as-a-foreign-language principles and theories on second language acquisition, to reflect on their own learning and teaching, and to practice teaching. A variety of learning experiences and tasks are usually provided to enable student teachers to attain these objectives, which may include observing experienced teachers' lessons, or microteaching in small or large groups. Student teachers also often collaborate in planning and revising a lesson and giving feedback to each other. This is a context in which an investigation was made into student teachers' perspectives and experiences during the training at the HEIs. In addition, the study examined student teachers' experiences during a school-based teaching practice at local secondary schools. The school-based teaching practice in Japan is typically practiced when student teachers are in their fourth year for approximately three weeks. ITE at the HEIs has been often criticised that transmission of theory is more emphasised in the Japanese context. More recently, however, the necessity of longer practical training has been recognised, although not officially implemented yet.

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<sup>41</sup> At the time of the case study, the participants were required to enrol in two courses, Methods of Teaching English I and II, in sequence, at the research site.

**Table 2: Number of Licenciates and Number of Licenciates Who Became Teachers**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
The number of licenciates of secondary school teachers <sup>42</sup>	183	107	82	202	170	199	158
The number of licenciates who became public school English teachers <sup>43</sup>	12	15	11	12	13	8	--
The number of licenciates who became private school English teachers	7	8	2	3	10	4	--
Total number of licenciates who became English teachers	19	23	13	15	23	12	--

Table 2 indicates the number of licenciates of lower and upper secondary schools as well as the number of licenciates who became secondary school teachers between 2000 and 2007 at the research site. As Table 2 indicates, the number of student teachers at this institution was on a downward trend, which is a national tendency because of nation-wide declining population of children as well as classroom situations with various problems. Teaching is nowadays considered to be a more challenging job, rather than a prestigious and secure job with a good salary. Another possible reason for a downward

<sup>42</sup> This information was obtained from the materials created for the initial teacher training committee of the research site on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2009. The number included the students who acquired a teaching license in the other subjects than English.

<sup>43</sup> This information was obtained from the university brochure for high school students published annually by the research site.



trend at this specific institution seemed to result from a minimum requirement of the English language proficiency level<sup>44</sup> that student teachers need to attain in order to practise teaching at a secondary school. Therefore, many of the students who enter ITE upon matriculation are likely to end up leaving the programme due to non-fulfilment of the required proficiency level. Although this institution does not have a faculty of education, it still remains one of the top universities that annually produce aspiring English teachers in the area.

At first glance, Table 2 indicates that a strikingly low percentage of licentiates actually become English teachers at the research site. It should be pointed out though, that it is common for undergraduate students in Japan to pursue a teaching certificate although they do not wish to become teachers, considering a teaching certificate as a safety net in case the job hunt does not go well. Thus, careful consideration was given to the selection of the participants in order to be sure that all the participants wished to become teachers. Their wish was first confirmed verbally prior to the case study. Of course it was not fully certain that all of them would continue to stay in the ITE programme and eventually become a teacher. Therefore, their intention to become a teacher was affirmed verbally again during the interviews in autumn 2009. At the time of the case study, the job recruitment activities in Japan officially started in October in their junior years<sup>45</sup>, and it was confirmed that none of the participants were looking for jobs then; they were all planning to

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<sup>44</sup> Student teachers in this programme are required to attain a TOEIC score of 700, which is equivalent to 550 of a paper-based TOEFL test, by the end of the third year. TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is a test developed by the Educational Testing Service in the US, designed specifically to measure the English language skills of people in an international working environment.

<sup>45</sup> Japanese companies usually employ new graduates all at once based on the assumption that they will graduate in March and start working in April, and their recruitment activities are focused for a fixed period of time, starting all at the same time.

take a teacher employment examination in summer 2010, which all of them eventually did and became teachers upon graduation, except for Saori<sup>46</sup> who decided to enter show business (see the next section, 3.3.2, for more details on the selection process of the participants).

The major deciding factor when choosing this institution as a research site was the availability and the willingness of the participants toward this project. However, the fact that the researcher of this study works as their teacher educator at this institution was another issue which may raise questions with regard to the selection as well as the data interpretation. As Fujii (2005) argues in discussing second language production in the EFL classroom, the role of a researcher as an insider of the group allows “privileged view of classroom and learners”, which contributes to deep understandings about the nature of processes investigated. An issue of a researcher as an insider will be further discussed in this chapter (section 3.3.4), and a number of careful measures were taken in order not to contaminate the data of the participants beyond necessity.

### *3.3.2 The selection process of participants*

At the research site, Methods of Teaching English courses I and II were offered by four lecturers, one of whom was the researcher<sup>47</sup> of this study. Most of the students in these courses were in their third year of the four-year ITE programme and there were usually approximately 30 registrants in each course. The participants for this study were first recruited based on the open

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<sup>46</sup> Pseudonyms were given to each participant in order to protect their privacy. See section 3.3.3 and footnote 49 in this chapter.

<sup>47</sup> Currently, Methods I is offered to sophomores, while Methods II and III, to juniors at the research site due to curriculum revision. All three courses are compulsory.

invitation in the researcher's Methods of Teaching English course I in the spring term of the academic year<sup>48</sup> 2009. The Methods of Teaching English course I was chosen for recruitment of possible participants since this was the first course in the ITE Programme in which student teachers learned theoretical principles on foreign language teaching and learning.

Purposive sampling, in which the participants were selected according to specific criteria, was used for this study (Cohen et al., 2000; Silverman, 2000), rather than probability sampling which provides "a truly representative sample" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 81) or random sampling in which the selection is on random basis, since the goal of the study was not to analyse the data using statistical tools for generalisation but "to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 114). The specific criteria used in this study for the selection were twofold: (1) students who enrolled in the course of Methods of Teaching English I in the spring term of 2009, and (2) those who were committed to becoming a secondary-school English teacher upon graduation. The exact selection procedure will be described next.

At the end of the first Methods class in April 2009, the student teachers were briefly informed of this project and were asked to indicate the willingness and availability of participation in writing. It was emphasised that participation would not affect their grades for the course, while it was also emphasised that participation would probably enhance understanding and appreciation of their own development as a teacher. This was a self-selection process and the

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<sup>48</sup> In Japan, an academic year starts in April. One term is usually 15 weeks long and a 90-minute class meets once a week. A spring term is usually from April till July and an autumn term starts in late September and lasts until January.

principal criteria were the students' willingness to become an English teacher and availability to meet with the researcher of this study. In a Japanese context, as Table 2 in the previous section indicates, many university students enroll in an ITE programme even though they are not entirely committed to becoming a teacher. They may pursue a teaching certificate partly because it is widely recognized that to have a teaching certificate enhances their curriculum vitae, and partly because many of university graduates consider a teaching career as a safety net in the time of the worst hiring slump in the past twenty years in Japan. Thus, there was a possibility that a participant not really interested in becoming a teacher may withdraw from this study in the middle. In order to assure quality of the data, the criteria above were kept in mind in the selection process.

Six students initially expressed their interest in participating in the study. First, one French-major student was eliminated because her first priority was obtaining a teaching certificate, but not becoming a secondary school teacher. Next, two students who showed their interest in participating but were not sure about their availability withdrew. After this process, three student teachers, Aya, Akira, and Noriko, remained. Due to a smaller number of the participants than expected, the invitation was extended to the Methods of Teaching English courses taught by the three other tutors. As a result, six more student teachers showed interest in participating in this study. The project and the selection criteria were verbally explained to each student teacher individually, and in the end, four of them, Chiyo, Saori, Mari and Mayuko, agreed to join the study. The other two were not planning to take an employment examination in the following year, thus withdrew. Consequently,

the study began with seven participants in May 2009, one male and six female student teachers. All the participants reported that they were giving serious consideration to a teaching job as their career options and planning to take an employment examination in summer 2010.

### *3.3.3 The participants*

Six of the participants, Akira<sup>49</sup>, Chiyo, Mari, Mayuko, Noriko and Saori, were English-major third-year students who enrolled in the ITE programme at the research site. Aya was an English-major fourth-year student when the project began. She left the programme in a previous year to the project, pursuing a career in a private sector. However, Aya re-entered the programme in April 2009, meaning that Aya would have to remain as a non-degree student for two more terms to complete the programme after she graduated from the university in March 2010. Saori was a transfer student from another private college in Tokyo area, regarding the ITE curriculum at a previous school unsatisfactory. Noriko was another transfer student from a foreign language institute where she studied English and early childhood English education. All the participants appeared keen to participate, partly to assist in the research, but also they saw this as an opportunity to improve their own teaching. See Table 3 for the full description of each participant.

At the beginning of the main study, four of the participants, Akira, Chiyo, Mari and Mayuko, did not meet the English proficiency minimum requirement set by the programme. However, they all attained the minimally-acceptable score on TOEIC test by the end of the academic year 2009. Therefore, they

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<sup>49</sup> Pseudonym was given to each participant in order to protect their privacy and anonymity.

**Table 3: Description of the Participants**

Name	Gender	Year as of April 2009	TOEIC score as of April 2009	Tutor
Akira	M	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	680	Researcher
Aya	F	4 <sup>th</sup> -year	810	Researcher
Chiyo	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	650	Tutor A
Mari	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	650	Tutor C
Mayuko	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	695	Tutor B
Noriko	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	795	Researcher
Saori	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> -year	800	Tutor B

**Table 4: Description of the Three Tutors**

	Gender	Age	Nationality	Position	Teaching experiences in ITE
Tutor A	F	mid-60s	Japanese	Professor	40 years
Tutor B	M	mid-50s	American	Professor	20 years
Tutor C	F	mid-30s	Japanese	Lecturer	2 years

were all allowed to do teaching practice in the academic year 2010.

Since four of the participants enrolled in the other tutors' Methods of Teaching English courses I/II, it was necessary to understand the course goals and course content set by each tutor<sup>50</sup>. In the programme, a common understanding of the Methods of Teaching English courses were formulated among the tutors; however, there was little sharing among us prior to the

<sup>50</sup> The title, *a tutor*, here implies that they teach the Methods of Teaching English I/II courses; the system of higher education in Japan is similar to that in the US, and their actual positions were not *tutors*. See Table 4 for their actual positions in the faculty.

project. Thus, the three tutors were invited to participate in this study and they all agreed to be interviewed<sup>51</sup>. This in fact contributed not only to the further understanding of the student teachers' layered experiences and ideas on professional development while they were in ITE, but also the researcher's better understanding of members and practices of this learning community which the researcher was a member of. Table 4 summarises the background of each tutor.

### 3.3.4 Researcher role

Any qualitative researcher is required to make careful consideration of degrees of involvement and detachment (Bryman, 2004). The fact that the research site chosen for this study was the higher education institution where the researcher taught may raise the question of the kind of role the researcher should adopt in relation to the setting and its participants of the study. For example, as Patton (2002) argues, a researcher may adopt a role of a complete insider in contrast to an *etic* approach by which a researcher is totally detached from the case being studied and thus being able to be objective in data collection and analysis. Some even argue that a researcher should avoid his or her own contexts. Hatch (2002), for example, insists that it is:

...too difficult to balance the sometimes-conflicting roles of researcher and educator when the enactment of both roles is required in the same setting. It is just too difficult for educators to pull back from their insider perspectives and see things with the eyes of a researcher. It is just too difficult for participants in the study to respond to

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<sup>51</sup> The Japanese term, *hanashi-o-kiku* (literally, it means 'to listen to your story') was used instead of *interview-suru* (to interview) in inviting the tutors to participate in this study because *hanashi-o-kiku* sounds less judgemental and demanding in Japanese.

the researcher as researcher not teacher, colleague, or both.

(p.47)

One of the significant elements of this study, however, is that it employed an *emic* approach with a role of a teacher/researcher; in other words, the researcher studied her own workplace and tried to engage in in-depth conversations with her own students regarding their teacher expertise development. A researcher as an outsider may offer an objective view of any observations, whereas a teacher/researcher could offer a “privileged view of the classroom and learners, relatively free from the reactions learners may have to being observed by an outsider” (Fujii, 2005).

The extent to which the self is exposed in interaction is often influenced by specific cultures which one belongs to (Cousins, 1989; Triandis, 1989). Therefore, cultural specificity needs to be recognised and taken in to account in the research design and the decision on the researcher role. In the Japanese context, for example, the distinction between *uchi*<sup>52</sup> (literally, “house” or “inside”) and *soto* (literally, “outside”) is explicit, as has been repeatedly argued by many anthropologists such as Condon (1984) or Barnlund (1989). According to Barnlund, for example, Japanese people are very careful about who to let inside of their group. In addition, unless a person becomes a part of *uchi*, a member of the community, Japanese are less likely to express their inner feelings and attitudes. They share their ideas and inner feelings only with “trusted acquaintances” (Barnlund, p. 79), not much with strangers or untrusted acquaintances. Therefore, the role of the researcher is

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<sup>52</sup> The Japanese terms, *uchi* and *soto*, are used by J.C. Condon in his book, *With Respect to the Japanese*. *Uchi* means inside the group or insiders, while *soto* means outside the group or outsiders. Condon explains that this distinction is important in understanding the extent to which people disclose themselves to others.



significant in this study since the main purpose of this study is to investigate student teachers' self-exploration process of their teacher expertise development. At the beginning of the study, the participating student teachers had already been familiar with the researcher as their teacher trainer to some extent, through the induction sessions, in classrooms, as well as casual encounters on campus. Having already some professional relationship with the participants prior to the study, the entry to their group was found rather smooth, as one member of their community of the ITE programme.

The distinctive role of the teacher/researcher also led to the elicitation of honest and rich descriptions in an interview due to the familiarity and trust between the participants and the researcher. The researcher being a member of the community made the participants feel safe about disclosing their feelings and ideas and engaging in in-depth interaction with the researcher, particularly during the interviews, although less so in writing especially in the beginning of the study because expressing their ideas in writing is usually considered as more formal. Many of the participants, however, started to voluntarily come and consult with the researcher regarding their own teaching even outside the office hours or not for the interviews of this study, or some of them invited the researcher to come observe their practice of microteaching on a voluntary basis. This in-depth interaction, in turn, led to the richness of the data, both verbal and textual, collected over one year and a half. Empathy that the researcher held as their teacher educator also enabled her to take and understand the stance, position, feelings, experiences of the participants, whereas the researcher attempted to be neutral and *non-judgmental* (Silverman, 2000, p.256) at the same time toward their thoughts and

behaviours as best as a researcher, not as an evaluator of their performances. In one sense, the study describes an interesting process of the researcher's own professional development as a teacher educator, by learning how student teachers feel about their expertise development and how they handle the issues which they face during ITE.

Being an insider of their group also made it easier for the researcher to make frequent meetings with the participants and communicate regularly with them, which motivated them to keep working on their expertise development. The researcher attempted to offer feedback to all the participants, whenever necessary, such as in a classroom right after their microteaching or in a casual conversation in the hall. As Chiyo, one of the participants, expressed in the end of the final interview, the participation in the study made her more conscious of teacher development being a long-term project. Chiyo built awareness through the process of engaging in self-reflection, peer interaction, and mentoring both at school and at HEI. Participation in this research study engaged some of the participants in the process of developing their abilities to reflect on their practices and thus contributed to their professional development.

As was already mentioned, the role of teacher/researcher may raise some questions about research ethics, validity, and reliability. Thus, the researcher needed to be very cautious in analysing the data since this teacher-student relationship may have influenced the participants' reactivity toward the study and as a result, might have invalidated the data. In order to minimise this influence, it was clearly explained to the participants that they were free to withdraw any time of the study they wished and assured that their

decision whether or not to participate as well as their participation would not affect the assessment of any of their coursework, their current or future relations with the university as well as the school they were based in during their teaching practice (see Appendix A for a sample informed consent form). It should be also noted that, during the teaching practice, school mentors, not the researcher, assessed the student teachers. What was also important in this study was to create an open and trusting relationship between the participants and the researcher by guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality as well as an access to their data after being transcribed (see also section 3.7 in this chapter for ethical issues).

### **3.4 The research process**

Prior to the main study, the pilot study was conducted on a smaller scale in order to test out the methodology.

#### *3.4.1 The pilot study*

The pilot study with two participants, participant K and participant M, was conducted at the same higher education institution between October 2008 and August 2009, using two major qualitative research tools: semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The participants were interviewed individually five times at different stages and asked to keep reflective journals. The timeline of the pilot study is delineated in Table 5.

**Table 5: The Timeline of the Pilot Study**

1 <sup>st</sup> phase	In-class tasks	Tasks for the pilot study
Oct 2008	three reflective essays	1 <sup>st</sup> semi-structured interview, daily journals
Nov 2008	microteaching 1 self-evaluation	daily journals
Dec 2008	microteaching 2 & 3 self-evaluation	daily journals, 2 <sup>nd</sup> semi-structured interview
Jan 2009		daily journals, peer evaluation of microteaching
Feb 2009		card-sorting exercise & 3 <sup>rd</sup> semi-structured interview
2 <sup>nd</sup> Phase	School-based training	Tasks for the pilot study
May 2009	daily teaching logs	4 <sup>th</sup> semi-structured interview, daily journals
June 2009	a demonstration lesson	daily journals, observation by the researcher
July 2009		daily journals, card-sorting exercise & final semi-structured interview

After the second interviews, two more tasks were added prior to the third interviews: peer evaluation of microteaching and a card-sorting exercise, which is a ranking task where the participants were asked to rank and label good English teacher's qualities. These two additional tools were implemented in order to encourage participant M's reflection, who seemed to be having difficulties in reflecting on her own 'learning to teach' process both in interviews and journals. As was explained in Chapter 2, novice teachers may not always be ready for quality reflection for various reasons (Akbari, 2007; Atkinson, 2004; Kennedy, 1993; Kerr, 1994). Therefore, peer

assessment of recorded microteaching was conducted in order to raise the participants' awareness of the importance of reflection on learning to teach and of the use of jargon effective in reflection, while a card-sorting exercise was introduced in the manner described by Kettle & Sellars (1996) in conjunction with the third and final interviews, in order to investigate more deeply the participants' perspectives on their expertise development, particularly the structure and reorganizing process of their expertise. How the card-sorting exercise was conducted will be elaborated later in this chapter (section 3.5.3). With regard to peer assessment of recorded microteaching, it was conducted in January 2009. The participants watched their filmed microteaching together and gave comments to each other. This task, however, did not prove feasible; participant K dominated the conversation, while the other was intimidated and could not express herself well, although it was done in Japanese, their native language in common. With the understanding that peer assessment of filmed microteaching may not always result in deeper reflection on student teachers' teaching practices, in the main study, the assessment of filmed microteaching was conducted individually during one of the interviews (see section 3.5.4 in this chapter).

Informed by the results of the pilot study, three changes were made to the main study:

1. The length of the study was extended from two semesters for the pilot study (Methods of Teaching English II in autumn 2008 and the teaching practice in spring 2009) to three semesters for the main study (Methods of Teaching English I in spring 2009, Methods of Teaching English II in

autumn 2009, and the teaching practice in spring 2010) in order to cover both Methods of Teaching English I/II courses as well as practice teaching and to collect richer data of the participants' perspectives and experiences in ITE. This led to implementation of more interviews (from five to six) and card-sorting exercises (from two to three) (see section 3.5).

2. In the main study, during the fourth interviews after microteaching in their Methods courses, think-aloud protocol while viewing the recorded microteaching was individually conducted, instead of a video viewing session in a pair, as was done in the pilot study, because there was a concern during the pilot study that one participant who was more articulate with more teaching experiences was likely to dominate the conversation, while the other one was intimidated and unable to fully express her ideas.
3. The other three tutors (see Table 4) who taught the Methods of Teaching English I/II courses were invited for an individual interview with the researcher in order to find out their class contexts because four of the six participants in the main study enrolled in their courses.

#### *3.4.2 The main study*

In the main study, the data collection involved the following two stages: from April 2009 until February 2010 and from May 2010 until August 2010. In the spring and autumn terms of the 2009 academic year, all the participants enrolled in the Methods of Teaching English I (in spring) and II (in autumn) courses in the ITE programme at the research site. In the spring term of the

2010 academic year, all the participants experienced a school-based teaching practice at secondary schools in either May or June depending on school contexts, except for Mari who did her student teaching in September 2010 due to contextual reasons of her school. Table 6 provides a brief summary of the overall data collection activities of the main study which will be explained more in details in the subsequent sections.

### **3.5 Methods of data collection**

#### *3.5.1 Interviews*

The main qualitative methods used in this study were twofold: semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. As many researchers argue (A. Brown & Dowling, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000; Hatch, 2002; Silverman, 2000), qualitative interviews enable interviewees to investigate their own thoughts, beliefs and perspectives of the world in which they live for greater depth and to reconstruct events they experience. For example, Silverman (2000) argues that interviews allow researchers access to not only “external reality (e.g. facts, events)” but also “internal experience (e.g. feelings, meanings)” (p.154). Hatch (2002) even ventures the suggestion that in order to capture participants’ perspectives and obtain rich data, interviewing in some forms is essential. On the part of the interviewer, this method leads to deeper understanding and richer descriptions of interviewees’ experiences and contexts from their perspectives. Furthermore, this method of qualitative interviews is commonly found in ITE research studies (Almarza, 1996; Borg, 2005; Johnson, 1994; Lim & Chan, 2007). With regard to the drawbacks of interviews, see section 3.5.2 in this chapter.

**Table 6: *The Timeline of the Main Study***

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1 <sup>st</sup> phase	In-class tasks	Tasks for the main study
May 2009		1 <sup>st</sup> semi-structured interview, starting journals (~ January 2010)
July 2009		2 <sup>nd</sup> semi-structured interview
Oct 2009		3 <sup>rd</sup> semi-structured interview card-sorting exercise 1
Nov-Dec 2009	lesson planning microteaching	observation by the researcher
Jan 2010		final journal submission
Feb 2010		4 <sup>th</sup> semi-structured interview, card-sorting ex. 2, video-viewing and think-aloud protocol

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2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	School-based training	Tasks for the main study
May 2010		5 <sup>th</sup> semi-structured interview
June-July 2010	daily teaching logs demonstration lesson	school visit and observation by the researcher
Aug 2010		final semi-structured interview card-sorting ex. 3

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All of the interviews employed in this study were semi-structured (see the Appendix B-1 for the complete set of interview guides) since, as Brown and Dowling (1998) argue, the chief objective of a semi-structured interview is “to explore the world from the perspective of the interviewee and to construct an understanding of how the interviewee makes sense of their experiences” (p. 73). In this study, all the six interviews with each participant were conducted in order to analyse the participants’ experiences and perspectives regarding the



process of learning to teach, to understand how they made sense of their experiences, and to see what factors in ITE influenced their expertise development.

On the one hand, the interview was open-ended as it was wished to create some space for flexibility for the interviewees to talk freely (Silverman, 2001; Brown and Dowling 1998), although it was not unstructured. As Bryman (2004) argues, during an unstructured interview, the interviewer asks a single question to which an interviewee is allowed to respond freely and take the directions without any structures. The interview in this study was semi-structured, on the other hand, in that both the researcher and the interviewees shared the understanding of the aims of the study and for each interview, an interview guide was prepared by the researcher with a set of questions in mind to be covered although the researcher understood that the questions were open and flexible (see the Appendix B-1 for the complete set of interview guides). The interview guides for each interview were first created during the pilot study so that the participants' experiences and expertise development could be covered without omission. The interview guides then were re-examined during the main study before each interview and adjusted based on the participants' journal entries, the researcher's observation of their microteaching, or the researcher's field notes, considering courses which they enrolled or activities and tasks that they participated in and outside the ITE curriculum. Questions which were not included in the interview guide were also asked as need arose and the overall interview process was flexible, allowing the interviewees to frame and explain their thoughts and views freely. The researcher tried to be open to digressions, building some flexibility into

the interviews and letting the participants take the directions (Hatch, 2002).

### *3.5.2 Interview process*

The initial interview with each participant was conducted in the beginning of the spring term in 2009. The main purposes of the initial interview were to collect factual information, such as the age of starting to learn English or their current TOEIC scores, as well as to analyse the participants' experiences and thoughts about learning and teaching, often influenced by their former teachers because of the long-term unexamined experiences of "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975). The questions included "What do you think a good teacher is?" and "What has influenced your English language learning and teaching?" (see Appendix B-1 for the interview guide for the first interviews).

The second interview with each participant individually took place in the end of July or early August in the same year, when the participants' examination period in the spring term was over. The main purpose of the second interview was to explore their perspectives on overall expertise development, particularly the influence of the ITE coursework during the first term. The questions included "In the spring semester, what did you learn for your teacher expertise development through taking the Methods course?" and "In the spring semester, what influenced your teacher expertise development outside the ITE programme?" (see Appendix B-1 for the interview guide for the second interviews). The questions that were found regarding their journal entries during the spring semester were clarified during the second interview as well.

The third interview was conducted with each participant individually in the beginning of the autumn term in October 2009. The main purpose of the third interview was to enable the participants, with the use of a card-sorting exercise, to engage and reflect more on their perspectives on what a good English teacher is. The nature and the process of the card-sorting exercise will be elaborated later in this chapter (section 3.5.3.)

Furthermore, during the fourth interview, conducted with each participant individually at the end of the autumn term in January or February 2010, the participants were first asked to evaluate their own microteaching. The stimulated recall task will be further elaborated later (section 3.5.4). Then the second card-sorting exercise was conducted in order to examine the participants' then perspectives on what a good English teacher was. After the stimulated recall task and the card-sorting exercise were conducted, the participants were then asked to respond to the questions such as "In the autumn semester, what did you learn for your teacher expertise development through taking the Methods course?" and "In the autumn semester, what influenced your teacher expertise development outside the ITE programme?" (see Appendix B-1 for the interview guide for the fourth interviews) and discuss their perspectives on overall expertise development. The questions that were found regarding their journal entries during the autumn semester were clarified during the fourth interview as well.

Prior to school-based training in the spring term of the 2010 academic year, the fifth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant in order to explore their expectations, concerns and perspectives on teaching practice as well as to find out their school contexts. The questions included

“During the teaching practice, what kind of English lessons are you planning to conduct?” and “What are your concerns now and how are you going to tackle them?” (see Appendix B-1 for the interview guide for the fifth interviews).

The final interviews with each participant individually were conducted in July or August 2010 after the teaching practice (in Mari’s case, in early October because she did her teaching practice in September 2010) in order to investigate the student teachers’ specific experiences with the teaching practice as well as their perspectives on overall expertise development. The third card-sorting exercise was conducted during the final interview as well.

Regarding the language for an interview, the participants were first given a choice of the language for an interview, English or Japanese; however all the participants chose Japanese, the participants’ and the researcher’s native language, for the participants could express as fully as they wished. With their permission, it was recorded on a voice recorder and transcribed for later analysis. All the interviews were conducted in the researcher’s office at the research site. The researcher carefully prepared so that there would be no interruption during the interview, such as knocking on the door or phone calls.

There are some drawbacks in qualitative interviews, however. For example, Silverman (1997, 2000, 2008) maintains that there may be a gap between what people do and what they think they do. Interviewees may try to show him- or herself in a better light than they really are or are unable to articulate their thoughts and feelings, producing an insufficient amount of the verbal data (Dörnyei, 2007). In fact, the latter case was observed in a case of participant M during the pilot study (see section 3.4.1 in this chapter). In

addition, a researcher usually needs to set up particular “‘artificial’ research environments” (Silverman, 2000, p.119) by asking questions. Thus, the accuracy of what participants tell interviewers ought to be ensured by using other research tools (Silverman, 2000). Silverman, for instance, suggests that the use of “naturally occurring data” (1997, p.352) through participant observations often gives researchers more direct access to participants’ experiences. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, in this study, being an insider of the group gave the researcher more access to the naturally occurring data of the participants. It needs to be recognized, therefore, that interview responses are interviewees’ interpretations of the reality and how to interpret interviewees’ accounts may also be influenced by the researcher’s bias and subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2000) (with regard to the subjectivity of the researcher, see also section 3.2.1 in this chapter). However, multiple data sources were collected, such as observation of their teaching (see section 3.5.9 in this chapter), which is closer to “naturally occurring data”, in order to examine how the participants applied their theoretical understanding to actual teaching practices, obtain further insights about each participant, and triangulate them with the interview data.

### *3.5.3 Card-sorting exercises*

At the beginning of the third interviews, the first card-sorting exercise was introduced in the manner described by Kettle & Sellars (1996) based on the concepts which recursively emerged in their journal entries and the two previous interviews in spring 2009. The purpose of this exercise was to investigate more deeply the student teachers’ perspectives on expertise

**Table 7: Seven Key Principles in Becoming a Good English Teacher**

<i>A good English teacher is one who ...</i>	Chiyo	Saori	Mayuko	Aya	Akira	Mari	Noriko
uses various teaching techniques and activities.	X	X					
relates to individual students.	X				X	X	X
is enthusiastic about English language teaching.	X						
teaches English in an easy-to-understand manner.	X		X			X	
changes approaches suitable for students' language proficiency levels, interests and needs.	X		X	X			
makes students think on their own.			X				
teaches English in a student-centred approach.				X	X	X	

development, particularly the structure and reorganizing process of their expertise. The data of their journal entries between April and July 2009 as well as the first two interviews were first coded, focusing on how they viewed a good English teacher. As a result, eighteen principles were found in their data all together, meaning that they either stated it during interviews or wrote it in their journals at least once. Seven key principles (see Table 7) of a good English teacher were commonly identified among more than two participants' data, and then, they were placed on cards. Next, during the interviews, the participants were first asked to look at the cards, eliminate unnecessary ones

and add new ideas if necessary. Then, the participants were asked to prioritise, group and label them. As Kettle and Sellars explain, data from this exercise were expected to “allow the construction of a taxonomy graphically detailing the attributes of an individual’s meaning system.” (p. 4).

At the end of each card-sorting exercise, the participants were also asked to explain how the principles they selected and prioritised were related to their perspectives on English language teaching as well. The card-sorting exercise was conducted three times during the study, in conjunction with the third, fourth and final interviews.

#### *3.5.4 Stimulated recall*

During the fourth interview at the end of the autumn term in January or February 2010, in addition to the second card-sorting exercise, the participants were asked to evaluate their own microteaching too. According to Friedman (2012), qualitative interviews can incorporate a simulated recall task in order to allow participants to “provide interpretations of their own or others’ actions” (p.190). In this study, the stimulated recall task was employed in order to prompt the participants to further reflect on their own teaching, to clarify their thinking processes, and further analyse their perspectives on their cognitive strategies and actions during their teaching and the interactive relationship between the two (Hatch, 2002; Lyle, 2003).

In the beginning of the fourth interview, the participants were first asked to view their filmed microteaching, which were conducted in the Methods of Teaching English II courses, and stop at any place on their will in order to make comments on their own thoughts and actions then. This procedure was

similar to an introspective verbal report on their thinking, such as a think-aloud protocol (Stromso, Braten, & Samuelstuen, 2003; Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999), or a recall protocol (Connor, 1984; Lyle, 2003), often used in the field of second/foreign language acquisition, particularly in reading research. In these approaches, readers are generally asked to make reports on their own thinking while reading or after reading, in order to illustrate their reading processes and to justify their thinking, the use of strategies, and reading behaviours.

### *3.5.5 Interviews with ITE tutors*

Since some of the participants enrolled in the Methods of Teaching English courses I/II taught by the other tutors than the researcher, the researcher decided to interview the three tutors in the main study in order to further understand each participant's context of learning to teach. See Table 4 for the description of the three tutors. The researcher and each of the participating tutors negotiated to find space in their tight work schedule in order to conduct an interview; Tutor A and C were interviewed in October 2009, whereas Tutor B's interview was conducted in November 2009. All of the tutors chose their mother tongue (Japanese for tutors A and C, English for tutor B) so that they were able to express themselves fluently. An interview schedule was developed beforehand, which was then given to each tutor in advance so as to have time to reflect on their own courses and overall teacher training practices at the institute. The questions included "What are the goals for your method course I and II?" and "What do you think is a role of theories in ITE?" (see Appendix B-2 for the full details of the interview guide with



tutors).

### 3.5.6 Journals

Another data collection tool employed in this study was reflective journals. In a qualitative study, participants may keep a journal in which they write accounts of events and activities in their everyday lives (A. Brown & Dowling, 1998). One of the advantages of using instruments such as reflective journals is that in writing things down, participants can “process and reflect on experiences in different ways than thinking about them or discussing them with others” (Hatch, 2002, p,140). It is also a useful tool of documenting participants’ activities even when a researcher is not around to observe them (Friedman, 2012). Thus, journal entries allow researchers to access participants’ first-hand experiences and voices and capture individual perspectives (Bailey, 1990; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Tsang, 2003), which are difficult to obtain by using other research tools such as observation. In one sense, as Dörnyei (2007) asserts, the participants become “co-researchers as they keep records of their own feelings, thoughts, or activities” (p.157). In this study, keeping a journal provides them with an opportunity for self-awareness of the teacher development process that they are involved in.

One of the problems in using a journal as a data-collection method is that it is virtually impossible to display long samples (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Participants are usually asked to keep a journal for an extended period of time and short extracts which are cut off may not be able to fully describe the changes of the participants over time. It should be kept in mind that the journal data are “selective and subjective” (Friedman, 2012, p.190) and they

show a participant's perspective of an event, but not the event itself. Furthermore, as keeping a journal is very demanding on the part of the participants, the quantity and quality of journal entries usually show variation considerably (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants may simply forget to write down their thoughts or may be too tired to write down an entry. By the time they find some time to write down an entry, they may be unable to recount an event fully. Thus, any segments from the journal data should be appreciated as they belong to "a broader temporal and contextual picture" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 123) and reading and re-reading the journal data allows the researcher to notice important themes to become foregrounded. Also, in addition to journal data, applying more than one research method and source of data to the analysis is essential (Friedman, 2012) so as to reveal a full picture of a case or a system.

With regard to another possible shortcoming of using the journal data, "observer effects" (A. Brown & Dowling, 1998, p. 65), it will be discussed later in this chapter (section 3.5.8).

### *3.5.7 Journal writing in the Japanese context*

In addition to the general value of the use of journal writing as a research tool, it is essential to discuss the meaning of journal writing that is specific to Japanese culture. Kawaura, Kawakami and Yamashita (1998), for instance, explain that the origins of diary writing date back to the Heian and Kamakura period<sup>53</sup> and diaries then were kept both for recording facts and for expressing the personal thoughts and individual conditions as literature. Even

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<sup>53</sup> The Heian and Kamakura period corresponds to from the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

today, as Suzuki (2013) as well as Miura and Yamashita (2007)<sup>54</sup> argue that personal diary keeping, including keeping a personal blog in more recent years, is a common practice in Japan. For example, elementary school students are often assigned with diary keeping, and posting personal diaries on the Internet has also gained popularity. According to Kawaura et al. (1998), in interdependent Japanese culture in which one needs to cooperate with others, writing one's personal affairs and showing them to others serve the purpose of self-disclosure, and writers want to reveal their inner self in their journals and expect readers to have sympathy for what they write. Therefore, in this study, journals are expected to provide a rich data of the participants' expression and thoughts.

### *3.5.8 Journal writing process*

The journals were used in this study in order to understand how the participants experienced the process of learning to teach and synthesised knowledge and information they acquired across and beyond the curriculum. In this study, the participants were asked to keep focused journals, rather than free and open-ended writing, from April 2009 till January 2010 during the first and second terms of the 2009 academic year. Focused journals in this study imply that the participants were given a list of possible topics and they freely articulated their thoughts and views on these topics (Johnson, 1994). For example, the participants were asked specifically to describe their daily experiences of learning to teach, not only in the courses in the ITE programme but also in their everyday life such as working as a private tutor at

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<sup>54</sup> Suzuki analysed in-service high school teachers' journals, while Miura and Yamashita studied blog writing in Japan.

a cram school for secondary school students or a volunteer teacher in a nearby school, or in other courses outside the ITE programme at the research site. The focused journals were used for this study in order to provide the participants some structure and choices of issues to write about rather than constraining their freedom of expressing their thoughts or limiting topics to write about, since the participants in the study were not familiar with keeping a log of their learning experiences and may not come up with things to write about.

During the first interview, each participant was provided with a small notebook as well as a prompt for keeping reflective journals (see Appendix B-3 for the full details of the journal prompt). The topics offered in the prompt included factors which may affect the participants' notions of a good language teacher and teacher development, their thoughts and experiences of learning and teaching in courses in and outside the ITE programme, as well as their feelings and experiences with former teachers, current teachers, peers and mentors. The prompt also indicated that the participants were allowed to make entries at their leisure and the length/amount/frequency of their writing was left to their discretion. During the first term in 2009, the journals were collected weekly regardless of the amount of their journal entries so that the participants could plan their time accordingly (Hatch, 2000). In the autumn term, however, their journals were collected at longer intervals because by this time the participants presumably became accustomed to writing their reflections and needed less intervention by the researcher. In addition, as the participants in Lee's study (2007) claim, some participants in this study also found it challenging to find time to write; thus, in order to reduce the

participants' burden, they were asked to submit their journals every two or three weeks instead of every week. In addition, a choice in language (Japanese or English or Japanese and English) as well as methods of submitting a journal were offered during the first interview. As a result, all the participants chose to write in Japanese by hand and submit a hard copy rather than via e-mail in the beginning. Later in the process, one of the participants, Akira, asked the researcher for permission to type his journal up and submit it electronically in order to reduce his workload, which was, of course, allowed. All the other journal entries which were handwritten by the participants were typed by the researcher for later analysis.

The participants kept their journals for two consecutive terms in 2009, while during school-based training in 2010, the participants kept teaching logs, instead of reflective journals, which was a requirement of the ITE programme. Student teachers in ITE in Japan are usually required to keep a teaching log provided by HEIs during the teaching practice in order to keep a record of and reflect on their teaching practices. Supervising teachers gave written feedback, and upon completing the teaching practice, the logs were submitted to HEIs, which will be used for evaluation. The participants were not asked to keep reflective journals for this particular study in order to lighten their workload during the teaching practice. This is because creating the required teaching logs is usually a heavy workload and from previous experiences as a tutor, the researcher understood that the logs usually describe their experiences during the school-based training quite well. These logs are usually prescriptive, thus may be less reflective, and are kept every day in Japanese on every aspect of their practical training, such as

constructing lesson plans, observing supervising teachers and cohort student teachers, teaching and getting feedback, conducting student counselling and guidance, as well as commenting on extra-curricular activities. Supervising teachers at the local schools provide written comments every day, as well. However, this teaching log was used for the course assessment of the teaching practice. Although the grade was given by a supervising teacher at a local school, this may have influenced what and how the participants wrote in their logs; thus, though the teaching logs during the teaching practice were collected soon after their teaching practice, the data obtained were used in order to understand what student teachers actually experienced during the teaching practice and used as supplementary data for triangulation, which means applying multiple research methods and sources of data to the analysis (Friedman, 2012) so as to reveal a full picture of a case or a system. It should be pointed out, however, that in the case of Mayuko who was not good at verbalising her reflections (see section 4.4.2 in Chapter 4), the entries in her teaching-practice teaching log were frequently used as the data, with her permission.

In analysing the data from their journal entries, the researcher needed to be aware of “observer effects” (A. Brown & Dowling, 1998, p. 65); since the participants may try to respond to the researcher’s or the mentor’s expectations and express only idealised stories of what they do and think. As Hatch (2002) suggests, making reflective journaling interactive by responding to the participants’ journal entries may also change the nature of the data. Therefore, commenting on the participants’ writing was avoided; however, their time and efforts were acknowledged by the researcher in writing, and

follow-up questions were asked during the interviews when there were unclear statements in their journals in order to understand their meaning-making processes. In addition, these potential drawbacks of journals were reduced by “clearly communicating the expectation that the participants’ genuine perspectives and reactions are what the researcher is interested in, that whatever level of reflexivity participants are capable of is just fine, and that entries do not have to be of a certain length” (Hatch, 2002, p. 142).

### *3.5.9 Observations, field notes and documentation*

It is recognised that qualitative data, such as interviews or journals, could be problematic in research terms. For example, as Silverman (1997, 2000, 2008) maintains, there may be a gap between what people do and what they think they do and “naturally occurring data” (1997, p.352) through participant observations can often give researchers more direct access to participants’ experiences. It needs to be understood, therefore, that interview responses or journal entries are based on interviewees’ interpretations of the reality and how to interpret interviewees’ accounts may also be influenced by the researcher’s bias and subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2000). With regard to the subjectivity of the researcher, see also section 3.2.1. As Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that “context both determines and is determined by the researchers’ self-understanding” (p.33), as much as those researched are understood in relation to the context, those who research themselves are part of the context and their interpretations should be understood in relation to the context.

In order to ensure the validity of qualitative data, the triangulation method was used in this study. As many researchers assert (Patton, 1980,

2002; Silverman, 2000, 2001), the use of multiple research methods and data sources contributes “to overcome partial views and present a more complete picture” (Silverman 2000, p.122). For example, in this study, the two main research tools used were interviews and journals. However, individuals may not be always willing to share what they have on their mind through interviews and journal writing. Thus, as supplementary qualitative data, observation of the participants’ teaching was conducted in order to observe what actually and more naturally occurred in the classroom. It was conducted throughout the data collection process with the participants’, as well as their tutors’ and mentors’, permission. The observation took place both formally and informally. First, each participant gave a micro lesson as a part of the coursework of Methods of Teaching English II, each of which was filmed by the researcher and was mainly used for self-evaluation by the participants during the fourth interview. On the other hand, the researcher was occasionally invited by some of the participants to informally observe their teaching in other ITE courses or when they voluntarily practised teaching after school.

During the school-based training, the researcher visited each school once in order to find out school contexts and observe each participant’s demonstration lesson<sup>55</sup>. At the research site, tutors are expected to visit only student teachers who do their teaching practice in a certain area near the research site<sup>56</sup>. However, the researcher made efforts to visit *all* the participants’ schools with the permission both from the ITE programme and

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<sup>55</sup> As was explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3), student teachers usually give a demonstration lesson called *kenkyujugyo* toward the end of their teaching practice, which is open to other student teachers, teachers and a principal at school, and ITE tutors.

<sup>56</sup> According the researcher’s field notes, only Akira’s school was located in this zone. The zone included the southern part of Saitama prefecture and the eastern part of Tokyo.



the teaching-practice schools, viewing this as an opportunity to observe how the participants were teaching in general, to see their relationship with their mentors, to converse with the mentors and get their insights, to see their relationship with students, and to understand the school contexts. Right after the demonstration lessons, the researcher had a meeting with each participant in order to discuss their teaching, sometimes attended by the mentor and other times not. In case the mentor was present then, assuming that the participants may hold back their feelings and ideas, the questions regarding this study were held unasked until the final interviews after the teaching practice.

Straight after each observation, the researcher recorded what was observed as field notes, particularly on the issues above. The questions that arose during the observation were asked for clarification in the interviews. The field notes were also kept after conversing with the participants during everyday life such as discussion with them in the hall or during face-to-face counselling on teaching in the office. The researcher's own reflection was kept in order to keep track and make sense of the research experiences as a researcher as well as a teacher trainer. Table 8 indicates how often the researcher was able to observe each participant's teaching during the study.

As was already mentioned in earlier sections (please refer to sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.6 in this chapter), the accuracy of the interview and journal data is one of the challenges because participants may or cannot really do what they say they do. In order to avoid this problem, the researcher supplemented interviews and journals with classroom observations in this study, since observation often permits the better understanding of the social phenomenon

**Table 8: Observations of the Participants' Teaching**

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Participants	In Methods course	In other ITE courses / voluntary practice	School-based training
Akira	Three times (2+10+40 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)
Aya	Three times (2+10+40 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)
Chiyo	Once (40 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)
Mari	None	Twice (50+50 min)	Twice(50+50 min)
Mayuko	Once (20 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)
Noriko	Three times (2+10+40 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)
Saori	Once (20 min)	Once (50 min)	Once (50 min)

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from the perspectives of the participants (Hatch, 2002). As Hatch (2002) further argues, to be there in the actual social setting, and to keep a good and careful record of what participants say and behave, allows a researcher to make better sense of how the participants understand the setting. Therefore, the use of observation as a supplementary research tool contributes to creating a more complete, may not be *true*, description of the social phenomenon being studied.

On the contrary, a major drawback to observation as a qualitative research tool is what is called the “observer’s paradox” (Friedman, 2012, p.187). This means that the presence of an observer can change the participants’ behaviour. It is impossible to avoid the problem entirely; however, one way to alleviate the problem is to let the participants become used to the

presence of an observer. In this study, it was also mitigated over time as the participants were willing to be observed and provided with feedback from the researcher as well as the peers on their teaching skills. Another drawback is, as McDonough and McDonough (1997) state, that an observer is a “human instrument” (p.115), which means that an observer also has a perspective. Thus, it needs to be kept in mind that a whole picture created in a qualitative research study is based on multiple perspectives, including the one of the observer.

In addition, all the related documents were also collected: documents that the participants developed during the coursework such as lesson plans, class materials and quizzes, and teaching logs that the participants kept during the school-based training. All the documents were photocopied for later analysis. For example, these supplementary data were later triangulated with the two main qualitative data sources of the interviews and journals; however, they were mainly used for reference and clarification of the participants’ meanings, and the researcher did not intend to directly draw meanings from them.

### **3.6 Data storage and analysis**

#### *3.6.1 Data storage*

At the completion of the courses and the teaching practice, copies of all the written texts, such as their reflective journals as well as lesson plans they constructed, were made and kept for final data analysis. The reflective journals handwritten by the participants were typed by the researcher in order to make data analysis easier. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Both the reflective journals and the interview transcripts were also translated

from Japanese to English as need arises by the researcher. Furthermore, with permission of the participants and their tutors, the participants' microteaching at the research site were filmed for video-viewing sessions during the fourth interviews, whereas their demonstration lessons during school-based training were not because it was difficult to receive permission from each school because of the risk of private information of students.

### 3.6.2 Units of analysis

From the initial stage of data collection, the data collected from each participant were systematically analysed with the use of the *constant comparative method* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Silverman, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using procedures for *content analysis* described by Patton (1990), the data were analysed to identify patterns and themes within each data unit first, and later, across the units.

According to Patton (2002), organizing data by cases can lead to "comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest" (Patton, 2002, p.447). In this study, singular cases were examined first and by comparing and contrasting distinctive and unique features of each case, more generalisations were formulated and synthesised (Bassegy, 1999). The unit of analysis in this study was each individual participant, an EFL student teacher learning to teach in an ITE programme in Japan, and each data unit included:

1. six semi-structured interviews,
2. the results of three card-sorting exercises,
3. journal entries over two terms (spring 2009 and autumn 2009),

4. teaching logs during the teaching practice<sup>57</sup> (spring 2010),
5. the transcripts of verbal reports on their own microteaching,
6. observation and field notes,
7. written texts produced by the participants as a part of the coursework.

The researcher began this process by reading through all the data within one data unit of analysis in order to develop initial coding categories. The researcher attempted to inductively discover themes and patterns and to be open to the data, not constricted by any particular existing frameworks (Patton, 2002). As the results were compared within one data unit generated by different data collection methods as well as across the cases, several categories were added and refined in an attempt to accommodate all of the data. This process of continually assessing and modifying the coding system was repeated several times until all the data could be accounted for. In the end, the result was a systematic and holistic classification of major categories. Each category was then given a code abbreviation.

### **3.7 Ethical issues**

The information sheet of the study was compiled, following the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association and handed to each participant at the beginning of the first interview. Participation in this study was based on informed consent, on a voluntary basis with the understanding that participants could withdraw at any time of this one-and-a-half-year-long study. Each participant was asked to carefully read an informed consent form and understand the content of the study before

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<sup>57</sup> Note that teaching logs during the teaching practice and written texts produced by the participants as a part of the course work were used only as supplementary data since they were a part of the coursework. See also section 3.5.8 in this chapter.

they decided to participate in the study. See Appendix A for a sample informed consent form. (Note that a Japanese version of this form was actually used instead.) From time to time, the researcher made sure to reconfirm the content of the documents with the participants. The researcher provided many opportunities to discuss the role of the researcher with the participants as well as obtained data during the data collection period.

Moreover, the researcher made efforts to keep participants' confidentiality. For example, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings and discussing specific participants. Permission was also obtained from the participants for all the quotes used in this study. Furthermore, during the data collection, the researcher noticed that some of the participants provided private information in their journal entries or in interviews. It was ensured that such information was kept confidential.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methodological design and considerations of this study. In the first section, some rationales underlying the choice of qualitative approach for this study were provided. In the next section, the research site, the participants, and the selection procedure were described. In addition, a role of a researcher in an *emic* approach was justified, allowing in-depth investigation due to the familiarity and trust between the participants and the researcher.

In the fourth section, five methods of data collection were discussed, including semi-structured interviews, focused journals, observation of student teachers' teaching, field notes and documents. The data were triangulated so

as to increase the validity and reliability of the study. Finally, the methods of data analysis were described. Using a coding technique, singular cases were analysed first; then cross-case analysis were conducted. The analysis of individual cases as well as across cases generated a thick description of the nature and process of EFL student teachers' professional development. The next two chapters, Chapters 4 and 5, present the qualitative results to the study.

## Chapter 4: Student Teachers' Perspectives on Theory and Practice in ELT in Japan

### 4.1 Introduction

As Chapter 2 of this thesis discussed, many researchers in the field of teacher education and development have used various terms and constructs in order to describe professional expertise that teachers should attain (Borg, 2003, 2006; Elbaz, 1981; Richards, 1996, 1998; Roberts, 1998; Shulman, 1987; Wallace, 1991). One such term, *teacher expertise*, is for example defined by Tsui (2003). She explains that the development of teacher expertise is an interactive process of “the theorization of practical knowledge through reflection and conscious deliberation and the transformation of ‘formal knowledge’ into practical knowledge” (p.261). This indicates that both *formal* and *practical* knowledge bases are essential constructs in becoming a good teacher and a student teacher must make *conscious* efforts in order to become professional. In this particular thesis, the necessary ‘formal knowledge’ offered to EFL student teachers mainly through ITE coursework is defined in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2) as consisting of seven dimensions often discussed in the language teacher education literature (Pachler et al., 2007; Roberts, 1998; L. Shulman, 1987): content knowledge (CK, hereafter) (i.e. knowledge of the target language system, knowledge on how the target language is learned, knowledge on strategies to learn the target language), general pedagogical knowledge (GPK, hereafter) (i.e. classroom management, behaviour management), curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK, hereafter) (i.e. knowledge that guides teachers’ actions in making methodological choices such as inductive or deductive



approaches, or when to use or not to use metalinguistic descriptions), knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of education ends and values. As was already discussed, the following two kinds of knowledge bases, content knowledge and PCK, are of particular interest in this study.

In the following sections, the two research questions from Chapter 1 that guided the case studies of the six participating student teachers will be revisited: How do student teachers perceive theory and practice in their training? How do student teachers' perceptions of theory and practice change over time? The participants' journals over the two fifteen-week academic semesters as well as the data from the six interviews conducted by the researcher with each participant, will be qualitatively analysed. The following research tools will be also used as supplementary information to support the issues found in the main data: the participants' teaching logs<sup>58</sup> from their teaching practice, interview data from three ITE tutors who taught the Methods courses, in addition to the researcher's field notes that were taken after observing the participants' teaching or interviewing them. Each individual case study will focus on how the participants perceived the development of their teacher expertise as well as their changes, and failures to change, in their professional development as a language teacher. The chapter will conclude that every student teacher's perspective greatly varied and shifted, and furthermore, what factors influenced or challenged the participants to

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<sup>58</sup> Student teachers in ITE in Japan are usually required to keep a teaching log provided by HEIs during the teaching practice in order to keep a record of and reflect on their teaching. Supervising teachers give written feedback, and upon completing the teaching practice, the logs are submitted to HEIs, which will be used for evaluation. See section 3.5.8 for more details about the teaching logs.

become professional varied as well.

#### **4.2 Profiles of six cases**

As Moore (2004) argues, teachers are situated within contexts; thus, concepts of being a good language teacher and the process of how novice teachers try to become one vary from time to time and from context to context. Even within one cultural context, teachers develop their expertise in different ways depending on their individual contexts. In this section, the data collected from the five participating student teachers, Chiyo, Aya, Noriko, Akira, and Mayuko, will be presented as unique individual cases (see Table 3 in Chapter 3 for the full description of the participants' background information). All were would-be junior-high-school English teachers at the beginning of the investigation period, April 2009. Furthermore, upon graduation from the university in March 2011, all went into teaching at public junior high schools; Chiyo, Akira, and Noriko held tenured positions, whereas Aya and Mayuko were hired with the fixed-term appointment. In this section, Mari's case is also carefully examined as a point of reference. She was a would-be high-school English teacher; therefore, in spite of a number of common features, her process of teacher socialisation slightly differed from the other five cases above. Mari became a part-time English instructor at a private high school after graduation.

The data of the remaining participant, Saori, will be also occasionally referred to throughout this chapter. Saori, a returned student from New Zealand, was not able to obtain an in-depth understanding of ELT at a junior-high-school level in an EFL context. Therefore, she ended up not fully

participating in this study. Upon completion of the ITE programme, she did not become a teacher. However, her comments gave the researcher many valuable insights, and thus, will be occasionally used for comparison.

The main purpose of this study is qualitative analysis of the participants' professional development in ITE. However, the quantity of the journal data (see Table 10 in Appendix C) is also important to more fully understand each participant's process of developing their expertise. As was explained previously, the participants' journals were coded by the researcher (see sections 3.5.8 and 3.6.2 in Chapter 3). In coding and frequency counting, a series of sentences which described or discussed the same theme, such as lesson planning, was counted as one. As a result, seven main themes emerged from the data: reasons for becoming a teacher, beliefs in ideal teaching, professional development, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, contextual issues, methodological issues, and others. The interview data were also coded using these seven major themes in order to further understand the participants' development of their expertise; however, the frequency of referring to a certain theme was not counted since the interviews were co-constructed between the researcher and each participant and it was difficult to judge whether the participants chose to speak about the themes or not.

Table 9 exemplifies some sub-categories included under each main theme. Using these themes and sub-categories, in the following sections, how the participants' perspectives toward professional development got shifted and developed will be discussed.

**Table 9: Examples of Each Theme**

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<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Why teacher?</b>	Reasons for becoming a teacher
<b>Beliefs in ideal teaching</b>	What is (are) a good teacher /a good lesson /good tasks and activities?
<b>Professional development</b>	Importance of theory, importance of practical experiences, effects of sharing ideas and giving feedback with others
<b>Lesson planning</b>	Needs analysis of students, materials analysis, making a lesson plan, importance of preparation
<b>Conducting a lesson</b>	Classroom language, giving clear instructions/explanations, interaction with learners, time management
<b>Contexts</b>	Current national curriculum, current educational systems, care practice experiences, holistic approach
<b>Methods</b>	Approaches (e.g. learner-centred pedagogy), methods, techniques
<b>Others</b>	Participants' proficiency levels, teaching as a career, non-verbal communication, evaluation of students, extra-curricular activities

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### **4.3 Student teachers' perspectives towards teaching the subject**

The three participants, Chiyo, Aya and Noriko, all showed some transformation in the constructs of their teacher expertise over time differently from the other three; in their cases, being a subject teacher gradually became more important and dominant. As already mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.4), in the process of teacher socialisation in Japan, particularly in a case of junior-high-school teachers, subject knowledge is usually considered less important since teaching at this level is considered more as a holistic undertaking (Shimahara, 2002) in comparison with high-school teachers. However, Chiyo, Aya and Noriko were different in that they tried to improve

their PCK and emphasised more the development their expertise as a subject teacher. This is supported by the frequency of their mention of “lesson planning” and “conducting a lesson” as opposed to the other four participating student teachers (see Table 10 in Appendix C).

#### 4.3.1 *Chiyo*

At first Chiyo was very keen to express her views in general terms about learning to become a classroom teacher rather than a subject specialist. This was mainly influenced by her experiences with former teachers. However, becoming an English language teacher gradually became more prominent in her reflections regarding expertise development. She was largely influenced by the courses taught in the ITE programme as well as some of the content courses offered in the department of English studies<sup>59</sup>.

The following example illustrates how some university courses made an impact on Chiyo’s teacher expertise as a subject teacher. In the second interview<sup>60</sup>, for example, she stated that the textbook analysis task in the Methods course was beneficial in that the analysis of vocabulary items and grammar elements used in one English textbook made her aware of the importance of utilising this kind of knowledge in lesson planning as a foreign language teacher. This suggests that Chiyo came to understand that the choices teachers make in lesson planning need to be underpinned by theoretical knowledge, particularly CK and PCK.

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<sup>59</sup> All the participants were undergraduate students in the department of English studies at the research site while they were also registered in the university-wide ITE programme. Therefore, they were required to take linguistics, applied linguistics, international relations, cross-cultural communication or literature courses in the department depending on their areas of concentration. In addition to the courses in the department, they took ITE courses by choice.

<sup>60</sup> See Table 6 in Chapter 3 for the timeline of the main study.

On the one hand, this initial transformation of Chiyo's perspectives is congruous with the idea that student teachers are influenced by ITE coursework to a certain degree, as some scholars and practitioners have argued (see section 2.2.4 in Chapter 2). For example, Richards, Ho, and Giblin (1996) posit that when trainees found that there were conflicts between their pre-training perspectives and practical experiences, they attempted to tackle the problems by applying what they acquired as theoretical knowledge, such as teaching skills and methodologies provided in the coursework at HEIs, although they interpreted the theoretical knowledge differently through the filter of their own assumptions. On the other hand, at the time of the second interview, Chiyo showed an awareness that she still lacked experience and confessed that she still was not confident in how to appropriately adapt theoretical knowledge that she learned in the university coursework to a particular teaching context. In other words, she was clearly aware of the gap between theory and practice then and was not sure how to internalise scientific concepts. This experience of Chiyo's was in line with the idea that professional education at HEIs cannot be the only influential factor on professional development of EFL student teachers. For instance, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) claim that experiential and reflective components are necessary in ITE, although in Chiyo's case, she reported in the second interview that she felt a need to first observe experienced teachers as one solution to narrow the discrepancy prior to more practical experiences at school.

The reasons why Chiyo needed to have a role model of experienced teachers before her own practical experiences can be explained as follows. In

the autumn semester of 2009, Chiyo volunteered to work as an assistant English teacher at a junior high school in order to gain informally some practical experiences which she had not had so far. Her reflections on this experience in her journal and interview data reveal that two factors were important in her professional development: emulating experienced teachers (a mediation activity as was discussed in section 2.3.6 in Chapter 2) and understanding actual classroom conditions (knowledge of educational contexts). Firstly, through observation, not only was Chiyo able to observe how teaching techniques that she learned in the ITE coursework were actually used by experienced teachers in a classroom but also she learned other teaching skills and tasks that were unknown to her then; one example is a bingo game by groups that created a competitive atmosphere among students and another is the use of Power Point<sup>61</sup> slides for enabling less-able learners to view what they were learning more visually (journal entry on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009). In the post-teaching-practice interview, Chiyo further explained this point by stating that she would first emulate these craft skills in her teaching in the same way as the teachers used them. As she had not established her own teaching style by then, she believed that actively looking for models and first emulating how model teachers taught would become a solid base of her expertise as a good language teacher. This implies that Chiyo believed in the importance of emulating various teachers in providing her with a springboard to explore and further develop her expertise. For example, she tried to emulate how the teacher that she worked with used the bingo game in one of the microteaching experiences in ITE courses. As she

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<sup>61</sup> Power Point is a software of making visual aids for presentations.

reflected later in her journal on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009, while she was satisfied with the way the activity went, some of the peers criticised her teaching, saying that having fun through a game may not lead to understanding of a language element. This incident of peer feedback, according to Chiyo, gave her a new insight that a task which meets the needs of one situation may not fit another teaching context properly.

Secondly, in the fourth interview, Chiyo remarked that she gained better understanding of actual classroom conditions through observation while working as an assistant English teacher, which she formerly lacked. For example, the awareness of less-able learners who were struggling to learn English was particularly new and significant to Chiyo. By observing how the teacher dealt with these students, she came to understand the importance of grasping students' proficiency levels, characteristics, and learning environments beyond the classroom. In this way, Chiyo's informal experiences as a volunteer teacher assistant prior to the teaching practice helped mediate her perspective changes from being a classroom teacher to more as a language teacher, particularly learning CK and PCK as well as knowledge of learners and educational contexts. Since the length of the teaching practice in Japan is quite short, as opposed to other ITE contexts such as the PGCE in the UK (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1 for more details about the length of school training), Chiyo's case suggests that additional informal teaching experiences where student teachers examine theories provided by HEIs in a pseudo environment could benefit them greatly.

The following example more specifically illustrates how observing experienced teachers influenced Chiyo's teaching. Earlier in the study, Chiyo



stated that she believed in learner-centred education and CLT in ELT (third interview/journal entry on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2009) based on formal knowledge she acquired in the coursework at the HEI. She commented that in this approach learners could experience a stronger sense of achievement and it would lead to students' increased intrinsic motivation of learning a foreign language. During the card sorting task in the third interview prior to the volunteer teaching experiences, she explained why she chose learner-centeredness as the second most important element in becoming a good English language teacher as follows<sup>62</sup>:

I reckon that students learn English best when they are centred in a classroom, not as passive learners, and think and work on a task together. I chose learner-centeredness as the second most important element since students' motivation is highly valued in such a teaching approach. [Third interview]

However, following her informal experiences of observing and assisting the junior-high-school English teachers, Chiyo realised that even a student-centred classroom should be controlled to some extent by a teacher, especially at a junior-high-school level. In an English class at a public junior high school in Japan, students' proficiency levels are greatly mixed and Chiyo found that there were quite a few students with low academic abilities who found working on language tasks on their own was challenging. This slightly differed from what Chiyo previously learned about learner-centeredness in the university coursework. The following quote is taken from the fourth interview

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<sup>62</sup> The interview data and the journal entries originally produced in Japanese were translated into English by the author. The author checked the translated version with each participant for its accuracy. Since subjects and objects of verbs are often unsaid in Japanese when they can be clearly interpreted from contexts, when necessary, the author added them in brackets. Also ellipsis (...) in transcripts indicates that text has been omitted because of relevance and space.

in which Chiyo explained during the card sorting task why learner-centeredness was ranked lower than before:

I previously thought that it is ideal to create a lesson together with students who actively express their ideas. Teachers shouldn't be the centre of a classroom, you know. But, as I observed experienced teachers and as I made lesson plans [in the Methods course]<sup>63</sup>, I came to understand that [in order to make a student-centred approach successful] students need to possess a certain level of knowledge [of the English language] first and a teacher also needs to instruct or make suggestions to a certain degree; otherwise, it is as if a teacher threw the weight of responsibility only on students....For example, if I were a junior-high-school student and my English teacher let us work totally on our own, we would probably get lost. If a teacher first teaches [a grammatical structure] in a teacher-centred manner, and then, tells students to work on their own and use the target structure....For example, if a teacher says, "Let's make a similar sentence by yourselves [using the grammar structure we learned] like this example," and then, students can have some confidence in doing so since they already made the sentence together with the teacher. They can feel more comfortable to work on their own. [Fourth interview]

This remark of Chiyo's indicates her growing understanding that a good language teacher needs to adjust and alter their teaching approaches by first understanding actual students' proficiency levels and teaching contexts, a part of knowledge of learners and educational contexts.

What is far more interesting was that Chiyo's perspectives on learner-centeredness showed another shift back more towards her previous perspective due to the teaching-practice experiences. In the post-teaching-practice interview, Chiyo noted again that she found it most significant to teach English in a student-centred approach. At this stage, she understood that in this approach students could collaborate with peers, learn

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<sup>63</sup> The extra information in some of the brackets in quotes was also obtained directly from each participant during the later interviews.

from each other, and enjoy freedom to practise using the English language, which she believed would lead to gradually fostering their communicative competence and individual learner autonomy:

During a group activity [that I did during the teaching practice], of course there were some students who were unwilling to participate in a language task, but most of the students actively participated in the task by sharing roles. I reckoned that both lower-proficiency-level and higher-proficiency-level students were able to work together. ...During the teaching practice, I found many students unable to think and focus on the given task individually. In that case, I found it more effective to provide a group activity through which they were able to think together and learn from each other. When they work individually, they are afraid of making a mistake in front of a class, but when they create an answer and make a mistake as a group, it seems less stressful [for them]. With regard to this point, it would be great if students can first nurture the ability to learn through group work and eventually can think independently. [Final interview]

Here in the quote above, Chiyo explained her growing awareness of the concept without referring to teacher's control over students unlike before. Through teaching practice at a junior high school, Chiyo came to notice that a teacher needed to see language learners' growth as a longer-term process. Teaching in a learner-centred approach cannot be achieved in a single lesson. Becoming autonomous language learners is a long process and a learner-centered classroom helps develop it. The modulating perspective shifting of Chiyo's suggests that Chiyo was trying to continuously mitigate the discrepancy between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences; theories and concepts that a student teacher first internalises in the ITE coursework are externalised by observing and emulating experienced teachers, sharing ideas with them, and actually practising the ideas, and it is a continuous process of positioning themselves professionally, even in

pre-service experiences.

This resonates with what many scholars have argued with reference to the dialogical nature of the process of professional development (Korthagen et al., 2001; Tsui, 2003). It also indicates that student teachers try to create meaning through their interactions with others and with their environments, not an individual process (see section 2.1 in Chapter 2 that criticises the individual nature of professional development models); as a sociocultural theory suggests (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011), social interactions mediate student teachers' learning greatly. In Chiyo's case, by understanding the needs of a specific teaching context and the students through observation, emulation as well as practice, she tried to adapt, refine and reframe the concept of learner-centeredness that she formerly acquired in the coursework at the HEI.

What is notable in Chiyo's case is that, in order to adapt and refine abstract concepts, it was essential for Chiyo to interact with others in her teaching context, and then, to produce and accumulate improvements, *kaizen*<sup>64</sup> in her words, better fitting for the actual teaching contexts, the term which Mari also frequently used in her reflection. *Kaizen*, according to Chiyo in the post-teaching-practice interview, was possible as a result of first emulating experienced teachers' craft skills in her own teaching. This suggests that the teacher expertise model proposed by Tsui (2003) does not fully capture some of the important characteristics of novice English teachers in Japan. While Tsui strongly emphasises that reflection and deliberation on

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<sup>64</sup> *Kaizen* is a Japanese word that is now also used in English, meaning 'making continuous improvements', particularly in the management practices. A famous example of a Japanese company that advocates *kaizen* is Toyota Motor Corporation.

teaching actions are the elements that link theory to practice of teacher expertise, the findings of the study suggest that some novice teachers ought to have a model first to emulate and experiment with before they can individually problematise their own teaching behaviours. The importance of emulation, and as a result, making improvements in student teachers' professional development will be further elaborated in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.1).

In this section, Chiyo's perspective shifting from a classroom teacher to a subject teacher was discussed. Based on the knowledge bases provided by the coursework at the HEI, such as CK and PCK, Chiyo attempted to link theory and practice. However, due to curriculum constraints which did not provide formal practical training until toward the end of ITE, she first actively sought informal practical experiences where she utilised two mediational activities of observation and emulation and gained better understanding of theories and actual teaching contexts. These informal practical experiences, particularly observation and emulation, helped her narrow the gap between formal and practical knowledge in school-based training, transform scientific concepts such as a learner-centred approach into more generalisable understanding as a subject teacher, and make improvements in her teaching.

#### *4.3.2 Aya*

Aya was another participant whose perspectives changed from that of a language learner to a language teacher. Mainly influenced by peer learning and experimentation on her own, one of the salient characteristics that Aya showed in her professional development was a shift in perspectives regarding

her personal theory of a good English lesson. As can be seen in Table 10 in Appendix C, Aya frequently mentioned planning and conducting a lesson in her journal especially in the 2009 autumn semester due to her microteaching experiences in ITE.

Regarding the concept of a good English lesson, learning from negative experiences of her student days in an English classroom, Aya stated in the third interview that she considered a “fun” class far more important than a class conducted in a grammar-translation method where students passively listen to what teachers say, typical of many secondary-school classrooms in Japan (see section 2.2.3 in Chapter 2 on the discussion on the use of the grammar translation method in English language teaching). Being asked to make a further comment on this point during the interview, she defined a “fun” class as a learner-centred class in which a teacher interacts with students by asking and responding to questions, not as accurately interpreted as Chiyo.

Aya’s perspective on a learner-centred approach, however, was largely modified due to microteaching and peer learning. For example, after microteaching in an ITE course at the HEI, Aya reflected in her journal on what could make her teaching more effective rather than what would make her class fun (journal entry on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009). The reflection was resulted from her peers’ questions and advice on the activities that she was planning to use in her microteaching. In the lesson plan that she created during the Methods course, she included some of the language activities that she learned in the coursework. However, her peers commented on her lesson plan saying that the purposes of using the particular activities were not clear, particularly which language skills were aimed at to develop through the

activities. Aya explained that her peers' comments made her notice more as a language teacher that a learner-centred class would be successful if a teacher could stress both the development of individual students' language skills and the interaction among students.

What was unique about Aya's professional development was the degree that she valued emulation. As opposed to Chiyo, Noriko, and Mari who believed that emulation was an important meditational activity for their professional development, Aya found it less valuable to have a model of an experienced teacher to emulate even at the initial stage of her development. Instead of emulating experienced teachers' craft knowledge as it was, Aya often reported that she tried to be creative and devise novel techniques based on what she acquired in the ITE coursework, in reference books, as well as her own previous teaching experiences; she was more willing to self-direct her learning and teaching, which is in fact an essential quality of teacher autonomy (Smith & Erdoğan, 2008). When Aya found some discrepancies between her perspectives and theoretical knowledge on ELT and the actual conditions of a classroom in school-based training, she reported she was willing to observe experienced teachers or peers to improve her teaching; however, they were to be used as a reference, not as a target of emulation, according to Aya (journal entry on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009). In contrast to Chiyo, Aya believed that to emulate how others teach was not a solution; what she thought more significant was to be inventive and devise her own methods when faced with a challenge in a classroom. Observing others worked as a way of making Aya recognise her own teaching patterns, which, she confessed, also made her feel that she needed to break them out and reach

beyond her current limits as a language teacher.

In order to be inventive, however, Aya was clearly aware that she needed to expand and appropriate her knowledge base such as CK and PCK (Shimahara, 1998; L. Shulman, 1987) in her practices. In other words, she valued experimenting with her personal theory and craft directly in practice, as Tsui (2003) argues that expertise is characterised as “engagement in exploration and experimentation, in problematizing the unproblematic, and responding to challenges” (pp. 277-8). For instance, Aya commented on her teaching in the teaching log as follows:

It is truly a challenge to teach what I have already acquired [as theoretical knowledge] to students who know nothing; I am never satisfied with how I teach, no matter how many times I do it. [Log entry, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010]

This entry was written after Aya used a language game in a class she taught, by which students had to work in a group and compete with each other in order to accomplish the task, and one of the less-able learners with lower motivation later commented in self-evaluation, to her surprise, that he was able to enjoy the class owing to the game on that particular day. For Aya, making lower-level students motivated to learn was a major challenge, and this entry shows that Aya learned by way of students’ direct reaction toward her own teaching. Through experimentation and reflection, Aya came to notice that a language teacher needs to have a variety of ideas and teaching techniques that can satisfy students with various levels and needs. The following teaching-practice teaching log on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010 also supports this belief of Aya’s: “Although I thought I understood what I had learned in the ITE



programme at the HEI, I realised that I needed more skills and abilities to actually act and teach effectively.” Aya often described this point of having many teaching competences by using a metaphor of “having plenty of drawers”<sup>65</sup> (for example, journal entry on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009). In order to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, Aya stated that language teachers need to be open to new ideas and techniques that they should store in “drawers” and to experiment with them in order to suit the needs and interests of the particular group of students, rather than emulating others’ teaching.

As Shulman (1987) rightly argues, “sound reasoning requires both a process of thinking about what they are doing and an adequate base of facts, principles, and experiences from which to reason” (p.13). Aya was not fully ready to use her knowledge base to provide the grounds for her actions; yet, her case illustrates that she was eager to struggle with transformation of her knowledge base in order to suit particular teaching contexts and become a better language teacher. Unlike Chiyo, Aya’s case is quite similar to Tsui’s model of professional development of more experienced teachers in that she attempted to link practice to theory by self-directing actions and experiments and reflecting on them without first emulating others’ teaching. The differences between Chiyo’s and Aya’s professional development will be further discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.1).

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<sup>65</sup> Aya often used the expression *hikidashi-o-motsu* in Japanese to describe a good language teacher with wide knowledge. *Hikidashi* literally means ‘drawers’ in English, whereas a verb *motsu* means ‘to have’ and a particle *o* is added right after an object of a verb and before the verb.

### 4.3.3 Noriko

Noriko was different from the other participants, even from Chiyo and Aya above, in that she had experienced a longer teaching practice of teaching English at a primary school<sup>66</sup> prior to joining the ITE programme at the research site. Therefore, even at the very beginning of the investigation period, Noriko was more aware of the importance of being a subject teacher, rather than a classroom teacher. Table 10 in Appendix C shows that Noriko more frequently mentioned planning and conducting a good English lesson in both spring and autumn semesters in her journal in comparison with the other participants in the study.

Her views on a language teacher underwent a few stages of development during the investigation. Originally influenced by her previous teaching practice experiences at a primary school, Noriko argued in the first interview that, as a language teacher, she found it important to teach students that learning English was fun and useable, similar to Aya, although in Noriko's case, it reflected her understanding of the goals of ELT laid down in the national curriculum guidelines for primary education. The goals of ELT in primary education<sup>67</sup> are currently threefold: (1) to form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities while familiarising them with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages, (2) to develop the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, and (3) to foster a positive attitude towards communication (MEXT, 2010b). As these goals show,

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<sup>66</sup> In the teacher training programme Noriko previously attended, she learned to teach as an English teacher for younger learners at private schools and institutions, not as a certificated primary-school teacher.

<sup>67</sup> In primary education in Japan, the revised curriculum was fully implemented in the 2011 school year, in which English activities were made compulsory for fifth and sixth graders. They currently learn English for thirty-five class hours per year.

the main purpose of ELT at a primary-education level is not mastering the English language, but rather, providing learners with an environment where they become familiar with the language and its culture. However, Noriko was aiming to become a lower-secondary-school teacher, and the goals at the lower-secondary-school level differed from those in primary education, where the focus is more on the development of “basic communication abilities” of the English language (MEXT, 2010c). This implies that Noriko still lacked the knowledge base of educational ends and values, the seventh dimension of Shulman’s (1987) teacher knowledge mentioned in the beginning of this chapter (also see section 2.2.2 in Chapter 2).

After joining the ITE programme at the HEI, Noriko came to value abstract theory that she learned in the university coursework more, particularly in terms of CK and PCK. For example, in the 2009 spring semester, Noriko frequently jotted down her thoughts in the journal on what she learned in the Methods course or one of the content courses on applied linguistics in the department of English studies such as an age factor in foreign language acquisition, theories on testing, and teaching grammar.

However, later on in the same semester, there was growing evidence that her informal practical teaching experiences at *kyoku*<sup>68</sup> had a crucial impact in shifting her views of a language teacher. For example, Noriko discussed in her journal (for example, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009) and in the second interview that an English language teacher should encourage a sense of mastery of the English language among learners, not just teaching the fun of learning. At

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<sup>68</sup> *Jyuku* is a Japanese word for a cram school or a preparatory school which provides additional after-school instruction to improve the probability of students getting into secondary schools and universities. Many student teachers in Japan teach part-time at *jyuku* in order to informally gain practical work experiences informally.

*kyoku* Noriko was teaching some junior-high-school students who had already learned English to some degree in primary education. As the goals of ELT in primary education above indicate, they previously learned English through fun and experiential activities which they enjoyed very much, whilst in junior high school, they were to learn the system of the English language and how the language is used, which they found quite challenging. Noriko's experience at *kyoku* made her aware that she had to teach the English language utilising CK and PCK, differently from ELT in primary education. This view was further reinforced by her experiences of microteaching and peers' feedback in the Methods course. By the fourth interview, she came to believe that a good language teacher needs not only to enhance learners' English language skills but also to make them retain what they learned through in-class tasks and assignments beyond the classroom. Such continuous transformation of Noriko's perspective on a language teacher indicates that she was very much informed by informal practical teaching experiences and peer learning in ITE in addition to theoretical intervention in the university coursework.

As was noted above, one of the major factors which made a major impact on Noriko's learning-to-teach process were the participants in the context of her professional community; namely, her fellow students in the ITE programme and experienced teachers during the teaching practice at a primary school. As was discussed earlier in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3), many teacher educators advocate peers as an important mediational tool in the process of learning to teach. For example, Johnson (2009) argues that trainees are temporarily affected by peers who help trainees verbalise and externalise their thinking and co-construct the meaning in learning to teach. In

Noriko's case, the role of peers was particularly crucial in her professional development. Noriko viewed them as the ones who could give her honest criticism without feeling intimidated. Sharing comments and ideas with peers for a better language lesson helped her reframe the theoretical knowledge she acquired in university courses and broadened her outlook on ELT. Additionally, Noriko often sought a model for emulation in her microteaching, and through observation and emulation, she noted that she learned teaching skills and knowledge that she was not aware of before, and became more successfully able to fill in the discrepancy between what she had already known as abstract theory and what she had never practically experienced before (for example, second and fifth interviews, as well as teaching log on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010). See Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2) for more discussion on the impact of peer learning.

Seeking a model for emulation, however, sometimes caused Noriko a problem; without a model to begin with, it was challenging for Noriko to create a lesson from scratch on her own. For example, during the teaching practice at a junior high school, when Noriko's supervising teacher asked her to teach a reading passage, she faced difficulties creating an effective lesson. Teaching reading skills is an important element in PCK, usually taught in one of the ITE courses at the HEI, and Noriko had some theoretical understanding of how to teach reading effectively. However, as she explained in the final interview, the difficulty was mainly due to a lack of an opportunity to observe how experienced teachers would typically teach a reading element in a textbook, as opposed to how they taught grammatical elements, which she observed well enough, and thus, was able to emulate. This implies that too

much dependence on emulation may hinder some student teachers from becoming professionally independent. On the one hand, emulation is an effective meditational tool, as has been discussed in this section, which can work as a springboard for novice teachers without confidence and enough teaching experiences. On the other hand, Noriko's case indicates that student teachers also need to eventually learn how to move away from emulation in internalising theory and self-directing their learning and teaching.

During the post-teaching-practice interview, Noriko maintained that she learned greatly from practical experiences as well. For instance, what struck Noriko most was the fact that students' scholastic abilities and learning environments were greatly mixed, currently typical in a public junior high school in Japan. As a result, she found it important to grasp a good view of a teaching context prior to lesson planning and teaching, and then to devise ways by which no students would be left behind. In other words, at the final stage of her ITE experiences, Noriko found knowledge on learners and knowledge of educational contexts (Shulman, 1987) beneficial in reshaping and reframing her teacher expertise.

Noriko and Aya both became aware of the importance of being flexible about changing lesson plans depending on the needs and interests of a particular group of students during the teaching practice. In Noriko's case, based on her previous teaching experiences as well as a knowledge base she built in the university coursework, she was originally keen to invest time and efforts in planning a lesson: for instance, as she noted in the fourth interview, preparing for clear instructions and in-class tasks for newly-introduced grammatical points. However, school-based training made her more certain

about the importance of flexibility in changing plans as the lesson had to proceed so as not to leave any student behind. In order to be successful in doing so, Noriko discussed in the final interview that it was essential to grasp each student's conditions including both cognitive and affective factors, which Chiyo also came to understand during the teaching practice. Noriko further illustrated this point by giving an example of when she conducted a lesson based on the same lesson plan to two different classes; things went rather smoothly in one of the classes, while it did not in the other. This resulted from the fact, Noriko stated, that each class consisted of students with various contexts and competences. In order to tackle this issue, Noriko had to change her lesson plans by, for instance, lowering the levels of her explanations by using more non-verbal hints and adding extra visual aids so that all the students could follow her explanations and would not feel discouraged to learn the target language. This suggests that EFL student teachers at the final stage of their ITE experiences learn greatly from more practical teaching experiences, as the vast research literature in teacher education has already discussed, where they not only experiment with their personal theory and craft, but also learn through the understanding of actual conditions of classrooms and learners, although at earlier stages, other interventions like theory and members in their learning community contribute more to their professional development.

As the findings of the study so far suggest, for some novice teachers in ELT like Noriko, being on their own without a model to emulate could become a major challenge, particularly with a language skill which they have never taught before and with a large class with mixed levels of abilities and

motivation. The three cases of Chiyo, Aya and Noriko suggest that to seek a model and/or to work with peers are significant interventions for novice teachers in the earlier stages of expertise development. As Chiyo argued, they would help them reshape their theoretical knowledge base and make it more solid as a language teacher, while they should also have ample practical experiences at the later stages to learn actual teaching contexts and experiment with their own ideas, like Aya, so that they eventually can learn to tackle new situations and tasks without help from others, being free from control by others.

#### **4.4 Student teachers' perspectives towards a holistic approach**

As compared to Chiyo, Aya and Noriko, who developed more advanced understanding of being a language teacher through pre-service experiences, Akira and Mayuko found themselves leaning more towards being a classroom teacher. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.4), teaching is often considered as a holistic undertaking. This is particularly true of primary school teachers in Japan; junior high school teachers in Japan are also responsible for inclusive and whole-person education, deeply situated in the teaching culture in Japan (Shimahara, 2002). For example, extra-curricular club activities, student guidance, and moral education are important areas of holistic teaching to understand for junior-high-school student teachers in Japan. Furthermore, as Ito (2011) discusses, there is a classroom-homeroom teacher system in elementary and junior high schools in Japan, in which students study in the same classroom<sup>69</sup>, which is called a “homeroom”, and

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<sup>69</sup> Students typically move to different rooms for subjects such as art, music, physical education, and other lab-related activities.



occupy the assigned seats all day long, and the homeroom teacher is responsible for “guiding students in their class in areas of academic, personal-social, and career development” (Ito, 2011, p. 43). The following cases of Akira and Mayuko will describe how some student teachers valued general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) (Shulman, 1987; Roberts, 1998) and struggled to become a good *homeroom* teacher despite the fact that they were EFL student teachers, in addition to what hindered their development as subject teachers.

#### 4.4.1 Akira

The concept of teaching as a holistic undertaking was deeply reflected in Akira’s perspectives from the very beginning of the investigation period and he did not make large changes regarding this point over time, but rather strengthened it due to the following three factors: ITE coursework, other members of the learning community he encountered, and practical experiences. He explained in the first interview that one of the chief reasons for becoming a junior-high-school teacher was to serve as a coach of a basketball club, rather than becoming a subject teacher. In fact, this is not uncommon for student teachers in Japan to state as the reason for becoming a teacher, very often based on their broader interest in social aspects of being a teacher than in the subject as a discipline. Akira was also greatly inspired by one of the ITE lecturers at the HEI who taught courses on the principles of education. Under his influence, Akira found that the ITE coursework was not sufficient and joined the circle of in-service teachers who regularly gathered outside school in order to discuss issues on student guidance and learn from

local input. He then started his own circle among student teachers at the HEI, through which he and his peers discussed various educational issues in Japan such as declining academic abilities and the problem of bullying, reflections of which he sometimes jotted down in the journal for this study.

Therefore, Akira's journal entries were dominantly on holistic teaching rather than subject pedagogy<sup>70</sup>, which provided a clear view of his perspective on the social aspects of being a teacher. For example, after taking an ITE class on general education at the HEI, he reflected on the course content and stressed the importance of holistic teaching in his journal in late October, 2009, saying that in every aspect of students' school life it was essential for teachers to clearly understand students' developmental stages in guiding them. He further stated that the better understanding of children's development and the underpinnings of learning theory were extremely important for him as a student teacher. This shows that, at earlier stages of professional development, learning a conceptual framework in general pedagogy was of considerable significance for Akira in terms of holistic teaching, but not subject teaching.

Akira's stance that practical experiences were marginal for his professional development changed over time, however. In the final interview after the three-week teaching practice, when asked about the most valuable element in his pre-service experiences, Akira responded, "the teaching practice," without hesitation. During the teaching practice, he found it difficult to put his theoretical understanding of student guidance into practice. Akira, for example, originally did not want to show his anger when disciplining his

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<sup>70</sup> As Table 10 in Appendix C shows, Akira discussed planning and conducting a lesson in his journal far less than the other participants.

students, since he learned in the ITE coursework that to suppress students by raising his voice and showing a dominant and authoritative character was not effective in student guidance. However, his supervising teacher was not satisfied with the way Akira disciplined his students during the English class because the level of his anger was too low and thus she thought it ineffective. What Akira found through observing experienced teachers at the teaching-practice school was that many of them were likely to get angry with and talk over the top of the students, instead of properly guiding them depending on the situation as he had learned in the coursework at the HEI. Through practical experiences during the teaching practice, Akira became aware of the discrepancy between theory and practice in holistic teaching, particularly actual conditions of junior high school classrooms where student guidance was not performed as he had expected.

During the post-teaching-practice interview, Akira stated that he still believed in the importance of holistic teaching although he also mentioned that he valued the importance of trying out and internalising theories and scientific concepts in practices and evaluating his own teaching more than before. He elaborated on this point as follows:

*Akira:* The core principles [regarding holistic teaching] remain unchanged [through the ITE experiences], but, you know, as I experienced the teaching practice, I became sort of greedier. I mean, [prior to the teaching practice] my understanding about teaching was all in my brain or from reading books, but I went to the teaching-practice school and experienced teaching there, and the questions that I had [in my brain] were actually a little resolved.

*Researcher:* What were your questions like?

*Akira:* For example, what is an actual classroom like, how does a teacher teach, can I teach it in this way or not, and so on. These questions were little by little

clarified during the teaching practice by understanding actual teaching contexts. Furthermore, I tried out the theories that I had learned in my teaching, and received various feedbacks, and I was able to evaluate myself [as a teacher]. So now I feel that I want to teach this way or that way [depending on needs and situations]; that's why I said I became greedier. [Final interview]

What this quote suggests identifies with what Tsui (2003) argues, that language teachers develop their expertise through dialogical interaction between theory and practice by way of reflections, although in Akira's case, it was more about holistic teaching.

Although Akira did not make major changes in his perspective on holistic teaching, he did show a shift in reframing some constructs in ELT. One major concept was learner-centeredness and the other, ability grouping. First of all, in learner-centred pedagogy, learners are placed at the centre so that they are the ones who think and use the target language and take control of their own learning, eventually leading to learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Nunan, 1988). Akira explained in the first interview that he first took passive learning for granted. The approach was mostly encouraged in his own experiences as a secondary-school student, typically found in a grammar-translation method. However, through taking the advanced-level English courses at the HEI, Akira became convinced that it was important for him as a language learner himself to become able to express his ideas in the target language. As was previously explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), since most EFL student teachers in Japan are not native speakers of the English language, they do not stop being a language learner even after the teacher socialisation process begins. Akira also learned the effectiveness of the use of group work in a foreign language

classroom in one of the content classes at the HEI<sup>71</sup> that he attended as a student; thus, he came to believe that group work was one of the essential teaching methods in ELT which would lead to a more communicative and student-centred classroom. Akira stated in the second interview that in such a classroom, learners could practise expressing their voices in the target language.

The following journal entry, however, indicates that perspective shifting on the learner-centred approach did not result in successful performance of ideal teaching behaviours in microteaching at HEI:

I made a lesson plan for microteaching in an Advance Guidance course. I'm thinking about using many activities and group work in my lesson, but couldn't think of the right ones. I think I should study more about various kinds of activities and group work and when and which ones are possible and effective.

[Journal entry, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009]

The quote above indicates that Akira had a good understanding of the learner-centred approach, whereas he had not internalised it sufficiently yet to effectively adjust his teaching performance. According to the researcher's field notes while observing his microteaching in the autumn semester in 2009, Akira tended to monologise by providing lengthy explanations without eliciting responses from the students. He also provided only one short pair-work activity within a fifty-minute lesson. In the fourth interview, he attributed the failure to a lack of former experiences as a student, without which it was a

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<sup>71</sup> According to Akira, these classes were not ITE courses; the former ones were English-for-academic-purposes courses while the latter ones were content-based courses on foreign language education. Both were the courses offered in the department of English studies where this research study was conducted.

challenge for him to incorporate various theoretical elements that he acquired at the HEI, including PCK, into his teaching<sup>72</sup>. As he noted in the fourth interview, “[i]t was difficult to theorise what I have never experienced.” He further stated that observation of others’ teaching and more practical experiences would lead to developing his PCK, “*hikidashi*”<sup>73</sup> of ideas and activities in his words, which would allow him to adapt to sudden changes in circumstances.

In the fourth interview he elaborated that this incident above caused him to shift his perspectives on a learner-centred approach. He said that in a classroom where learners were encouraged to freely express their ideas, a teacher’s main role should be to facilitate learning and give assistance as the need arose, rather than the one who encourages passive learning and regulates and dominates talk. This perspective change implies that the student teachers’ process of learning to teach is complex in that they internalise their own current experiences as a language learner, their experiences as former students, their experiences as becoming teachers, in addition to their theoretical knowledge base that they acquire at HEIs.

In the fifth interview right before the teaching practice, Akira postulated that during the teaching practice he wanted to teach English using a learner-centred approach without dominating the classroom communication. Through the teaching practice, however, Akira realised that his ideal approach did not always function well. What he experienced was the realities of

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<sup>72</sup> See also the very first quote by Akira at the beginning of Chapter 1.

<sup>73</sup> The term was also used by Aya. See footnote 65 in this chapter for the meaning of *hikidashi* in Japanese.

*gakkyu-hokai*<sup>74</sup> and less-able learners. In the final interview, Akira tried to analyse and make sense of the difficulties of implementing a learner-centred approach in his class. What was first needed, according to Akira, was to discipline his students rather than to encourage them to exchange their ideas in English. Using the knowledge base of PCK he acquired at the HEI, he prepared a lesson plan with some language activities where his students could use English and share some information; however, what Akira found out was that the students threw themselves into the fun part of the activities, and as a result, did not learn English much through engaging in the activities. The researcher's field notes on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2010 after observing his *kenkyu jugyo* called a demonstration lesson<sup>75</sup> at the practice-teaching school indicating that, although Akira was observed to have made a great effort to involve his students, using pair work and showing visual aids, he seemed to have difficulty in attracting all the students' attention, and thus could not have them play active roles in their own learning. Akira later agreed that this incident<sup>76</sup> influenced him greatly in building a firmer belief in being a holistic teacher before being a good English teacher.

This incident also had a significant impact on Akira's perspective shifting on ability grouping in a foreign language classroom. Ability grouping,

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<sup>74</sup> *Gakkyu-hokai* is the expression which became widely used in the late 1990s in Japan. It means breakdown in classroom discipline in primary and lower-secondary school classrooms.

<sup>75</sup> A student teacher usually provides a demonstration lesson toward the end of the teaching practice which is observed by a head teacher, a supervising teacher and other teachers across disciplines as well as other student teachers who are doing their teaching practice at the same time in order to demonstrate his teaching and receive feedback for future improvements.

<sup>76</sup> The similar classroom situation with behaviour problems was observed in Saori's case, too. In her case, without much support by her supervising teacher, it caused Saori to lose her interests in further pursuing her career as an EFL secondary-school teacher.

*shujukudo-betsu-shido* in Japanese, is also called “differentiation”<sup>77</sup>, the method using some forms of grouping such as banding and setting (Ireson & Hallam, 1999). In ability grouping, students are placed in classrooms or small groups according to their abilities in order to reduce frustration and increase students’ academic motivation (Danzi et al., 2008), not only in Japan but widely used in the US and the UK as well. Sato (2004) states that ability grouping in primary and junior high schools in Japan spread rapidly in the early 2000s after the term was first introduced by MEXT in 2001, in response to the first strategy of the Rainbow Plan (see section 1.3.1), which was to improve students’ basic scholastic ability through easy-to-understand classes. The main purpose of this instruction is that individual students acquire the basic knowledge and skills mentioned in the course of study, and it is usually conducted for maths, Japanese and English classes in Japan.

Heavily influenced by the ITE lecturer, as previously noted, Akira was originally opposed to proficiency-dependent teaching. In the second interview, by quoting what the lecturer said in class, Akira claimed that “ability grouping will not lead to *ningen-keisei*”<sup>78</sup>. Students need to meet various perspectives and values in a mixed-level classroom in order to grow.” This statement shows what Akira understood as the essence of the inclusive approach to teaching, stressing the importance of growing up together holistically in a mixed-ability classroom, rather than prioritising the acquisition of the target

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<sup>77</sup> The National Curriculum Council defines *differentiation* as “the process by which curriculum objectives, teaching methods, assessment methods, resources and learning activities are planned to cater for the needs of individual pupils.” This document is available at:

[http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/SCC\\_1\\_Link\\_12\\_Differentiation\\_manual.pdf](http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/SCC_1_Link_12_Differentiation_manual.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> *Ningen* is a noun in Japanese which literally means ‘human beings’ and *keisei-suru* is a verb which means ‘to build or form something’. Thus, *ningen-keisei* is equivalent to ‘character formation’ in English.



language.

Akira's experience as a volunteer teacher assistant at an evening high school also reconfirmed his belief in the drawback of ability grouping. At this school, he assisted an English teacher in a classroom where the students' English language proficiency levels were quite low and the students not motivated to learn English at all. Akira noted in his journal that in such a case of the lowest-proficiency-level group, it was a challenge to teach even though the students were at a similar proficiency level, which could usually make it easier for a language teacher to focus on one proficiency level (5<sup>th</sup> October 2009). Akira's concern with ability grouping resonates with previous research studies in other EFL settings in East Asia. For example, Kim (2012) posits that in South Korea, although proficiency-dependent teaching policy has been implemented by the government, many junior-high-school teachers and students raised their concerns about students' emotional problems and mixed attitudes towards ability grouping.

On the other hand, partially because of Akira's part-time teaching experiences at *kyoku* where he met some more low-level learners, he started to question in his reflections teaching a large class<sup>79</sup> with mixed proficiency levels (for example, journal entry on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009). This was in fact a common concern typically observed among many participants in this study – Chiyo, Aya, and Noriko. Wavering between these two approaches of ability-grouping and mixed-ability grouping, Akira finally reported in his teaching log during the teaching practice that he experimented with various

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<sup>79</sup> One homeroom class typically contains 35 to 40 students at a public secondary school in Japan. For the description of a typical 'homeroom' class, also see Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3).

methods including group tasks and communicative activities in his teaching to examine what worked best in a large class. With more than a few less-able learners among forty students in his classroom, Akira confessed during the final interview that he did not come to any conclusions on whether it was more effective to place them together or divide them into ability groups according to their English proficiency levels. This means that he was not able to conduct his classroom practice with the theoretical underpinning he possessed then. He was not satisfied with how he taught since he could not effectively encourage higher-level students to learn English, while he had to pay more attention to less-able learners and less motivated students. What he found the most important through this practical experience, according to Akira, was the disciplining role of the teacher in order to make classroom teaching more effective.

Why did Akira not make major changes in his perspective of being a holistic teacher and remained less focused on subject teaching? His supervising teacher's attitude is certainly another cause of this dilemma, in addition to the existence of less-able learners. During the final interview, Akira complained that his supervising teacher at the teaching-practice school was not creative and passionate about ELT. All she did was follow the teacher's manual and teaching routines that she had established over time. Akira described her teaching as *tantan-to-shiteiru*, literally meaning being emotionally intact and distant. This implies that the supervising teacher followed regular teaching routines but did not try to devise any creative or ingenious ways of communicating effectively as best accommodated her students' needs and interests. This resulted partially from the fact that the role

of supervising teachers during the teaching practice is not clearly defined in ITE in Japan, as was previously discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3), and it certainly does not specify the role of a mentor<sup>80</sup> (Tomlinson, 1995). As the following quote indicates, Akira was in fact first trying to actively seek a role model during the teaching practice who could effectively teach English using group tasks, since he himself had never experienced group-work tasks in ELT as a junior-high-school student, but soon gave up looking for an appropriate model to observe and learn from:

When I was a student, teachers taught English only based on textbooks, so I've never experienced group-work activities in English classes until I entered this university. So, the activities I used in my teaching were my original ones. ...I heard that the teacher who taught second graders there taught using group activities, which I thought sounded like my ideal approach, so I really wanted to see his teaching, but, unfortunately, I could not due to time constraints. The teacher, a very young teacher. [Final interview]

The supervising teacher's feedback on Akira's teaching, according to Akira, was on how to manage a classroom smoothly, such as disciplining students, making students listen to him, or giving attention to those who were doing something irrelevant. With no good model of ELT to follow or to be inspired by during the teaching practice, Akira failed to transform the theoretical knowledge into appropriate practical experiences. The teaching-practice experiences only reconfirmed his belief in the importance of a disciplined classroom as the base for effective ELT.

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<sup>80</sup> Tomlinson argues that one of the essential functions of a mentor is to actively assist student teachers.

#### 4.4.2 Mayuko

Mayuko was not very successful in enhancing reflective skills throughout the investigation period, and thus, could not fully develop her teacher expertise as a subject teacher; rather her practical experiences made her “imitate” her supervising teacher’s teaching in order to survive the teaching practice, and reinforced her belief in holistic teaching. As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.5), reflection may be challenging for some student teachers and Mayuko was certainly one of such cases. For instance, her journal entries were usually very short and descriptive, rather than critically reflective, and the length of the interviews with the researcher was always the shortest among the participants. Mayuko was also the only one participant who revealed the main reason of becoming a public school English teacher as gender equality in school teaching as opposed to in companies, rather than a passion for learning or teaching English or interests in the cultures of English-speaking countries, as she explained in the first interview.

As is the case with Akira, Mayuko strongly believed in the importance of being a holistic teacher, rather than a subject teacher. Mayuko’s journal entries and the interview data indicate that she could not recall how her former teachers taught English in detail, while she was more anxious about how to praise and motivate students. She stated during the second interview that her informal teaching experiences at *kyoku* contributed to the anxiety. At *kyoku* where Mayuko taught part-time, individual- and small-group tutoring was offered. Once, she tutored one student with low motivation to learn English who often fell asleep during a tutorial session being tired from club activities. In order to deal with this student, Mayuko noted that, informed by

GPK she acquired at the HEI, she started to praise him more. This gradually had an effect on the student and he seemed to become motivated to learn English, according to Mayuko (second interview). It was possible for Mayuko to motivate the student because the tutorial was conducted at the individual level and the purposes of *kyoku* teaching were very clear; to teach students so that they can obtain high grades on tests. As a result of this experience, Mayuko stated that she started to feel anxious about teaching at school where she had to face a larger class with students with mixed proficiency levels and to teach so that every student understands easily and develops their overall English proficiency.

Not well-informed by CK and PCK acquired in the university coursework, Mayuko also had a firm belief that she could develop her teacher expertise only by practical experiences. This was congruent with her tutor's (Tutor B<sup>81</sup>) belief in ELT who described the process of learning to teach by using the metaphor of coming to play tennis well, and noted that "what learners do reinforces what they learned earlier" during the interview with the researcher (interview on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009). Being influenced by the tutor, Mayuko also often maintained in her journal that theoretical knowledge she acquired in the coursework about ELT should be tested in practice in order to judge its effectiveness (for example, journal entry on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

However, during her microteaching in the Methods course in autumn 2009 which was observed by the researcher, Mayuko failed to transform theoretical knowledge she learned in ITE coursework into actual teaching. Moreover, she avoided verbalising and analysing what exactly happened in her teaching.

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<sup>81</sup> See Table 4 in Chapter 3 for the information on ITE tutors.

The following illustration based on the field notes tells exactly what happened during her microteaching on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 in the Methods course. She was originally assigned to microteach listening skills for junior-high-school students. According to the syllabus for this course, the role of schemata in teaching listening and reading skills was discussed earlier in the course. Known as schema theory in language teaching, learners often bring their own prior knowledge and experiences about the world to a classroom (Brown, 2007b). However, without introducing either a content topic and the background knowledge, which was “cool biz<sup>82</sup>” in summer in Japan, or new and key vocabulary to help students comprehend the content, Mayuko started her teaching by first playing the CD of the script twice, and then, gave her classmates, who acted as her students, a handout with a list of comprehension questions written in Japanese. Then she orally asked them the questions on the handout, which they were allowed to answer in Japanese. Although she frequently commented in her journal as well as in the interviews that teaching in a lucid manner was important, the researcher’s field notes on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 tell that she taught a lesson one-sidedly without activating her students’ schema, and her classmates, feeling lost, did not have to utter almost anything in English. Mayuko did not later write down any reflections regarding this particular microteaching in her journal, whether positive or negative, which most of the participants in the study often did on their own microteaching. This example implies that, prior to the formal school-based teaching practice, Mayuko was not quite ready to try out a train

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<sup>82</sup> ‘Cool biz’ is a governmental campaign in Japan that promotes a business style to deal with global warming which enables us to feel cooler and comfortable when working in offices in summer.

of events in the dialogical process of theory and teaching actions with the help of reflection, although this was the process which the vast literature in teacher education including Tsui (2003) and Korthagen et al. (2001) has suggested to be effective in teacher development.

Through the three-week teaching practice in 2010, her views on inclusive education did not show a major shift, but rather were more reconfirmed. In the teaching log during the teaching practice, she frequently mentioned the importance of student guidance, one important aspect in holistic teaching. For instance, after observing one English class in the first week, Mayuko felt the difficulty of motivating students and wrote as follows:

Although my goal is to become an English teacher, I clearly understand that student guidance is also an important task for junior-high-school teachers.

[Log entry, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010]

In this context, what Mayuko meant by student guidance was simply dealing with students with behaviour problems in a classroom, although Le Tendre (1999) argues that it usually includes more demanding responsibilities beyond a classroom and the school curriculum. This shows that Mayuko did not fully understand yet the complexity of GPK, one of the dimensions of teacher expertise according to Shulman (1987) (see section 2.2.2 in Chapter 2 and section 4.1 in Chapter 4), though she stressed that she continued to value it highly in her expertise development.

In as much as Mayuko mentioned about subject teaching in the teaching log during the teaching practice, such as how to deal with students who disliked English, and how to deal with differences in students' proficiency

levels, the final entry in the teaching log indicates that she was greatly influenced by her teaching-practice supervisor who attached a great importance to holistic teaching. She illustrated her point with a quotation from the supervising teacher's comments in the teaching log: "Teachers need to study theories more, while student teachers as well as teacher educators at HEIs should understand the issues and challenges of student guidance in a language classroom; otherwise, theory and practice will never be linked" (log entry, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010). As if to respond to her supervising teacher's comment, Mayuko wrote in the end of the teaching log as her general impression of the teaching practice that student guidance was essential in lower secondary education. As she stated earlier, she believed that teacher expertise could be enhanced by experimenting through practical experiences, but what she mainly tried to test was general pedagogical knowledge (Roberts, 1998; Shulman, 1987) including student guidance in a classroom, rather than CK and PCK of the subject matter.

However, there were some minor changes observed in Mayuko's perspectives on ELT, and one example is her understanding of the concept of learner-centred pedagogy. Prior to the teaching practice, Mayuko defined the concept in the interviews, as noted below, as an approach that a teacher prioritises students' needs and abilities over other issues. For example:

It is important to teach English clearly by understanding students' situations first.

[Third interview]

I should teach carefully based on an assumption that students do not know much about the target language yet.

[Fourth interview]

Tutor B's comment during the interview with the researcher supports her idea:



“[w]e should think of students first because they are the learners who should be mainly concerned [in a language classroom]” (interview on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009). However, as was discussed earlier, the observation of her microteaching in the Methods course in autumn 2009 indicates, in which she taught a lesson one-sidedly where her students had to say hardly anything in English, that her understanding of learner-centred pedagogy in a language classroom was partial. To be more specific, based on the observation of her microteaching, her teaching lacked the idea of putting students in the centre so that they are the ones who use the English language and negotiate the meaning, and take control of their own learning, gradually leading to learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Nunan, 1988).

Through the teaching practice, however, Mayuko showed a slight shift in this regard due to observing and working with the supervising teacher and an ALT<sup>83</sup>. According to Mayuko (teaching log on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010), she observed that the supervising teacher devised various ways to teach English and often closely approached her students and asked questions. With this role model that Mayuko found it possible to emulate, she came to understand that eliciting students’ voices would make them think, as opposed to Akira who found it quite difficult to implement a learner-centred classroom where discipline was a major issue with less-able learners. Mayuko’s *kenkyu jugyo*, a demonstration lesson, toward the end of the teaching practice, was observed by the researcher of this study, and the field notes then indicate that

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<sup>83</sup> An ALT refers to an assistant language teacher who is a young overseas graduate recruited by the Japan and Exchange Teaching programme in order to assist foreign language education in elementary, junior and senior high schools throughout Japan. More information is available at the following website:  
<http://www.jetprogramme.org/e/introduction/index.html>

she seemed successful in approaching and encouraging her students to use and answer in English, in a similar way that her supervising teacher would have done.

This experience of Mayuko's could be understood in Furlong and Maynard's (1995) five stages of student teachers' developmental process. They maintain that student teachers typically go through five stages in school-based training. In their framework, Mayuko was at the third stage of "survival as a teacher" (p.82), when student teachers begin to make sense of what is going on in a classroom, and very often, in order to deal with difficulties, they try to emulate, or "mimic' what they believed to be teachers' behaviour" (p. 82). Without understanding how complex teacher thinking behind the stage is, they could "at least adopt the outward appearance of being a teacher" (p.82). This means that emulating teaching behaviours without a full appreciation of theoretical knowledge that underpins them will confine student teachers to one approach, and, cannot lead to solutions of problems that they face in a classroom.

What the two participants, Akira and Mayuko, had in common and what also differentiated them was the influence of their supervising teachers on their professional development. At the beginning of the investigation, both noted that they prioritised GPK over CK and PCK (Shulman, 1987; Roberts, 1998) in teacher expertise. In Akira's case, his supervising teacher placed the importance on student guidance, one element in GPK, while she valued subject teaching less. This led Akira to reconfirm his perspective on the importance of student guidance and a disciplined classroom even in ELT in lower secondary education. On the contrary, in the case of Mayuko, her

supervising teacher emphasised the importance of student guidance; however, she also served as a role model as a subject specialist who could teach in a learner-centred approach. Although Mayuko did not fully cultivate the ability to reflect on her teaching in her pre-service experiences, she managed to merely imitate her supervising teacher and survived the teaching practice. Her perspectives on learner-centred pedagogy in ELT was reconceptualised by practical experience to a certain degree, but she had a long way to go before fully developing autonomy as a professional EFL teacher.

#### **4.5 Being a subject teacher in an upper-secondary school: Mari's case**

Mari showed large shifts in her professional expertise over time during the study: from a language learner's perspective to that of a professional language teacher. Originally influenced by her prior experiences of "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) as a student, Mari often discussed in her early journal entries what a good teacher should be like, rather than a good EFL teacher; however, she gradually developed teacher expertise as an EFL teacher over the year-and-a-half investigation period. She was probably the most successful participant in the study in that she was eager to learn from abstract theories, appropriate theories and emulate experts' techniques in practical contexts, reflect on her own teaching, and then try out new methods in her teaching. Though similar shifts were commonly found in other participants in this study, such as Chiyo, Aya and Noriko, for different purposes and regarding various constructs of professional

expertise, it was more obvious with the case of Mari probably because she was a would-be high school teacher. As opposed to lower-secondary schools, teachers are expected to be more a subject specialist at the upper-secondary-school level in Japan.

There were two elements that showed distinct shifts in Mari's development as a subject teacher; one was how to transmit expert knowledge on the subject matter (CK) to students, while the other one was how to teach a language class smoothly and effectively (PCK). It should be also noted that some particular factors, such as observation and emulation of experienced teachers and her peers were crucial in mediating these shifts.

Initially, Mari was very particular about how she was viewed as an English language learner. As was discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), EFL student teachers in Japan cannot cease to make an effort to develop their knowledge and skills of the English language, as most are non-native speakers of English. For example, in the beginning of the investigation, Mari frequently stated that her major concern was a lack of English language ability. This was observed in Mari's initial description of professional expertise that mainly consisted of the following two elements in CK (Shulman, 1987), the knowledge of the English language system and the fluency of the English language. She was particularly concerned about her pronunciation of the English language, frequently commenting on this throughout the study. One of the reasons why she often pointed out about her imperfect pronunciation as a concern was caused by the following belief: as a teacher, she wanted to be observed as a fluent speaker of the English language by her students.

Mari also frequently used the expression, “to convey (equivalent to *tsutaeru* in Japanese) information” about the subject. For example, during the first interview she stressed the importance of transmitting CK, particularly about the English language and its culture, to her prospective students. A verb, *tsutaeru* in Japanese, often implies one-directional communication, typically observed in a Japanese classroom in which a teacher is the authority who is likely to pass on information to learners without much interaction with them. Influenced by this cultural norm as well as her former experiences as a student, Mari at first believed that a language teacher ought to possess sufficient CK as a well-informed professional, in addition to the high-proficiency level of the target language to teach.

One of the changes that Mari made in her professional development over time was her perspective on how to “convey” her CK to students. Eventually Mari started to mention more frequently that she wanted to involve her students more in her teaching rather than to teach in a unidirectional way. Observing filmed experienced teachers’ teaching in the ITE courses at the HEI as well as reflecting on her teaching experiences at *kyūku*, Mari became concerned about PCK, such as how to involve and make every student understand explanations, particularly those who were less motivated and slower at learning, than her being a fluent speaker of English with ample expert knowledge. For example she stated in the fifth interview that one-way explanations in fluent English from a teacher to students was not a solution; instead, she needed to become able to teach in an easy-to-understand manner by employing more teaching techniques such as paraphrasing and

eliciting students' responses by asking questions appropriately and effectively. Thus, she noted that she tried to observe peers and experienced teachers in order to improve these skills. In addition, through observation of experienced teachers' teaching during the teaching practice, Mari reported in the final interview that she became more certain that adequate lesson preparation as well as sufficient knowledge about the language were important factors in providing clear and intelligible explanations.

Mari also became more fully aware of expectations for high school English teachers in Japan. The interview data at the later stage clarified that her own English language proficiency was one of the concerns, not only because of her perspective as a language learner, but also due to the to-be-newly-implemented curriculum for upper secondary schools in Japan<sup>84</sup>, which is a part of the knowledge of educational ends and values (Shulman, 1987) that she learned in the university coursework. As already mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), the new curriculum, being implemented in the academic year 2013, stated for the first time in Japan that the medium of instructions for high-school English classes should be the target language, English. Mari maintained in the fourth interview that she was clear about this imminent change in the educational policies, and as a prospective English teacher, she wanted to be ready for teaching English in English. She firmly believed that high-level proficiency in English, which would enable teachers to effectively teach in English suitable for students' linguistic level, should be an essential construct of language teacher expertise.

Another change observed in Mari's perspectives was how to teach a

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<sup>84</sup> This new curriculum was implemented in the academic year 2013, but at the time of the data collection, it was still to be implemented.

foreign language class smoothly. Originally, Mari explained in her first interview that a lack of experience of teaching a large mixed-ability class led to her concern of how to teach it effectively. Although she had taught at *kyoku*, she taught only smaller classes there, which were grouped based on students' academic abilities. Without ability grouping, she was not sure how to involve all the students, particularly the ones with lower motivation and proficiency levels, while teaching English effectively and meeting their needs. As a solution for this challenge, she was able to point out a few mediational activities (see section 2.3.5 in Chapter 2 as well as section 5.3 in Chapter 5 for mediational activities in a sociocultural approach) during the second interview: observation of experienced teachers and peers, peers' feedback on her microteaching, and emulation of experienced teachers' and peers' teaching. Through observation, for example, Mari stressed that her imbalanced image of ELT that she previously held as a language learner would be corrected and could discover newer ways of teaching. Observation of others' teaching also provided her with a model of a good language teacher, and she could improve her teaching by emulating this<sup>85</sup> and later reflecting on it.

In the fourth interview, Mari further elaborated on this point by saying that “stealing”<sup>86</sup> somebody else's craft skills was culturally endorsed. Through observing experienced teachers' teaching in the Methods course as well as

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<sup>85</sup> This in fact contradicts what her ITE tutor at the site (Tutor C in Table 4 in Chapter 3) believed. According to the interview data, her tutor contended that she would never encourage her student teachers to emulate a model since she believed that they should make trial and error by themselves in creating their own styles without emulation.

<sup>86</sup> *Nusumu* is the word she used in the interview, which means literally ‘to steal’ or ‘to emulate’. The word was also frequently used by Tutor A (see Table 4 in Chapter 3) during the interview, who encouraged her student teachers to emulate experienced teachers. See also Chapter 2 (section 2.3.6) for its cultural connotation.

her peers' microteaching in ITE, she became aware of so many unknown skills that she could implement in her own teaching, such as how to effectively use teaching materials, how to inform students of the purposes of tasks and activities, and how much English should be used as a medium of instructions. Mari maintained that what she and others believed as a good language class may differ, but they shared an ultimate goal in common: to promote learners' English language proficiency. In order to achieve this goal, she became convinced through observation that there was much more variety of teaching methods and techniques than she had expected in ELT, which she hoped to experiment through emulation.

During the teaching practice, Mari continued to observe teachers, particularly her supervising teacher, and emulated what she thought was effective in her own teaching. Mari showed her understanding in the final interview that she could not exactly emulate how he taught since she was not as experienced; thus, although she emulated his basic teaching techniques, such as how to call on students, how to treat errors, or how to jot down on the blackboard, or activities he employed, she mentioned it was difficult to emulate how he elicited his students' responses and reactions, and how he timed his lessons. Mari noted that she was aware she was not yet ready to emulate these advanced skills. However, employing some of his basic teaching techniques gave her teaching more *merihari* in her words, which means well-modulated in English. She further mentioned that mere emulation of experienced teachers did not improve her teaching. In order to improve it, she needed to first try to emulate them, and then try to make improvements, *kaizen* in Japanese, similar to Chiyo, by linking various constructs of her



professional expertise, so as to fit a particular classroom context. This resonates what Tsui (2003) argues, “the boundaries between these knowledge bases... constantly intermesh in practice” (p.58), since it often involved other constructs in professional expertise than merely content knowledge.

Overall, Mari’s data indicate that she was quite successful in developing her expertise as an EFL teacher. She was able to change her perspectives as a language learner to that of a language teacher in her initial teacher education experiences. What helped her develop her teacher expertise was complex mixtures of various mediational tools: theories of CK and PCK, observation and emulation of others, practical experiences, reflection and experimentation. Additionally, as many qualitative researchers state, participation in a research study can often increase a sense of self-understanding as personal self-benefits<sup>87</sup>. In this study, Mari’s high motivation to become a high-school English teacher in addition to active participation in the study were as a consequence linked with a positive outcome, as opposed to Mayuko who was not able to well cultivate her critical reflective skills even by joining this project.

#### **4.6 Theory and practice: Evolving student teacher perspectives**

This study initially began with the following two research questions: How do EFL student teachers in Japan perceive theory and practice in their pre-service training? How do their perceptions of theory and practice change over time? The profiles of the six participants above depicted how their

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<sup>87</sup> See also the very first quote of Chiyo’s at the beginning of Chapter 6, which indicates a similar belief in a benefit of participation in the research study.

perspectives toward professional expertise, especially on theory and practice, shifted and developed.

#### *4.6.1 The value of theoretical knowledge for student teachers*

The six case studies in previous sections revealed that most of the participating student teachers valued the importance of theory in their teacher expertise development. The cases also show that the knowledge bases they valued covered a broad range of topics, including subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and a knowledge base on being a holistic teacher.

First of all, most of the participants in this study highly valued the importance of theory in their expertise, particularly in the beginning of the investigation because they were acquiring a theoretical base at the HEI then. As Eraut (1989) and many other researchers in teacher education have previously argued, absorbing theoretical knowledge took place at the HEI. The knowledge base acquired in the ITE coursework allowed the student teachers to feel confident, and this confidence underpinned their lesson planning and teaching. The conceptual and theoretical knowledge also helped the student teachers to organise concepts of the subject, English in this case, and to identify potential difficulties of their students in learning English, as Pachler et al. (2007) argue that “pedagogical, methodological and disciplinary knowledge obtained from background reading, be it empirical, theoretical or professional, can help foreign language teachers construct, articulate, test out and modify personal theories of teaching” (p.57). It should be pointed out, though, that in the case of Japan, due to the balance of theory and practice in their ITE experiences, which is seven to one (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1

for more explanation on this issue), student teachers are in one sense confined to theoretical knowledge, be it good or bad, since they do not experience formal practical experiences until the seventh semester upon matriculation.

The findings in this study further indicate that not only the value of theoretical knowledge was acknowledged by the participants, but also kinds of knowledge the participants valued were multifaceted. As was already discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2), Shulman (1987) argued that there are seven dimensions of teacher knowledge. Using the labels suggested by Shulman (1987), one dimension that many of the participants (Aya, Chiyo, Noriko, Mari) mentioned is content knowledge, and the data in this study have shown that it included second/foreign language acquisition theory, and pronunciation and grammatical structures of the target language. The second label, general pedagogical knowledge, was valued by the two participants, Akira and Mayuko. This included behaviour management and ability grouping in this study, for instance. Examples of pedagogical content knowledge in the study, the third dimension, further varied: for example, textbook analysis, materials development, teaching methods, how to teach vocabulary, how to teach reading skills, how to instruct effective and fun activities, evaluating attitude, and setting standards. Again, the four participants (Aya, Chiyo, Noriko and Mari) stated that they acknowledged the influence of this knowledge on their expertise development. The following dimensions, curriculum knowledge (for example, newly-revised Course of Study, newly-introduced English activities in primary education), knowledge of learners (for example, less-able learners), knowledge of educational contexts

(for example, team teaching, Assistant Language Teachers<sup>88</sup>, *gakkyu-hokai*<sup>89</sup>) and knowledge of education ends and values (objectives of the newly-revised Course of Study), were also frequently mentioned by most of the participants in this study.

Some of the participants valued the knowledge base not directly related to English language teaching; although they were EFL student teachers, some of them, especially Akira and Mayuko, were very eager to develop a knowledge base on being a holistic homeroom teacher, such as behavioural management, even before they actually encountered classroom issues and problems during the teaching practice. This study found that it was mainly as a result of the cultural characteristics of teaching at junior high schools in Japan. As was discussed earlier in Chapter 1, junior-high-school teachers in Japan are responsible for whole-person education, while they specialise in particular academic subjects (Ito, 2011; Shimahara, 2002; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992). The perspective of an inclusive approach in junior high schools in Japan is often emphasised in some ITE courses at HEIs outside the core courses on content knowledge, as Akira reported that he was very strongly influenced by one of the ITE lecturers regarding this matter.

#### *4.6.2 The improvement of the target language abilities*

Furthermore, what was also unique about the case studies was that the participants in this study were not only eager to establish a knowledge base about the target language, English in this study, but they themselves wanted

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<sup>88</sup> See footnote 8 in Chapter 1 as well as footnote 83 in this chapter on the description of ALTs.

<sup>89</sup> See footnote 74 in this chapter for the meaning of *gakkyu-hokai* in Japanese.

to develop *their* target language abilities in order to become good English teachers. Many discussed their experiences as learners in the English language classes<sup>90</sup> at the HEI, very different from their high-school classes, as well as their impact on professional development.

For instance, in Mari's case, she wanted to develop the knowledge of the phonological structures of the English language and use the knowledge in her teaching; at the same time, she considered that being a fluent English speaker with proper pronunciation was a must for a good English teacher, and therefore, she herself wanted to improve her own pronunciation. As Pachler et al. (2007) rightly posit, a good and secure grasp of the target language promotes student teachers' confidence, especially when they ought to give instructions and interaction in the target language, as they can provide a good target language model themselves.

In Akira's case, he had never experienced discussion activities in English classes in high school. Thus, Akira's personal theory of learner-centred pedagogy was influenced by the tasks that he experienced in one of the English classes he received as an undergraduate student at the HEI. As Almarza (1996) argues, teacher trainees reflect "not only on their activity during teaching practice but also on their own language learning experiences. These reflections provide them with a springboard to explore the theoretical aspects of the profession in ITE, without necessarily having to postpone it until they are full-fledged classroom teachers" (p.70). However, the cases in

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<sup>90</sup> The participants were required to take English language courses in their first and second years of their undergraduate study along with content courses in academic fields; the main goal of the English language curriculum in the department was English for academic purposes according to "The Guidelines of English Courses 2013-2014" of the programme.

this study indicate that one of the characteristics of their professional development is that while they were EFL student teachers, they never ceased to be English language learners at the same time, and thus, attempted to incorporate their experiences as language learners in reconceptualising their personal theories. What is usually considered in the existing literature is that student teachers are influenced by their former experiences as language learners; in the case of EFL student teachers in Japan, their experiences as language learners are not in the past tense, but rather, are influential on language teacher development as an on-going experience.

#### *4.6.3 The role of practical experiences in teacher development*

In contrast to theory, how did the participants in this study view the role of practical experiences in professional development? Firstly, as was previously mentioned, a relatively short period of school-based practical teaching experiences is one of the problems that confronts ITE in Japan. Therefore, as the results of the study indicate, at the initial stage of the study, particularly in the spring and autumn semesters of 2009<sup>91</sup>, the participants did not have many chances to experiment with their personal theories, unless they actively sought chances to go into a classroom beyond the ITE curriculum. For instance, Chiyo, Noriko and Akira worked as volunteer teacher assistants at nearby schools. All the participants, except for Chiyo, also taught English at *kyoku* as their part-time jobs in order to use it to resemble classroom teaching experiences. All the participants except for Akira fully realised lack of practical experience as their weakness, which they believed should be eventually

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<sup>91</sup> See Table 6 for the timeline of the main study in Chapter 3.

compensated for. Aya expressed this point in the second interview that she understood that practice-teaching experiences, although quite short, would be a place where she could “put together” what she learned at the HEI and test it out in order to develop her expertise. Mayuko also agreed in her journal<sup>92</sup> that she had a strong belief that abstract theory that she learned in ITE at the HEI should be tested first in practice in order to understand its effectiveness.

On the other hand, Akira, whose initial stance was that practical experiences were marginal for professional development in comparison to abstract theory, also changed his perspective toward practice over time. In the post-teaching-practice interview, he noted that the most valuable element in his pre-service experiences was the teaching practice. During the student teaching, he found it extremely difficult to put his theoretical understanding of student guidance into practice. The three-week exposure to actual classroom contexts introduced him to a number of issues relevant to teaching that he further needed to address.

As a number of researchers and teacher educators have argued (Borg, 2003, 2006; Korthagen et al., 2001; Roberts, 1998; Tsui, 2003), the student teachers in the study also recognised both professional coursework and classroom practice as significant elements in language teacher expertise. However, the process of expertise development was not that simple. Many of the participants noticed, earlier or later in their developmental processes, that there was a gap between theoretical knowledge and actual practical experiences. As Borg (2003) notes, in order to examine the effectiveness of teacher education, while it is important to discuss the content of student

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<sup>92</sup> This is based on the journal entry written on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.

teachers' cognitions and related elements, the processes of cognitive development should also be investigated. Thus, the next chapter will address what specific factors were involved in the EFL student teachers' processes of narrowing the disparity between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the reported processes of each student teacher's professional development were presented as individual cases. All participants were aware of the importance of theory and practice as essential elements in developing their teacher expertise, although what kind of knowledge bases they valued differed. The participants also actively sought chances to go in to a classroom beyond the ITE curriculum, as they were aware that lack of practical experiences was their weakness. In addition, in the final interviews, many participants reported that they perceived some changes in their perspectives about ELT, from that of a language learner to a language teacher or from that of a homeroom teacher to a language teacher. Some greatly benefited from having a good model to emulate or having peers who could give honest and constructive criticism. On the other hand, some cases suggest that they were not able to perceive radical changes in their expertise. For example, they were not able to critically reflect on their teaching behaviours due to lack of reflective skills or lack of an expert model.

Every student teacher's process varied as each case described. What factors influenced or challenged the participants to become more professional varied as well. Then, what is still not clear are the reasons why some of the



participants were more successful in developing their expertise while others failed to transform their perspectives into more professional EFL teachers in this study. In order to further examine this issue, major factors that influenced them to become more professional or hindered them to develop their expertise will be focused on in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Factors that Affect EFL Student Teachers' Professional Development**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The research findings presented in Chapter 4 depict the reported processes of each participant's professional development as individual cases. Each story differed from that of the other participants, while there were some common issues that emerged from the interview and journal data, particularly in terms of the factors that influenced their professional development both positively and negatively.

In this chapter, the two guiding research questions, previously stated in Chapter 1, will be further discussed: Do student teachers perceive that there is a gap between theory and practice? If student teachers see it as a problem, how do they mitigate the disparity between theory and practice? In order to respond to these questions, the chapter will first explore the factors that influenced the student teachers to become more professional or hindered them to develop their expertise. The main factors are as follows: mediational activities (observation and emulation) and peer interaction in addition to schooling experiences, theoretical knowledge base, and informal teaching experiences. Then the process of teacher expertise development in ITE, proposed in Chapter 2 (see Figure 1), will be revisited and the ways in which the findings of the six case studies have advanced our understanding of EFL student teachers' process of their expertise development will be discussed.

## 5.2 Factors that affect early professional learning

Examining the growth of the EFL student teachers in ITE in Japan, close analysis of the interview and journal data have identified the following mediational tools that influenced, mediated *and* challenged the teachers' early professional learning: previous and current experiences as learners, theoretical knowledge that they acquired in ITE coursework, practical experiences both in formal and informal settings, mediational activities such as observation, emulation and reflection, as well as having a "temporary other" (Johnson, 2009, p. 25), who can help a student teacher verbalise and internalise his or her thinking and co-construct the meanings. These factors influenced the development of the student teachers' professional expertise at various stages<sup>93</sup> for different purposes. In this study, mediational activities and social interactions with others were critical for their professional development in linking theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. The data in this study indicate that the student teachers experienced the modulating perspective-shifting in their expertise development with the help of mediational activities as well as other participants in their learning community. The fact that the student teachers were learners of English at the same time also made the process complex and multifaceted. It should be also emphasised here that student teachers in ITE are still at the early stage of their professional development where their foundations of the future development are being built. Without realising the fact that the process of developing teacher expertise takes time, some student teachers such as Saori and Akira in this study possessed unrealistic and inadequate

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<sup>93</sup> See Table 6 in Chapter 3 (section 3.4.2) for the timeline of the main study.

expectations of teaching, which resulted in the struggle of linking theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experiences, especially when there was not enough support by the pre-service training programme.

In the next section, the following elements in the dialogical process of student teachers' expertise development will be first focused: schooling experiences as a learner, theoretical learning in ITE coursework and informal teaching experiences. These aspects were beneficial in novice teachers' professional development, although in this study, they were not necessarily well connected to their teaching practices in themselves, without some mediational activities and human mediation.

#### *5.2.1 Previous and current experiences as a learner*

This study found that at an earlier stage of the student teachers' professional development, all of them heavily drew on their own experiences of being taught English in the past, at least to a certain degree. It is congruent with what Furlong and Maynard (1995) call the stage of "early idealism" (p.75) in line with other previous studies in ITE (M. Borg, 2005; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). In the early part of the first phase of the main study, the participants tended to be informed mainly by their prior knowledge and experiences as a student, which they established through 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975), discussed in Chapter 2. It was due to lack of theoretical knowledge on ELT to draw upon or lack of an opportunity to formally practise teaching at that stage of the study, as we should see in the following examples.

As Borg argues, the previous schooling experiences usually provide

student teachers with “first-hand encounters with the realities of life in schools and classrooms” (2003, p. 277), and some of the participants in this study were positively influenced by previously-encountered teachers in pursuing a career in teaching and becoming one like them. In the first interview, for example, Chiyo explained how much she was influenced by one homeroom teacher<sup>94</sup> in her junior-high-school<sup>95</sup> days. Her former school was located in the suburbs of Tokyo and had a welter of problems due to the variety of students, but the teacher never gave up on facing each student and bringing them together as a group. Heavily influenced by this teacher, Chiyo wished to become a good homeroom teacher like him in the future, someone who can create a positive learning environment. Unlike Chiyo, Aya and Saori reported that they were positively influenced by their previous English teachers in becoming a subject teacher. In the first interview, Aya stated that owing to an English teacher in her junior-high-school days who employed a communicative approach, she chose a career as an EFL teacher and wished to be like her in the future, although she did not elaborate on how effective the teacher’s teaching was on the development of her own English competences and English teaching abilities. Similarly, Saori stated in the first interview that because of her experiences of learning English as an ESL student in New Zealand, through observing her teachers, she became convinced of the importance of students’ autonomy as well as CLT, and wished to actively involve students in learning as her teachers did. This will be further discussed later in this section.

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<sup>94</sup> See section 4.4 in Chapter 4 for the roles and functions of a homeroom teacher in secondary schools in Japan.

<sup>95</sup> As for the compulsory education system in Japan, see footnote 2 in Chapter 1.

These examples above indicate that their own teachers in the past influenced them in deciding how they wished to manage students and teach English in the future. However, at the stage of the first interviews, they were still unable to analyse how the teachers' thinking behind their behaviours shaped their actual teaching and student management, without enough theoretical knowledge to draw upon or chances to practise teaching and reflect on it. As Borg (2005) argues, their perspectives were built only around what teachers do in class and they were not able to observe what was going on behind the scene of teaching such as thinking, planning, preparing, and reflecting. Similar to many of the previous studies in ITE, the participants individually formed their perspectives of a good teacher through 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975) based on observable behaviours of a teacher's job. The following cases of Saori and Akira will illustrate what Furlong and Maynard (1995) explain that these student teachers at the stage of "early idealism" cannot evaluate their teachers "in terms of their effectiveness as *teachers*" (p.75) as to communicative language teaching (CLT).

#### *5.2.1.1 Student teachers' pre-existing perspectives of CLT: Saori's case*

Although Saori did not fully participate in this study, her case is worth noting here because she strongly expressed her thoughts on the impact of former teachers, which did not contribute to the successful professional development. As Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) discuss with regard to the impact of ITE on student teachers, their pre-existing beliefs are often not changed drastically by pre-service teacher training. Many of student teachers

use theoretical knowledge that they acquire in ITE at HEIs or actual practical contexts that they teach in to confirm their beliefs, rather than reconstruct or correct them. The following example of Saori also indicates that her understanding of one of the theoretical concepts in language teaching, CLT, did not change much because she was unwilling to evaluate theoretical knowledge that she possessed then and practical teaching situations where she taught; rather, she showed her vulnerability to critical feedback and was stubbornly attached to her pre-existed perspective of CLT influenced by the experiences as an ESL learner with her former teachers in New Zealand.

In the first interview, Saori stated that she left her former public high school in Japan because she did not find any meaning in exam-oriented education there (see section 1.3.1 in Chapter 1 for educational reforms in Japan in 2000s). Then she moved to New Zealand where she attended a high school and learned English as a second language (ESL). While studying there, she observed her ESL teachers and became convinced of the importance of CLT in English language teaching. As was previously discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), CLT is an approach which focuses on learners as well as developing their communicative competence (Savignon, 2005). In CLT, the role of a teacher is more as a facilitator, whereas students are expected to actively engage in interaction with other students and collaboratively construct meaning in the target language (Brown, 2007b). Saori showed a clear understanding of CLT in the first interview stating that a language teacher needs to value autonomy of individual students and to actively involve them in learning so that they can engage in interaction and use the language.

Saori conducted a 20-minute microteaching in the Methods II course on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2009. Although she was able to articulate what CLT was in the first interview and thought she understood it, the following description of her microteaching indicates that she did not necessarily understand the approach from a teacher's point of view. According to the researcher's field notes, the target audience of her teaching was first graders of a lower-secondary school and she conducted her teaching all in English, though the two preceding student teachers taught almost all in Japanese. She started her teaching by first reading aloud a short text for her students. Then, breaking the text into shorter chunks, she asked them to repeat after her. Without the text in front of them, the students basically listened to what she said and immediately repeated it. This procedure was repeated a few times, and chunks that Saori provided at one time progressively lengthened as she continued; as a result, the students were asked to repeat at the sentence level in the end. This shows that she was unable to incorporate the concept of CLT in her own teaching. In this teaching process, her students did not have many chances of interacting with each other, but rather, had to 'parrot' Saori's words.

After the microteaching, there was a feedback session with her classmates where she received critical feedback on her teaching approach. Many of the criticisms focused on her teaching which did not match the level of her future students, particularly because it was all conducted in English and the text was provided only orally. Some of the criticisms also reflected the fact that she did not encourage her students to interact with each other. She could not embrace the criticism well and wrote a journal entry on this incident



as follows:

They commented [that my teaching approach] was not appropriate for the level of my [future] students, but, if so, then it is impossible to teach English in English. I don't want to teach English in the grammar-translation method, which was a reason why I quit high school [in Japan]....I have doubts about "passive learning" and...I felt I was not suited for teaching at public schools. [Journal entry, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009]

This excerpt indicates that Saori was unwilling to objectively analyse and evaluate her teaching with the help of theoretical knowledge or peer interaction. In fact, she only had partial understanding of CLT and did not actively involve her students in learning, which is one of the features of the CLT approach, as noted earlier in this section. As the Course of Study (MEXT, 2010c) states, English language teachers are required to devise teaching methods and approaches such as pair work and group work as appropriate in order to gain facility and confidence in using English and cultivate students' communicative ability. She could have, for example, employed some strategies to prepare her students to engage more actively in language tasks and these teaching strategies could have been provided by ITE coursework. Instead, she showed an incomplete understanding of CLT in her teaching, which was to teach all in English and have students say sentences in English aloud, without trying to understand the actual teaching conditions at secondary schools in Japan. To put it another way, she was unable to reconstruct her pre-existing experiences of CLT, and this finding is in line with Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000).

Even at a later stage of this study, during the teaching practice, when

Saori found a gap<sup>96</sup> between her ideal teaching approach of CLT that she established through observing her previous ESL teachers in New Zealand and the reality of an EFL classroom in Japan, she was unable to analyse the causes of the problems utilising the theoretical knowledge that she possessed then and to reflect on her own teaching, but rather became discouraged in pursuing her career as an EFL teacher, as she stated in the final interview. Being asked about her future plans in teaching in the final interview, Saori responded:

I want to enjoy teaching, and I mean it. I wish to teach students who want to learn, not the ones who are forced to.... Also I want to think together with students, and develop my own materials from a scratch. [I wonder if] it might be more enjoyable to teach in developing countries. I've never been to any, but it seems more interesting to begin teaching from nothing. Not to teach in a fixed [curriculum], but, yes, introducing activities and thinking [on my own]. I have no intention of teaching in Japan now. [Final interview]

Some student teachers like Saori think that they know more than they actually know and can do, and when they find that their understanding is still partial and incomplete, they express their frustration as they are not sure about how to take another step. When Saori found the gap between her experiences of CLT as an ESL student and the actual EFL classroom contexts, she showed her vulnerability and was unable to find a way to promote her learning. However, it should be emphasised again that student teachers are still at the very early stage of their professional development and should be supported within an ITE process so as to overcome issues they face. In the case of Saori,

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<sup>96</sup> Saori faced a classroom situation with behaviour problems during the teaching practice, and without much support on ELT from her supervising teacher, she lost her interest in further pursuing her career as an EFL teacher in Japan.

more chances to practise critically reflecting on her pre-existing beliefs and analysing classroom situations and learner needs, in addition to fostering a more positive attitude toward collaborative support by others in the same learning community, could have resulted in more effective development of her expertise as an EFL teacher.

#### *5.2.1.2 Student teachers' pre-existing perspectives of CLT: Akira's case*

What differentiated this study from the other studies in ITE was the dual identities of the participants as English language teachers as well as English language learners. During the study, they often reflected on their experiences as a language learner with their current teachers at the university, not just on their former schooling experiences. As was previously stated in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3) as well as Chapter 3, all the participants in this study were undergraduate students in the department of English studies. In order to satisfy the requirement of the curriculum, they were still taking English language courses (English for academic purposes: EAP) in addition to courses in their focus areas as well as ITE courses outside of the department.

For example, as was discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.2), Akira was greatly affected by his English teachers at the university. Akira recalled in the first and second interviews that his EAP teachers employed CLT and their teaching differed greatly from the teacher-fronted classes in his high-school days. For instance, as was already mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), in CLT, learners are considered as agents who interact and co-construct meanings by using the target language (Nunan, 1999). Thus, in the EAP classes that Akira enrolled, the students were often asked to engage in

small-group discussion through which they had to form and express their opinions, receive criticism and make rebuttal statements in English. His teachers also often assigned group roles to the students in order to help them develop learner autonomy. He confessed that it was his first time to experience this kind of opinion-building practice in English classes. Through these communication-oriented activities, he came to realise that to become able to express one's ideas in English and to collaboratively work with peers in a group were essential elements in CLT, as he stated in the second interview. He also commented that this approach would contribute to creating a more communicative and student-centred classroom in his own teaching.

In this way, Akira gradually developed his understanding of the concept of CLT influenced by current experiences as a learner prior to his practical teaching experiences; however, similar to Saori, he was not sufficiently prepared to employ this approach appropriately in his informal teaching. In the Methods II courses, Akira conducted his 20-minute microteaching in December, 2009. The researcher's field notes indicate that the target audience of his lesson was the second graders of a lower-secondary school and the topic of the unit was on Easter Island, a Polynesian island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean. Akira focused on one of the new grammar structures that he found in the text; the usage of a verb, *call*, when it is used as "call + an object + a complement", as in "We *call* him Bob." This is one of the typically-taught grammatical structures at the lower-secondary-school level in Japan. Akira started his teaching by writing down a few examples with the target structure on the blackboard first, and then, spent quite a long time explaining the examples one-sidedly. There was not much student-student

interaction and it was far from CLT, according to the researcher's field notes, although he explained later that he meant to introduce an information-sharing task through which the students were expected to practise using the structure by asking their classmates' nicknames with each other. During the fourth interview, he watched his filmed teaching and was asked about his teaching approach. He responded that the reason why he gave a lengthy explanation of the grammatical structure was because he wanted to make sure his students clearly understood how to use it. At the same time, he also stated that he was aware that his students remained silent and looked bored, but he did not know how to engage them during his grammar instruction. Without referring to his partial theoretical understanding of a concept of CLT, he further commented with regard to an increase in student interaction as follows:

To increase interaction was difficult. I mean, the differences between simply chatting or effectively interacting [with students], I found it difficult to differentiate them. When I broadened the topic, then, hmmm, [I thought] I was just chatting, this is not [effective] teaching. Or [in other occasions I thought] I should broaden the topic more and interact more [with students]. It requires quick decisions, which was still difficult for me. [Fourth interview]

This interview excerpt indicates that Akira's confusion was caused by the gap between his experiences of his current EAP teachers, who were more experienced than Akira, and his partial understanding of CLT as well as his teaching competences which were still not fully developed yet. Thus, Akira could not adjust a CLT approach in order to meet the levels and needs of his students and increase student interaction. His understanding of CLT was also partial because he stated in the interview that interaction was for a teacher and students, not between students, although his view on CLT was informed

by his current teachers who employed a great amount of group work to increase student interaction and improve students' communicative ability. To put it another way, Akira's pre-existing experience of CLT that learners should be placed in the centre of interaction and they are the ones who should develop their agency and communicative ability did not result in successful application to actual teaching.

As Lortie (1975) rightly posits, these examples of Akira and Saori in this study imply that observing former and current teachers merely, which was discussed as one of mediational activities in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.5), did not fully contribute to successful professional development of dialogically linking theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. As they were still in the middle of developing a sound basis for the early stages of professional development, they could have been encouraged to explore alternative ways within their training to deal with the struggle and the confusion. As noted earlier, the impact of former teachers was observed at early stages of this study; how other elements and tools influenced, mediated, and challenged the participants' professional development will be discussed in the succeeding sections.

### *5.2.2 Theoretical learning in ITE coursework*

As was previously discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.4), theoretical principles that student teachers acquire in the ITE coursework are often criticised as ineffective and irrelevant (Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996). However, the findings of this study show that they were an influential factor for them to an extent which changed their pre-existing perspectives established

through “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) and which helped develop their expertise as a teacher, similar to some studies in ITE. For instance, MacDonald, Badger, and White (2001) conducted two surveys (pre-training and post-training) on beliefs and cognition on second language acquisition theories with novice teachers in initial teacher training, and found that there were some statistically-significant differences between their pre-existing and post-training perspectives, although, as they observed, no data from classroom practice were used in this study.

As with MacDonald, Badger, & White’s study above, the results of the present study show that theoretical knowledge influenced the participants to a certain degree, although dimensions and degrees varied depending on the participants. In addition, student teachers’ theoretical knowledge in itself did not have a major impact in developing their professional development. For instance, Chiyo, Aya, Noriko, and Mari found theoretical knowledge significant in changing their views from a foreign language learner perspective to that of a foreign language teacher’s, but what enabled them to realise it was actual classroom contexts. These cases, both the successful and unsuccessful cases, provide valuable insights with regard to which elements of training can contribute to laying the student teachers’ foundation for early professional development in ITE in Japan. The following example illustrates how theoretical knowledge of SLA theory influenced Mari’s professional development.

### 5.2.2.1 Student teachers' knowledge of SLA theory: Mari's case

Chiyo, Aya, Noriko and Mari found content knowledge (CK)<sup>97</sup> and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1987) particularly important in transforming their perspectives as a language learner into those of a language teacher. To give one successful example, in the final interview after the teaching practice, Mari explained how her understanding of one of the teaching skills, reading-aloud tasks, developed due to the theoretical knowledge of affective filter<sup>98</sup> (Krashen, 1985), both of which she learned in the coursework at HEI. She stated that before the teaching practice, she was planning to use reading-aloud tasks in her teaching because her former teachers often used this teaching activity. She understood through the coursework that the benefits of the using these tasks were to increase the amount of students' output and give them an opportunity for pronunciation practice. However, she discovered in the reality of a classroom during the teaching practice that her students did not have much confidence in speaking in English. According to Mari during the final interview, this reminded her of one of the second language acquisition theories which stresses the importance of lowering the affective filter of learners for effective instruction in a classroom. As a consequence, unlike Saori in section 5.2.1.1 in Chapter 5 who failed to analyse the appropriate use of a reading-aloud task, she decided to use a reading-aloud task to lower her students' filter prior to a small-group discussion activity, instead of using it for simply increasing the amount of output. She explained that the reading-aloud task could lower her

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<sup>97</sup> See Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2) for detailed explanation of dimensions of teacher expertise.

<sup>98</sup> The affective filter is a hypothesis developed by Krashen who explained that the affective filter must be weak in order for optimal learning to occur in language learning (Krashen, 1985, 2008).



students' affective filter since they did not have to produce their own utterances in English and negotiate meaning with each other by using their own words. She changed the task instructions accordingly as follows:

Because [students] did not have [much] confidence [in their English], I provided a model first and [they] could imitate and follow me. Also, with regard to a reading-aloud task, when [they] listened to others around themselves, [they could notice that] there weren't that many who were very good at pronunciation, so they could feel relaxed and wouldn't lose confidence. Well, yes...if [they can] feel a sense of achievement at least once in one line [during the task], that will do, I guess.

[Final interview]

In the example above, Mari used both CK (affective filter hypothesis) and PCK (how to instruct a reading-aloud task effectively) as “guidelines for understanding particular situations” (Elliott & Labatt, 1975, p. 59) in making professional choices and taking concrete actions in her own classroom. This was a successful case of connecting student teachers' theoretical learning to practical teaching situations. To put it another way, practical teaching experiences and an actual teaching context were essential in making meaning of Mari's theoretical understanding and further developing her expertise.

#### *5.2.2.2 Student teachers' knowledge of learner-centred pedagogy: Akira's case*

Although the example above shows that some student teachers in this study were able to utilise their theoretical knowledge and adjust their practical teaching behaviour, not all the participants were able to do so. Akira, who found GPK (Shulman, 1987) more beneficial for becoming a good *homeroom* teacher, was one such example. As Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1) already

discussed, through the coursework at HEI, Akira gradually developed his perspectives on a learner-centred approach in ELT, one of the concepts in PCK. He understood that in such an approach, learners are placed in the centre and practise expressing their ideas in the target language to learn (second interview). However, he failed to employ the approach successfully in his microteaching at HEI in December 2009. See section 5.2.1.2 in Chapter 5 for more details of how he taught. He reflected on his teaching and explained in the fourth interview that the failure partly resulted from a lack of former experiences as a student, without which it was difficult to internalise his theoretical understanding in his own teaching. This implies that Akira believed he first needed to learn how to teach in the learner-centred pedagogy through observing experienced teachers as a model, as the following quote indicates, “it was difficult to theorise what I have never experienced [as a student]” (fourth interview). In fact, this view of the necessity of having a good model to create a good lesson was observed among the other participants such as Noriko (see section 4.3.3 in Chapter 4).

During the teaching practice, Akira faced the realities of *gakkyu-hokai*<sup>99</sup>, breakdown in classroom discipline and management in translation, and found it challenging to teach in a learner-centred approach, which he was hoping to employ in his teaching during the school-based teaching practice. Based on the knowledge base of PCK that he possessed then, he developed a lesson plan in which his students could practise using English through an information-sharing task. However, he soon found out that his students were not able to perform the task well, since they had poor concentration and could

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<sup>99</sup> See footnote 74 in Chapter 4 for the more detailed explanation on *gakkyu-hokai*.

not stay focused. Although he had a good knowledge base of the approach, he stated in the final interview that he failed to adjust it to an actual teaching context and put it into practice.

Akira could have more actively sought some mediation in order to link his theoretical knowledge to actual teaching contexts; for example, with the help of a supervising teacher as a model, he may have had a better understanding of how to adjust his teaching approach and make his teaching more learner-centred accordingly. As was examined in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1), Akira noted that his supervising teacher during the teaching practice was not too influential as a subject teacher. Reflecting on his teaching practice in the final interview, Akira stated that his teaching practice experience made him more aware of the importance of behaviour management at the lower-secondary-school level, rather than subject teaching. This case indicates that correct understanding of a theoretical concept in itself does not necessarily result in successful application to a classroom setting.

As Furlong et al. (2000) point out, theoretical studies can give student teachers opportunities to sort out their own perspectives and values and reflect on practical situations that they encounter, which Akira did to a certain degree. However, Akira could have developed his expertise as a subject teacher in a more balanced way and narrowed the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical contexts in different ways, if he had had more support on ELT from others or been given more chances to experiment with his ELT skills by way of various mediational activities, as we shall see in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 later in this chapter. Pachler et al. (2007) also rightly posit that student teachers' expertise development is enhanced more

effectively through actively engaging in social practices than being done at the individual level with the sole use of knowledge bases acquired at HEIs.

### *5.2.3 Practical learning in informal settings*

Many previous studies on ITE have suggested that some form of practical experience in a classroom is a vital element in student teachers' expertise development. In fact, as noted in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.4), in response to the criticism that there is too much emphasis on theoretical learning at HEIs, longer school-based training was introduced, for example, in the UK. Regardless of the fact that ITE in Japan still offers only a relatively short period of practical teaching experiences, all the participants<sup>100</sup> in this study agreed that it was essential for developing their expertise. As was explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3), two weeks for upper secondary schools and four weeks for lower secondary schools is a minimum requirement as school-based training in ITE in Japan. What emerged from the data, however, was the student teachers' struggle to find an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to real teaching contexts, due to the imbalance between theoretical learning at the HEI and practical experiences at schools. The participants were certainly aware that a few-week teaching experience was not sufficient to internalise their teacher knowledge and connecting it to actual teaching contexts. Thus, all the participants except for Saori reported in the data that they actively sought more informal practical learning opportunities prior to the teaching practice, which is not observed much in

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<sup>100</sup> Akira was the only participant who reported in the early phase of the study that he found theoretical knowledge more significant for the development of his expertise; however, after the practice teaching, he also agreed that practical experiences were necessary for his professional development.

previous studies in ITE in Japan. Their informal practical experiences included teaching at *kyoku*, microteaching in the ITE courses and volunteer teaching at nearby schools. The results of this study imply that their informal practical experiences made them more aware of the divide between theory and practice, but did not always function well for mitigating the gap between the two; as a result, as we shall see in the next example, during formal practical learning, the participants actively sought mediational activities in order to further narrow the gap between them.

*5.2.3.1 Student teachers' informal teaching experiences of giving clear explanations: Noriko's case*

By the latter part of the first phase of this study, the participants' expertise was shaped by informal practical experiences to a certain degree. As with the aforementioned two constructs of former experiences as a student and theoretical knowledge acquired in ITE, however, informal teaching experiences made student teachers aware of the importance of other mediational tools in order to connect theoretical knowledge and actual teaching practices more effectively. For example, worried about a lack of practice, Chiyo volunteered to work as an assistant teacher at a nearby junior high school. As was already discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.1), her reflections on this experience reveal that she learned greatly through observing experienced teachers and understanding real classroom situations. However, she was only allowed to take a role as a support person for students or to co-teach with the experienced teacher by leading one language activity at a maximum, and as a result, she felt a more urgent need to actually teach on her own and experiment with her knowledge and teaching skills.

Teaching at *kyoku* was another informal practical teaching situation that many of the participants<sup>101</sup> in the study found useful. For example, in the second interview, Aya discussed how she attempted to solve a problem of teaching a mixed-ability group at *kyoku* through observing one experienced teacher. Aya found that he communicated well with his students, which made them look up and listen to him carefully. According to Aya, she still could not teach well like him even after observation, which is natural since she was still developing her foundations for early professional expertise. At least teaching at *kyoku* provided her with opportunities to reflect on her own teaching and analyse somebody else's teaching.

Similarly, microteaching in ITE courses, particularly the Methods courses, was another opportunity for the participants to directly apply their knowledge base to practice. In some recent studies in ITE, microteaching is considered as an effective mediational tool which provides an opportunity for novice teachers to "trial, analyse and revise" and involve them in active learning (Fernández, 2010, p. 351). For example, Noriko's reflections on her own microteaching accounted for the substantial proportion of her journal entries in the autumn semester of 2009. Her comments ranged greatly from time management and non-verbal delivery to teaching materials, lesson plans, and language activities, but the focus in this section is on giving clear explanations (PCK) as it was rated highly by Noriko during the second card-sorting exercise in the fourth interview. The following illustration of Noriko's case on giving clear explanations indicates that informal teaching experience in itself is not strongly influential enough in student teachers' expertise development.

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<sup>101</sup> In this study, Chiyo and Saori were the only participants who did not teach at *kyoku*.

Noriko commented on how she gave grammatical explanations in November, 2009, after her 10-minute microteaching in the Methods II course:

I did 10-minute microteaching today [in the Methods course]. I had to introduce “be going to ~” so I made three kinds of example sentences with the names of the teachers that [learners] were familiar with. But by making the sentences appear authentic, I ended up using difficult words. My classmates gave me feedback [after teaching] and I realised I need to use already-taught vocabulary words more.

[Journal entry, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2009]

This journal entry indicates that her informal teaching experience, with the help of peers’ feedback, made her realise the importance of the use of understandable *teacher talk*, which is one of the crucial factors that help a teacher to formulate an effective approach to teaching beginners (Brown, 2007b). In the fourth interview, Noriko cited the awareness of less able students as one of the reasons for rating clear explanations more highly than in the spring semester. She explained as follows:

In the spring semester, I could not explain well why giving clear explanations was important...When I did microteaching the other day, my cohort students gave me feedback [on giving explanations]. For example, ‘your explanations were too difficult for students at a certain school’ or ‘too easy’ and so forth... This made me think more about [how I can give] clearer explanations in teaching.

[Fourth interview]

Noriko further mentioned that because of informal teaching experience, she realised giving clear explanations was more difficult to do than she had thought, especially when there were so many other issues she had to consider in teaching. This example implies that Noriko tried to reflect on and

analyse her microteaching with the help of peers and came to realise what issues and challenges she still had to work on in developing her expertise further, with which many of the participants in this study also agreed.

As noted above, in this study most participants attempted to gain some informal practical teaching experiences, and the experiences led to the awareness of actual educational contexts and their teaching abilities at the time. The experiences sometimes caused a feeling of anxiety in some participants such as Aya, Noriko, Akira, and Mari, since when they discovered what issues needed further work and improvement because of reflection, they did not have an opportunity to fully practise what and how they wanted to teach prior to the teaching practice. In a sense, even with informal practical learning experiences, the participants were still at the first stage<sup>102</sup> of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) five-staged professional development of student teachers without fully teaching experiences in a real classroom setting. Before the teaching practice, the participants may have been allowed to teach in a relatively short amount of time or only one classroom activity during volunteer teaching. They may have had a very small group of students at *kyoku*. Or, they may have taught in a hypothetical situation in ITE courses in which university students were the audience instead of actual students.

To put the point differently, informal practical teaching experiences enabled many of the participants in this study to have clearer purposes when interacting with experienced teachers, students and peers later in training, and in further developing their expertise. They raised their awareness of the

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<sup>102</sup> As we saw earlier, Furlong and Maynard (1995) discussed five stages of development of student teachers on their school experiences: 'early idealism', 'personal survival', 'dealing with difficulties', 'hitting a plateau', and 'moving on'.



challenges and issues that needed to be tackled prior to the teaching practice. However, without much opportunity to fully practise teaching, the participants did not have much confidence in directly experimenting and individually solving the problems based on their own teacher expertise, but rather, as we shall see in the next section, first employed mediational activities in order to narrow the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching.

### **5.3 Mediational tools that narrow the gap between theory and practice**

In the subsequent sections, two kinds of mediational tool for narrowing the gap between theory and practice will be discussed. As was discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3), human cognition emerges out of participation in social activities, and as Johnson (2009) discusses from a sociocultural theoretical perspective, tools that mediate teacher learning can include cultural artefacts and activities, scientific concepts, and social relations. In this study, the following two tools, mediational activities (observation and emulation) and social relations (learning from experienced teachers and peers), supported the developmental process of the student teachers and enabled them to narrow the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. Indeed, these elements above were not required components of the ITE curriculum in this study, unlike some studies such as Nagamine's<sup>103</sup> (2008), Poehner's (2011)<sup>104</sup>, and Collins, Brown, and Newman's (1989) cognitive apprenticeship model in which imitating teachers' thinking processes is utilised as a part of the process of learning; instead, the

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<sup>103</sup> In Nagamine's study, the participating student teachers were required to exchange collaborative journal entries and have group discussions on the entries fortnightly.

<sup>104</sup> In Poehner's study, the participating teacher trainees were divided into Critical Friends Groups in which they discussed and collaboratively found solutions to the dilemma according to the provided protocol of procedural steps and guidelines.

participants in this study spontaneously sought mediational tools in order to fill in the gap, as the situation demanded. In the following two sections, how these tools mediated their process of learning to teach and why they depended on these tools will be further delineated.

### *5.3.1 Impact of mediational activities of observation and emulation*

In this study, the findings indicate that the following mediational activities, observation, emulation and peer learning, were particularly actively utilised by the participants as a springboard for filling in the gap between theory and practice. For example, Chiyo, Noriko, Akira, Mari, and Mayuko frequently mentioned in both the interviews and journals that they actively sought role models of experienced teachers and peers, observed how they taught, and emulated their methods of teaching in their own teaching. The successful example of Chiyo below shows that some student teachers in the study were able to make the transition naturally from a language learner to a language teacher by critically observing and emulating their experienced teachers, unlike school pupils who observe their teachers uncritically without thinking about teacher thinking behind the stage (Lortie, 1975). Furthermore, peers served both as a provider of critical and honest feedback on their teaching in a less threatening manner, as well as a role model who could provide craft skills, challenging but possible to replicate. The impact of peer learning on student teachers' professional development will be discussed later in this chapter (section 5.3.2). It should be also noted that some student teachers are not as gifted and do not necessarily have natural skills which are necessary to fill a gap between theory and practice. As Akira's case in section

5.3.1.2 in this chapter will indicate later, the failure to find an appropriate role model for observation or emulation may result in their failure to make sense of their expertise as a subject specialist. Also, as can be seen in Mayuko's case (section 5.3.1.3 in this chapter), the inability to critically reflect on theory and practice may lead to mere imitation of teachers in order to survive the teaching practice (Furlong & Maynard, 1995) when there is no proper support through ITE.

#### *5.3.1.1 A successful case: Chiyo's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy*

As was already noted in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1), it is generally accepted that a learner-centred approach to language teaching has attracted attention and it is certainly one of the areas taught in ITE courses at the research site. In foreign language learning, learners are at the centre of active learning: they think and use the target language and take control of their own learning (Benson, 2001; Nunan, 1988). In this study, the interview and journal data show that Chiyo and Mari were the two cases that articulated the concept of learner-centred pedagogy in ELT more successfully and in a more balanced form than the other participants. What made these participants more successful was mostly due to their active use of observation and emulation of experienced teachers as we should see in the following example of Chiyo.

In the third interview, Chiyo's understanding of the concept of the learner-centred approach in ELT was still somewhat inaccurate: prioritising students' needs over teachers' needs, and planning and monitoring students' progress from their perspectives. As the researcher's field notes show, the third interview with Chiyo was conducted before she began to visit a nearby

junior high school regularly as a volunteer teacher assistant. Thus, what she noted during the interview was not yet underpinned by formal practical experiences.

However, mainly through further observation and emulation, she developed her understanding of the concept. For example, Chiyo wrote in her journal about her volunteer teaching experiences explaining how group tasks were effectively used by experienced teachers: “The students during group work were thinking hard and worked very actively. I found it important to give an opportunity for moving their seats and discussing with their classmates” (Journal entry, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2009). With regard to what exactly happened to the students, Chiyo stated in the fourth interview as follows:

This is a technique that Mr. Yamamoto<sup>105</sup> was using today, and, for example, he asked a volunteer teacher like me to introduce myself [in English] first. And then, he asked the students to listen to me, and then to think of what they wanted to ask me and put [questions] into English. Then, they discussed by rows<sup>106</sup> for about three minutes and they made questions in English. Hmm, for example, they asked me questions like “Have you been to the US?”, “What is your favorite school lunch menu?” They thought by themselves and made questions [together] about what they wanted to ask, and since [the teacher said] it is ok to make mistakes, so, their words were sometimes grammatically in the wrong order, but [he said] it is important that what you want to ask gets through [to a listener], and as they discussed together, well, they were discussing like, an interrogative word comes first and what word should be next, I thought such an activity is very effective to promote their autonomy.

[Fourth interview]

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<sup>105</sup> Mr. Yamamoto was a pseudonym given to the teacher whom Chiyo mainly worked with as a volunteer teaching assistant. He was an English teacher with five-year teaching experiences who happened to be a graduate of the same ITE programme. Chiyo went to this junior high school once or twice a week in the autumn semester of 2009, where she also had some chances to work with other English teachers there.

<sup>106</sup> Typically students sit in rows facing a teacher in front even in a foreign language classroom in secondary schools in Japan.

As noted earlier in this section, in the third interview, Chiyo defined the concept in a somewhat undeveloped way. However, the quote above shows that, due largely to observing the experienced teacher, her understanding of learner-centeredness was gradually changing more toward having students work on their own and use English to express their ideas, closer to how the pedagogy is usually defined in ELT.

Chiyo's perspective on learner-centred pedagogy continued to transform; during the fourth interview, she further explained her understanding of the pedagogy then based on observation of Mr. Yamamoto's teaching:

What I thought ideal before was, well, [a] student-centred [approach] where students actively volunteer their opinions and [a teacher and students] establish a lesson together, not so teacher-dominant, but, well, [I saw] actual classrooms, and in addition, I made lesson plans myself [in the Methods course], and now I feel, unless [a teacher] teaches a certain degree of knowledge [first], or gives explanations [to students] to do this or that, it's kind of like [a teacher] abandoning [his responsibility]. Ideally, [a teacher should] provide a topic and let students work on their own, but in fact, if I were a junior-high-school student and [a teacher] told us to work [on our own right away], then we would say, "I don't know what to do", or "I don't want to do this". To some extent, a teacher [should] teach in a teacher-centred way, then tell students, "now you are ready to do this by yourselves," or "make sentences on your own which are different from the model I gave you." Then students can have some confidence since they did it once already [with the teacher]. This will raise students' motivation, too. [Fourth interview]

This excerpt shows Chiyo's understanding of the concept then; in order to make a learner-centred class successful, a lesson should be carefully sequenced with ample staged tasks appropriate for students, while a teacher must give proper instructions so that students will feel safe enough to actively participate in a group task. Chiyo became aware that the degree of

learner-centeredness should be controlled by a teacher depending on factors such as contextual constraints and learner disposition and competences, which is in line with what Hedge (2000) asserts in her study on language teachers with some experiences. Similarly, Chiyo came to notice through observation that a teacher did not simply hand over their responsibilities to learners and learners were not always ready to make responsible decisions on their own.

At this phase, however, Chiyo had only few opportunities to emulate what she observed in her own teaching. In order to further develop her perspectives on learner-centred pedagogy in ELT, during the teaching practice she actively used observation and emulation. As already discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.1), Chiyo was asked by her supervising teacher to observe how experienced teachers taught English in the first week of the three-week teaching practice. The following quotes from the teaching log indicate that in observation, Chiyo paid close attention to specific teaching skills which she could later emulate in her own teaching, though no specific objectives or behaviours were provided in advance by the supervising teacher on which to focus:

Third-year, Class 4 --- [The students were] preparing for an interview with an ALT<sup>107</sup>. The teacher provided an in-class handout which was made to suit the students with the lower proficiency level. [They were to] choose questions to ask [during the interview] from the handout. I understood well that [the teacher was trying to] give them support according to students' levels so that they could use English actively.

[Log entry, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010]

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<sup>107</sup> See footnote 8 in Chapter 1 as well as footnote 83 in Chapter 4 for the description of ALTs.

Second-year, Class 4 --- I found the first activity of a crossword puzzle effective in that [the students were asked to] not only fill in blanks [with verbs] but also change them into the past tense by themselves...In a translation task, the teacher very effectively and adequately led [the students] to an answer. I've seen many times that even the students who first said they didn't understand could get to the answer on the teacher's hints. I would like to emulate this and teach in such a way that I could lead them to answers. [Log entry, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010]

The quotes above show that Chiyo did not observe experienced teachers' teaching behaviours uncritically, although many researchers in the past have criticised the impact of the implicit process of "observation of apprenticeship" (Lortie, 1975); rather, she tried to analyse why some tasks worked well and which teaching skills she could later emulate in her own teaching. The first excerpt shows that Chiyo came to notice that providing support appropriate for students' proficiency levels is essential in order to facilitate an interactive task. The second excerpt also indicates that Chiyo paid attention to how the teacher's support could lead the students to forming answers in English. As Bandura (1977) argues, as a process of human learning, by nature, people learn observationally and form an idea of how new behaviours can be performed; Chiyo also tried to examine how she could use the model as "a guide for action" (p.22) in order to promote student-centred learning.

During the post-teaching-practice interview, Chiyo stated that in the beginning of the teaching practice, she attempted to look at how the lessons flowed and emulated exactly how her supervising teacher taught because she had not established her teaching style yet. The following quote indicates that even in emulating the routine tasks such as giving instructions for a

reading-aloud activity, Chiyo found it difficult to perform well and give as clear instructions for her students as her supervising teacher did:

Every time [I taught], I emulated how the supervising teacher taught, but, since [the students] have done this [before] in every lesson, so [I thought they] must be fine [with the procedure], so I just said, like “then, let’s practise reading. OK? Start.” And then [the students said] “are we doing this in a pair?” or “up to what point are we reading?” Without specific instructions, [the students] became worried even with what they do in every lesson. So, I should give specific instructions, like “today, this, tomorrow, that”, and so forth. [Final interview]

Later in the teaching practice, Chiyo became able to observe and emulate more extensively how her supervising teacher taught, and later reflected on how it went. The following quote shows that Chiyo tried to emulate not only the routine tasks but also more complicated teaching craft which needed deeper teacher thinking behind the stage:

First of all, [as for] the lesson flow, in the very beginning [of the teaching practice] I was asked by Ms Imada<sup>108</sup> to emulate how she taught, so I thoroughly observed her teaching style, and additionally, I tried to observe particular skills. For example, when she asked questions, how she elicited answers from the students, or who answered the questions, [I observed] these points. Also, how she dealt with the students when they had a lapse in concentration, and from [how she dealt with the students] I gathered some hints and then emulated it in my teaching. While I observed her, I myself walked among the students, like [as if it were] in team teaching. This way, I learned by closely observing how the students perceived the teacher and how they became focused, or how they learned. [Final interview]

As the quote above indicates, Chiyo came to understand how observation and emulation were beneficial for her in developing her reflective skills as well as teaching skills.

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<sup>108</sup> Ms Imada, a pseudonym, was Chiyo’s supervising teacher during the teaching practice. She was a female English teacher with about twenty years of teaching experiences in the suburbs of Tokyo.



According to one of the few studies on EFL student teachers in ITE in Japan, Nagamine (2008) found a common value among the participants that they found it essential to emulate experienced teachers' teaching to become better at teaching English, especially at an early stage of their development, in order to make up for their anxieties about the lack of CK and PCK. Some participants in his study, however, experienced difficulty and reservation in imitating experienced teachers. They stated that it was "dangerous" (p.181) to emulate others without analysing the situation and teacher thinking behind the stage. This suggests that some student teachers may imitate experts uncritically, which will not contribute to their professional development. As we shall see later in this section, this is similar to Mayuko's case in this study (see also section 4.4.2 in Chapter 4).

In contrast, what made Chiyo more successful in effectively using emulation was that she emulated experienced teachers with some clear purpose in mind, which she explained so in the final interview (see the sixth quote in this section). Joining this study and keeping reflective journals for two consecutive semesters prior to the teaching practice was certainly one reason for providing her with a sense of purpose; in addition, her informal practical experiences as a volunteer teaching assistant beyond the curriculum exerted a strong impact on Chiyo as was discussed in this chapter (section 5.2.3). In the final interview, when asked about beneficial factors of the mediational activities she utilised, Chiyo stated:

As I observed how Mr. Yamamoto taught English [prior to the teaching practice], although there were differences in their lesson flows because [Mr. Yamamoto and my supervising teacher] had different teaching styles, I was able to notice that they

had many common points such as how to plan and conduct lessons within fifty minutes, so I should admit I learned a lot [from observing Mr. Yamamoto].

[Final interview]

Towards the end of her ITE experience, Chiyo became able to articulate the reconstructed idea of the learner-centred pedagogy in comparison to the one in the beginning of the study. During the third card-sorting exercise in the final interview, Chiyo stated that what is important in a learner-centred approach is to pay attention to individual students and to adjust teaching accordingly. In her understanding, a teacher needs to grasp each student's levels and interests first so that he or she can provide appropriate tasks and support, with which students can actively engage in learning. Active interaction with each other on language tasks will eventually lead to forming their own ideas and taking responsibility for their own learning, which she believed is an ultimate goal of ELT.

Chiyo's case implies that in ITE at HEIs, more opportunities to observe and emulate others' teaching, particularly with specific purposes and goals, could be useful. Through this meditational task, student teachers can practise drawing on their emulated actions using theoretical underpinnings. They also can make up for the short period of teaching practice in the case of ITE in Japan. It should be also noted that the failure to find an appropriate role model for observation or emulation may result in the failure to make sense of teacher expertise as a subject specialist. As opposed to Chiyo's case, in the cases of Aya and Noriko, without an appropriate model, they found it harder to create a lesson on their own.

For instance, in Noriko's case, as was discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.3), at the first glance Noriko successfully used observation and emulation

for developing her teacher expertise; for example, in the post-teaching-practice interview, Noriko stated that she found it very comfortable to emulate her supervising teacher during the teaching practice since her supervising teacher taught in a similar teaching approach as her ideal way to teach, such as teaching grammar in inductive ways by first giving familiar examples embedded in contexts rather than explicitly providing rules (H. D. Brown, 2007b). As Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) argue, the degree of influence of supervising teachers depends on the degree of congruence of values of a supervising teacher and a student teacher.

However, when Noriko was asked to teach reading during the teaching practice, she noted in the post-teaching-practice interview that she found it challenging to plan and conduct a lesson from scratch without a good model to emulate. Not knowing what to do, Noriko further explained during the same interview that she first introduced new vocabulary words, and then asked her students to read aloud and translate one line at a time, a typical technique in the traditional grammar translation method (see section 2.2.3 in Chapter 2 for the details of the grammar translation method). As we saw already in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.3), this is the same method she commented that she disliked as a student. Without a good model to emulate, Noriko simply following how her former teachers taught English. She instead could have taught reading, for instance, by having students read paragraphs together and discuss what each paragraph meant in groups in a more top-down approach by using the background knowledge and the knowledge of the world; however, without appropriate PCK to implement such a learner-centred class, she claimed that she needed a model first which could show her how to adapt the concept into

practices. The case of Noriko's, and as was discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.2), the case of Aya's as well, give an indication that having an appropriate model to observe and emulate can help student teachers link their theoretical knowledge to practical experiences more effectively.

#### *5.3.1.2 An unsuccessful case: Akira's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy*

In contrast to Chiyo's case above, the following case of Akira further illustrates that the understanding of theoretical principles alone does not result in effective teaching if without a good model to underpin the teaching. The second interview with Akira reveals that his initial understanding of learner-centred pedagogy was informed by one of the content courses on applied linguistics he joined in the department of English studies in the spring semester of 2009; it was to have students think on their own and express their ideas, and the role of a teacher in such an approach was to make appropriate judgments in deciding when to give hints and when to watch without support. According to Akira, he had never learned the concept before anywhere else. Furthermore, he was informed by English language courses<sup>109</sup> he took as an undergraduate English-major student where his teachers usually had students discuss many issues in English. Through taking these courses, he stated in the second interview that he learned that teaching in the learner-centred approach was what he wished to aim towards as an EFL teacher who makes students work in a group and express their ideas in English. In the autumn semester 2009, however, he put more stress on the theory he was then learning in general education courses; with regard to

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<sup>109</sup> See footnote 71 in section 4.4.1 in Chapter 4 about the content of these courses.

learner-centred pedagogy, for example, he made comments such as “a learner needs to grow so that he will not say yes all the time to adults” and “he has to have his own ideas and express them clearly and listen to others” (third interview). This indicates that his understanding of the concept was fluctuating between the one as an EFL teacher and as a homeroom teacher.

Akira stated in the final interview that during the teaching practice, he first attempted to look at his supervising teacher, Ms Matsuda<sup>110</sup>, as a model in order to improve his subject teaching skills; but it soon turned into disappointment since the supervising teacher was not a good model of a subject teacher:

It was helpful to see how Ms Matsuda used flashcards and picture cards. I thought writing down [new words] on the blackboard was a lot of work but Ms Matsuda used the flashcards and later stuck them up on the blackboard. I found it less stressful. Yes, picture cards. [Ms Matsuda] used them just as the teachers' manual tells you to do. [Final interview]

As Akira explained in the final interview, some basic craft skills such as using flashcards and picture cards were easy to emulate in his teaching, but he could not see Ms Matsuda as a model of learner-centred pedagogy. Through observing her, Akira realised that she did not devise various teaching strategies and make informed choices, which he thought were essential for making an English class more learner-centred. He found out instead that many of the students looked as if they had been thinking and engaging in

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<sup>110</sup> According to the researcher's field notes, Ms Matsuda, a pseudonym, was a female English teacher with about twenty-year teaching experiences in junior high schools in suburban areas in Tokyo. See Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1) for more detailed explanations on Ms Matsuda as a model.

classroom activities, but in fact they were just spacing out or gave up studying English. Also during the group tasks, he saw some just left it to other group members without any appropriate support by the teacher. Although Akira theoretically understood that to become able to express ideas in English to others should be one of the foreign language learners' long-term goals, with no good model to underpin his ideal teaching, he could not make it happen in his own teaching<sup>111</sup>.

Akira's case is in one sense similar to many practical learning contexts in ITE such as Holligan's case study (1997). Holligan argues that student teachers are often implicitly forced to conform to "implicit professional norms governing acceptable thought and behaviour expected of teachers" (p.548) through contact with school teachers. Similarly, without a model to critically observe, analyse and emulate, he was unable to make further meaning of a learner-centred pedagogy in ELT, but was forced to imitate his supervising teacher's basic craft skills. Unfortunately, throughout his study in the interviews and journal entries, Akira did not mention much about using other mediational activities such as working with peers and co-constructing meaning with them as being influential on his professional development. Perhaps with the systematic support of providing more interaction with peers, he could have connected his theoretical understanding to an actual teaching context more successfully in becoming a subject specialist. The issue of raising student teachers' awareness of benefits of peer learning will be discussed in section 6.2.3 in Chapter 6.

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<sup>111</sup> As the very first quote of Akira's in Chapter 1 indicates, he gave a similar comment with regard to content-based instruction.

### 5.3.1.3 *Uncritical Emulation: Mayuko's understanding of learner-centred pedagogy*

Finally, the results of the study indicate that some student teachers in the study merely imitated teachers' teaching skills in order to survive the teaching practice, which Furlong and Maynard (1995) refer to as the stage of personal survival. As Mayuko's case indicates in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.2), what differentiated unsuccessful cases from successful ones was the inability to reflect on theory and practice.

In contrast to Akira's case, Mayuko, who was poor at reflection and originally with a strong belief in being a good homeroom teacher, in fact had a good model of a subject teacher during the teaching practice. In the beginning of the investigation, being asked what she meant by a student-centred classroom, she answered as follows with no indication of theoretical intervention:

*Researcher:* Can you give me an example of a student-centred classroom?

*Mayuko:* Well, to teach in an easy-to-understand manner, I think.

*Researcher:* A teacher teaches in an easy-to-understand manner. This is equal to a student-centred class.

*Mayuko:* ...that's what I think... [Third interview]

In the excerpt above, Mayuko could not elaborate on what learner-centred pedagogy means reflecting on what was presented in ITE courses with regard to a learner-centred approach in ELT. Later during the fourth interview, Mayuko discussed one of the journal articles that she was reading in a content-based course on foreign language learning and teaching, and "being able to teach clearly" was raised again by Mayuko as an important element of learner-centred pedagogy. As she was asked to elaborate on what she meant,

she responded as follows:

*Researcher:* Could you explain more about teaching in an easy-to-understand manner?

*Mayuko:* Well, hmm..., in the book [that I read in the course], when teaching English, a class which encourages students to have interests in English is a class easy for students to understand.

*Researcher:* A class which makes students become interested in English. That's what you mean by a class which is easy for students to understand.

*Mayuko:* Yes... [Fourth interview]

However, while her microteaching in the Methods course was observed by the researcher of this study, her teaching was far from being learner-centred and easy to understand<sup>112</sup>. In her case, she was unable to refer back to theoretical knowledge, analyse and underpin her own teaching actions by her theoretical knowledge and make sense of her teaching in order to further improve it. As Funaki (2008) discusses, many student teachers in ITE in Japan lack problem-solving abilities due to lack of proper training for reflective teaching and support; Mayuko is certainly one such example. The issue of providing training explicitly for reflective practices in ITE will be discussed in section 6.2.2 in Chapter 6.

During the researcher's observation of her demonstration lesson in the teaching practice, however, Mayuko actively interacted with her students and more or less successfully taught English. Prior to the teaching practice, Mayuko noted that she wanted to teach in a learner-centred approach, which she defined as an easy-to-understand manner in the third interview. Returning back to HEI after the teaching practice, she stated in the final

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<sup>112</sup> See Chapter 4 (section 4.4.2) for the detailed description of Mayuko's microteaching.



interview that she tried to teach in a learner-centred approach. She was asked to cite a case, and gave the following examples: asking her students to translate the example sentences into Japanese in explicit grammar instruction, and providing explanations in English so that they could think about what she was saying. She stressed that in both cases, she emulated how her supervisor taught and tried to encourage them to think on their own. Her understanding of learner-centred pedagogy showed a slight change; however, it was still far from the real sense of the term and, during the interview, again, she did not refer back to theoretical principles to analyse her teaching and support her understanding of the pedagogy then.

During the final interview, Mayuko also stated that, with not much confidence in her CK and PCK, it was good to have a model, her supervising teacher, to begin with. As Borg (2003) posits, it should be stressed that her superficial behavioural changes did not necessarily mean that her teacher cognition was developed fully. As was discussed in Chapter 2, emulation has often been criticised in the literature in ITE (Alexander, 2002; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Roberts, 1998), as student teachers may be confined to a particular model of a certain techniques or a particular school context without much difference in their teacher cognition. As opposed to Chiyo who was able to experience a “creative form of imitation” (Dunn, 2011, p.56) because she tried to analyse her emulated teaching and make some improvements, *kaizen*, Mayuko is certainly the case who was confined to what Furlong and Maynard (1995) would call *stage three*<sup>113</sup> of novice teachers’ development. As the

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<sup>113</sup> Furlong and Maynard (1995) discern five stages in student teachers’ development during school experiences: ‘early idealism’, ‘personal survival’, ‘dealing with difficulties’, ‘hitting a plateau’, and ‘moving on’.

example above indicates, without being able to make subject-related theories explicit and relate them to her teaching practice, she could only adopt “the outward appearance of being a teacher” (p.82) by uncritically imitating her supervising teacher’s teaching behaviours in order to survive as a teacher.

As Chapter 2 (section 2.3.4) discussed, observation and emulation are one kind of mediation in human learning (Rogoff, 1995), through which novice teachers can transform from external and social interactions to internal and psychological elements (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Why did most of the participants in this study resort to mediational activities of observation and emulation as a measure to link theoretical knowledge to teaching practice, rather than directly experimenting in actual classroom practices on their theoretical principles that they acquired? Firstly, it should be pointed out again that there is a problem of the balance between theoretical and practical elements in ITE in Japan. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the participating student teachers entered the ITE programme and began their coursework upon matriculation. The core courses on teacher knowledge in ELT, “Methods Course I and II”, were not offered until their third year, which they were required to register for two consecutive semesters<sup>114</sup> prior to the teaching practice. The teaching practice was conducted during the spring semester of the fourth year, lasting three weeks only in average. In comparison to PGCE in the UK, where the ratio of theoretical and practical components is one to two (see section 1.3.3 in Chapter 1), that of ITE in Japan is, roughly speaking, seven to one. The imbalance usually leads to student teachers’ anxiety, since

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<sup>114</sup> The ITE curriculum at the research site was revised in the 2013 academic year in which student teachers are now required to take three core courses (Methods I, II and III) on teacher knowledge.

they obviously lack ample time for practical experiences, as many of the participants frequently stated during the investigation period. As a result, many of them in the study sought more informal practical experiences, such as volunteer teaching or *jyuku* teaching. The addition of informal experiences did not easily ease their anxiety, however. Their low confidence in teaching often resulted in seeking a model of an experienced teacher whom they feel comfortable to emulate as a springboard for connecting theory with practice, as was also noted by Nagamine (2008).

Another issue that should be raised again regarding emulation is its positive cultural connotation in Japan. As formerly discussed<sup>115</sup>, this is an approach deeply permeated in apprentice training in becoming professional in Japan. This practice is found not only industrial sectors and traditional arts, but also in the teaching culture in Japan. In in-service teacher training in Japan, it is considered highly valuable to look for a model in order to further develop autonomy as a professional teacher. As Shimahara and Sakai (1992) point out, novice teachers in Japan are also expected to “steal”<sup>116</sup> ideas and skills from more experienced teachers by observing, emulating and interacting with them. Student teachers work through the process of emulation in personally meaningful ways “in order to change the nature of their instructional activities” (Johnson, 2009, p. 39). This relates to what Chiyo and Mari mentioned as *kaizen*<sup>117</sup> in Chapter 4, making improvements in their teaching after observation, emulation and reflection on emulated teaching. As

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<sup>115</sup> See Chapter 2 (section 2.3.4) for more details of the cultural connotation of emulation in Japan.

<sup>116</sup> The cultural connotation of the word ‘steal’ was also explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3) as well as in Chapter 4 (section 4.5).

<sup>117</sup> See footnote 64 in Chapter 4 for the detailed explanation of the term, *kaizen*.

the case of Chiyo's conceptual development of the learner-centred pedagogy shows, theoretical knowledge acquired at the HEI underpinned the participants' emulated teaching, leading to the "internalization" (Johnson, 2009, p.18) and the establishment of a more solid foundation of their teacher expertise. They made informed choices of what to observe and which skills to emulate, rather than merely imitating an implicit model, as was the case with, for example, the ethnographic study on student teachers in childcare by Alexander (2002). In this author's study, the participants developed a set of skills that they saw and merely imitated in their specific settings due to the nature of competence-based training. As opposed to Alexander's study, many participants in this study later reflected on their emulation and attempted to reconceptualise their teacher knowledge that they acquired at HEI. This was also reflected in some of the ITE tutors' perspectives of professional development: Tutor A<sup>118</sup> that Chiyo took the Methods course from and the ITE lecturer<sup>119</sup> that Akira admired. Many of the participants in this study possessed this culturally-endorsed value about the process of learning to teach in Japan.

#### *5.3.1.4 Limitations of observation and emulation*

As this section so far has discussed, most of the participating student teachers in this study attempted to employ observation and emulation as mediational tools in order to narrow the gap between theoretical knowledge and actual teaching practice and make improvements in their teaching. The

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<sup>118</sup> For the comment by Tutor A, see the footnote 86 in Chapter 4 (section 4.5).

<sup>119</sup> According to the researcher's field notes, while observing Akira's microteaching on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2009, the ITE lecturer encouraged the student teachers during the feedback session to actively observe, emulate and "steal" experts' craft in order to become more professional.

results indicate that observation and emulation are significant elements in the process of student teachers' early professional development in ITE in Japan. This is found to be in consistency with what Dunn calls a "creative form of imitation" (2011, p.56). However, as the cases in the study also indicate, willingness and capacity to critically observe and analyse others' teaching, make professional choices to choose which teaching skills to emulate, and make continuous improvement are essential for developing their expertise. Without willingness or capacity, such as in the cases of Akira and Mayuko, student teachers may simply copy others' teaching craft or may adhere to routines and continue with traditional teaching approaches. The necessity of providing explicitly-assisted guidance as well as training of reflective practices on emulated teaching at HEIs will be discussed in section 6.2.2 in Chapter 6.

### *5.3.2 Impact of peer interaction*

As was previously discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3), within the framework of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), learning is conceptualised as participation and social relations in the learning community are crucial for promoting learning. Similarly in this study, in addition to mediational activities of observation and emulation, the interview and journal data indicate that the role of other members of the learning community was significant as a "mediational means" (Johnson, 2009, p. 25), and the student teachers in this study were largely dependent on engagement with experienced teachers and peers. It implies that EFL student teachers' development of teacher expertise is achieved more effectively not only at the personal level through critical reflection on *individual* experiences (S. Borg, 2006; Korthagen et al., 2001;

Tsui, 2003), but social learning with *others*, the members of the same learning community. *Others* in this study includes (1) former teachers (Chiyo/Noriko/Akira/Mari), (2) experienced teachers in informal settings where they practised teaching as volunteer teachers (Chiyo/Akira), (3) experienced teachers in formal settings at the teaching practice sites (Chiyo/Noriko/Akira/Mayuko/Mari), (4) current ITE tutors and/or English teachers at the university (Chiyo/Akira/Mari), and (5) peers (Chiyo/Aya/Noriko/Akira/ Mari).

How student teachers established pre-existing beliefs influenced by both their own teachers in the past and their current teachers at the university was discussed in section 5.2.1 in this chapter. Furthermore, in section 5.2.3 in this chapter, how the student teachers learned from experienced teachers as a model during informal practical experiences was already discussed, while how they learned through observation and emulation of experienced teachers during formal practical teaching was also discussed in this chapter in section 5.3.1. In the current section, the focus will be on peer learning and the two functions of peers: co-meaning-makers, and model providers.

In Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3), one of the major roles of peer interaction in L2 teacher education is explained that peers, who are not necessarily more capable experts, collectively go through cognitive struggle and develop collective identity as professional teachers (Nagamine, 2008). The findings of the study also indicate that the participating student teachers developed their expertise by actively observing and working with peers. The benefits of having peers in this study were mainly twofold. Firstly, student teachers appreciate honest criticism from peers on their teaching, less intimidating than

experienced teachers. It provides them chances to co-create meaning and re-construct their theoretical knowledge prior to their practical experiences at school. Secondly, peers serve as a role model, as a resource of teaching skills that they were not aware of, which are easier for them to emulate because they are close at the professional level. Articulation and emulation can assist them to “push the boundaries of their current state of cognitive development” (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 8) and professional growth occurs through interactions with each other.

It should be also recognised here that peer learning was found beneficial in this study although it was neither explicitly incorporated in the curriculum, nor forced by the participation in this study, in contrast with some previous studies in which peer learning is more vigorously encouraged and incorporated in the curriculum. These studies report that it has beneficial effects on professional development of student teachers. For example, in Nagamine’s study (2008), EFL student teachers were asked to keep a collaborative journal which helped them reconstruct some of the theoretical concepts about language learning and teaching. In another study, Dunn (2011) concludes that the intervention of the workshop allowed the trainees of second language teachers to express newly-learned theoretical concepts by connecting them with their personal experiences as well as sharing ideas with other trainees during small-group activities. Similarly, Childs (2011) argues that a support system in an MA TESL programme, afforded through supervising professors and other trainees, mediated the trainees’ conceptualisation of second language teaching. Whether in writing or directly interacting, these studies indicate that cognitive and emotional support by

members of the learning community, especially those who are close at their cognitive, social and professional levels, can mediate novice teachers to conceptualise their learning and teaching more effectively (Murphey & Arao, 2001). What these studies do not fully reveal is how peer learning can be effectively facilitated when it is not explicitly incorporated in a curriculum, such as in this particular study. What the results suggest is that student teachers in ITE in Japan normally draw on peers and interaction with them; however, as Akira's case indicates (section 5.3.1.2 in this chapter), some student teachers did not take advantage of peers in mediating their learning-to-teach process. In addition, the limitations of peer learning in ITE needs to be considered (see section 5.3.2.3 in this chapter).

#### *5.3.2.1 Peers as co-meaning-makers*

As already noted in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3), peers often serve as co-meaning makers who can provide constructive feedback in ITE. Johnson (2009) also calls a peer in teacher education a "temporary other" (p.25), who can help a teacher or a student teacher verbalise and externalise his or her thinking and co-construct the meanings in the process of learning to teach. In a similar way, the findings of the study suggest that all the participants found working with their peers, EFL student teachers in the ITE programme, as one solution to their problems. The benefits of having peers were mainly twofold. Firstly, the participating student teachers appreciated honest and investigative criticism from peers on their teaching. It is similar to what Clarke et al. (2014) call as "providers of feedback" (p.174), one way that supervising teachers participate in ITE. Feedback from peers differs from that of supervising



teachers, however, in that there is no power relationship and thus it is less intimidating. Chiyo, Aya, Noriko, and Mari were particularly positive about the first kind of benefits of having peers in their learning-to-teach process. They believed that it gave them chances to co-construct their theoretical knowledge prior to their practical experiences at school. The following example of Noriko illustrates how co-constructing the meanings with peers and reflecting on their teaching contributed her greatly to grow as a teacher.

Noriko stated during the fourth interview that peer feedback often made her aware of others' ideas and perspectives that she lacked in her expertise. For example, during her microteaching in autumn 2009 that was observed by the researcher, she tried to implicitly introduce a new grammatical structure, *there + be*, using the names of fruits in English. According to Noriko, since she assumed that her future students would not be familiar with the fruit names in English, she first provided them using flash cards and stuck them on the blackboard. As she spent more time introducing them than explaining the structure *there + be*, her peers commented later that the lesson was focused more on the introduction of the fruit terms and they did not have enough chance to actually practise using the new grammatical structure, and thus, they did not feel that they learned it. In this regard, Noriko stated, "it was illuminating for me" (fourth interview) and it reminded her of the importance of *noticing and output* in SLA theory (Swain, 2005) that she learned at HEI. She explained that in order for learners to pay attention to language form, the structure needs to be noticed and practised, which she failed to do so during her microteaching. As this example shows, in the post-teaching-practice interview, Noriko stated that observing and discussing with her peers

provided her with an opportunity to become aware of shortcomings of her knowledge base and enabled her to better clarify problems at an appropriate level. This is often observed in the case of peer learning in other disciplines, such as medical education training (Bulte, Betts, Garner, & Durning, 2007). Whatever the discipline is, according to Bulte et al. (2007), the “social and cognitive congruence” (p.583) is important to peer learning and teaching because social and cognitive congruence enables them to communicate with each other in a more informal way, coupled with an empathic attitude.

As was previously discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.2), Aya also valued her peer’s questions and advice. For example, her peers’ feedback on the activities that she used in microteaching in autumn 2009 made her notice that a learner-centred class was where students think on their own, with a minimum amount of teachers’ control, in order to promote learner autonomy (fourth interview). During the microteaching which the researcher observed, she team-taught with her classmate, one playing a role of a Japanese teacher while the other playing a role of an ALT. The game activity that they provided was fun, but there was no specific communicative purpose to achieve. This issue was pointed out by her peers later on, which she reflected on during the fourth interview and commented that it gave her a chance to rethink about the purposes and benefits of the learner-centred pedagogy. In the same interview, she also mentioned that she noticed through peer feedback that interaction with peers encouraged her to make clearer sense of the concept of learner-centred pedagogy.

Mari was another participant who positively valued her peers who gave her honest criticism. The following example illustrates how Mari used her

peers' criticism in making sense of her theoretical knowledge and growing as a subject teacher. In the second interview, Mari reported that she learned in the Methods course that how teaching materials should be analysed, and that thorough materials analysis before lesson planning would lead to more successful teaching. This view was stressed again while observing experienced teacher's filmed teaching during the coursework; she noted in the second interview that in order to teach effectively, careful lesson planning and thorough preparation were essential, which in turn would contribute to students' effective learning. Thus, Mari stated that she carefully analysed teaching materials and planned a lesson before her microteaching in one of the ITE courses. During the feedback session after her microteaching, however, she received many critical comments from her peers in spite of her thorough lesson planning. As the following excerpt shows, her peers criticised her teaching by saying that it was lengthy and one-sided, and she looked more like a straight-laced teacher at a cram school, *jyuku*, which in fact reflected Mari's initial thought on her ideal teaching approach of conveying her CK to students<sup>120</sup>:

[My peers] gave me feedback, saying that [I] was fast-paced and seemed to be in a hurry. I didn't mean it, but...if I spend more time [on each particular teaching point], I cannot teach [everything I planned] within 50 minutes. [Their comments reminded me that] I learned in the Methods course [before] there are some points you can [wait to] teach [till] later and other points you have to teach now. And I learned [from observing filmed teaching of an experience teacher] an experienced teacher can switch [between these two approaches] quickly. I quite agreed with [my peers' comments] and [they] made me think I need to have more practical experiences.

[Second interview]

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<sup>120</sup> See Chapter 4 (section 4.5) for the detailed description of Mari's initial thought on her ideal teaching approach.

The excerpt indicates that Mari analysed her peers' comments on her teaching by referring back to what she gained in the coursework. She was able to reflect on her teaching positively based on her peers' criticism, since they shared similar backgrounds and experiences, rather than experienced teachers with more sophisticated teaching skills and longer teaching experiences. Mari's idea on peer learning below also shows that she appreciated this sort of co-learning experiences in ITE and she was encouraged to further explore her teacher thinking:

I don't [usually] teach in a context where I get such [critical] comments. This was the first time to be in an environment where [we] point out both negative and positive points with each other. Looking back, I mean, [my peers] tell me my good points, and as for negative points [of my teaching], they don't only point them out, but they tell me how I can improve them. It made a very positive impact on my [teaching], I believe. [Second interview]

Another example of the impact of peer learning on expertise development was Mari's case of the use of reading-aloud activities in microteaching. Reading-aloud tasks are very common language activities in ELT in Japan at the secondary-school level (Tsuchiya, 2004), typically introduced to EFL student teachers as PCK in ITE. During the Methods course, Mari learned that there were numerous reading-aloud activities, which she decided to experiment with in her microteaching in the 2009 autumn semester. According to the researcher's field notes, she began a lesson with chorus reading as a class, then moved on to a task of reading aloud a text together slash by slash, called *chunk reading*<sup>121</sup>, and then provided another reading-aloud task called

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<sup>121</sup> According to Tsuchiya (2004), chunk reading is a task in which students read sentences divided beforehand into smaller groups of meaningfully-related words.

*chain reading* in which students took turns to read aloud the same text. Mari noted in the fourth interview after this microteaching experience that she emulated how her prospective supervising teacher taught using this chain-reading task<sup>122</sup>. During her microteaching at the HEI, it was observed that she also rigorously followed MEXT's new policy on the medium of instructions by teaching all in English<sup>123</sup>, and used the approach in which she tried not to make her class too teacher-dominant, since that was the feedback she mainly received from her peers previously.

The main reason why Mari used a series of reading-aloud tasks was, according to Mari, to make her class more student-centred since she believed reading-aloud tasks allowed students to use English. Contrary to her expectation, her peers gave critical feedback of her teaching again:

[My peers] said, "I didn't understand the purposes of doing these [reading-aloud] activities", or "it wasn't clear whether you wanted to teach grammar, or to make [students] read intensively, or to focus on reading comprehension." These comments made me rethink what I really wanted students to learn in this lesson.

[Final interview]

As the excerpt above illustrates, although Mari tried to reshape her teacher expertise by experimenting with what she learned and observed as PCK in her practice, her peers' sincere comments led to a new insight on how to use the tasks more effectively in actual teaching by clarifying purposes of activities and using appropriate ones which meet the needs of a specific group of learners.

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<sup>122</sup> Mari voluntarily went to observe her supervising teacher's teaching prior to the teaching practice.

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1) for the details of the curriculum reforms in ELT in Japan.

As was described earlier in this chapter (section 5.3.1), Mari valued the impact of emulating experienced teachers on her teaching in the post-teaching-practice interview; Mari also valued working with her peers as a “temporary other” (Johnson, 2009, p.25). She equally valued observing her peers and being observed and given feedback by her peers, which provided her with further hints for making meaning of her own teaching. The supplementary data of the interview with Tutor C<sup>124</sup> support Mari’s point. Being asked about her perspective on peer learning on the process of learning to teach, Tutor C responded that student teachers should be aware that there are other student teachers who can teach better than them, which should stimulate them to co-grow as a teacher. In other words, having a peer is essential in co-constructing the meanings of theory and alleviating the disparity between theory and practice, especially in an early stage of professional development. As Shulman and Shulman (2004) rightly posit, student teachers learn to teach effectively when the process of learning to teach is supported by “membership of a learning community” (p.267). As the examples of Noriko, Aya, and Mari above indicate, in the case of this study, cohort student teachers in the ITE coursework are certainly the members of the learning community, in addition to former and experienced teachers.

#### *5.3.2.2 Peers as model providers*

With regard to the second function of peers, they can also serve as role models, a resource of teacher thinking and teaching skills that student teachers were not previously aware of. It is similar to what Clarke et al. (2014)

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<sup>124</sup> See Tables 3.2 and 3.3 in Chapter 3 for the information on ITE tutors of the Methods courses.

call “modelers of practice” (p.177), another way of supervising teachers’ participation in ITE, although a modeler can be a peer, not only an experienced teacher, in this study. In having a peer as a model provider in their learning to teach process, mainly two benefits were observed in this study; while peers allow student teachers to have a third-person’s point of view, the skills of their peers are easier for them to emulate, for they are close at the professional level. Peers are proximal and easier to identify with; thus, they can assist each other to make sense of their learning within each other’s zone of proximal development more easily (Murphey & Arao, 2001).

Firstly, Chiyo and Aya occasionally reflected on how beneficial their peers were on their professional development for providing them with an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching with a third-person’s perspective. To cite an example, Aya stated in her journal that the existence of peers was motivating since they shared the same goal of becoming an English secondary-school teacher, and that through observing and reflecting on how they taught, she could think about how she would teach and tackle the problems in the same settings (journal entry on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009). Observing peers from the objective perspective was also mentioned by Chiyo. For example, in her journal, she argued that through observing her peers’ microteaching, she noticed many issues in PCK, such as the volume of voice, how to summarise the main points and write them down neatly on the blackboard, or how to teach grammar more effectively (journal entry on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009). She pointed out that being able to see teaching from a third person’s viewpoint owing to peers was beneficial in assessing and correcting her own teaching behaviours as well as learning and integrating new techniques into her own

teaching whenever they were possible for her to emulate<sup>125</sup>.

The second benefit of peers as role-model providers is that their skills and thinking processes are easier for student teachers to replicate. As Weiten, Lloyd, and Lashley (1991) posit, in children learning, emulation often takes place when there is somewhat a similarity between a model and a learner, and when a learner sees emulating the model “leading to positive outcomes” (p.46). For instance, children tend to imitate same-sex role models rather than opposite-sex ones. Similar phenomena were observed in other experimental studies of the impact of peers on learning (Bulte et al., 2007; Johnston, 1992; Murphey & Arao, 2001). For example, on the basis of the zone of proximal development theory (Vygotsky, 1962), Murphey and Arao (2001) argue that English language learners in Japan were encouraged to further learn English by their peers close to their social level and/or age level with similar past and/or present experiences and whom they respect. This means that when a learner observes a peer who succeeds in the task and when he sees that the performance tells him that he himself has the ability to do similarly, he becomes motivated to emulate his peer’s performance.

The studies above imply that confident people can readily emulate models of excellence with highly skilful craft, whereas learners with less self-confidence and experience could also profit from observing same-level or slightly higher-level performances. As Murphey and Arao (2001) rightly claim, peers make student teachers aware of certain successes possible in their teaching, which allows them to try certain teaching behaviours with hopeful expectations. The participants in this study who actively sought role models of

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<sup>125</sup> Chiyo made similar comments on the impact of peer learning in the fourth and fifth interviews as well.



peers as a way to narrow the gap between theory and practice and develop their expertise were Noriko and Mari.

For instance, Noriko stated in her journal that observing a student teacher of German who taught all in German encouraged her to use more gestures in her own teaching. She realised that gestures were helpful for junior-high-school students to learn vocabulary in context and understand the meanings of unknown words in English as well (journal entry, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009). She further commented in the same journal entry that she learned in a content-based class of SLA theory at HEI that a teacher needs to help language learners associate new words with a meaningful context, to which they can apply to later on (Brown, 2007b), and she came to notice through observing her peer's teaching that providing gesture was certainly one effective way for vocabulary learning. According to Mari, as the use of gesture in vocabulary teaching was easy enough for her to replicate in her own teaching, she emulated the technique in her own microteaching later on.

Reflecting on her professional development during the fourth interview, Mari also noted that "what I changed most in the autumn semester was I tried to steal good teaching skills of peers and emulate them in my own teaching. I knew this was effective, but it was probably the first time that I actually did this," (fourth interview). This excerpt shows that through observing peers' teaching, she came to realise her peers' teaching techniques and thinking processes were available for her to easily replicate. Being asked to offer specific examples, she mentioned teaching skills such as how to give instructions for certain language activities or how to explain the purposes of them to students. For instance, she observed how one student teacher

introduced a reading-aloud task during his microteaching. He read the text out loud together with the students, which she found it encouraging, especially for less-able students. She thought it could lower their anxiety, which she learned as one of learners' affective factors (Brown, 2007a) in one of the content-based courses in SLA at HEI. She understood that the factor of anxiety plays a major affective role in second language acquisition. In fact, as was depicted earlier in section 5.2.2.1, it can be said that the combination of theoretical intervention and peer learning contributed to her understanding of the benefits of a reading-aloud task. Regardless of her reconstructed understanding of the task, however, when she emulated his teaching skill during her microteaching, she expressed later in the fourth interview that she realised the volume of students' voices was actually quite low and it was difficult for her as a teacher to assess how they were reading if she read the text together. Emulating her peer's teaching made Mari aware that she needed to lower her voice so as to assess students' chorus reading more effectively during the task. This is one of the *kaizens* she was able to make through emulating her peers' teaching, according to Mari.

#### *5.3.2.3 Limitations of peer learning*

The examples in section 5.3.2 in this chapter highlight one of the meditational means that the participating student teachers sought out in order to restructure their theoretical concepts and knowledge bases. What they mentioned was their cohort student teachers in ITE, other members of the same learning community. Without being forced to, most of the participants relied on each other since they were like-minded. Peers' sincere and critical

feedback helped to facilitate learning and enabled them to articulate their underlying rationale for their teaching behaviour, without feeling intimidated. Most of the participants also showed a willingness to emulate each other's teaching behaviour, since they found it within the realm of possibility, and reflect on it to internalise their thinking and make improvements in their expertise. As Johnson (2009) argues, student teachers "collectively struggle through issues that are directly relevant to their professional lives" (p.23) and this research also suggests that peer interaction and learning is an important aspect in teacher education. The limitations of peer learning needs to be discussed, however, in order to explain the unsuccessful cases of Akira and Saori.

In one major respect, peer learning in ITE could be limited. Since peer learning is not systematically provided by the ITE curriculum in Japan, in interacting with cohort student teachers who are close to their professional level, student teachers may choose an inappropriate model or a teaching skill to emulate. Their feedback may be also intuitive, not underpinned by theoretical knowledge, or inappropriately articulated. Feedback or role models provided by student teachers may simply depend on what they experienced themselves as learners with no real understanding of the underlying principles that inform them. Thus, as Akira and Saori's cases have shown, some student teachers may harbor reservation about simply imitating peers' teaching. As Nagamine (2008) pointed out in his study on student teachers in ITE, some of them have doubts about emulating others without analysing the situation and teacher thinking behind the stage. Some might also feel confused or vulnerable against peers' intuitive comments as Saori's case indicated earlier

in this chapter (see section 5.2.1.1). This is largely due to the fact that student teachers are usually not explicitly trained to give constructive feedback and provide a model in the ITE curriculum in Japan. The conditions to make peer learning more beneficial in ITE will be discussed in section 6.2.3 in Chapter 6.

#### **5.4 Conclusion: EFL student teachers' developmental processes**

In this chapter, the major research findings of the study were highlighted and presented in terms of mediational tools which affected the participants' professional development. Mainly due to the imbalance of theory and practice in ITE in Japan, the participating student teachers struggled to seek ways in which to develop their teacher expertise. As the educational literature has already revealed, the three factors, former and current experiences as a learner, theoretical knowledge acquired in ITE, and practical experiences, were influential to a certain degree, but this study found that they did not function well in themselves. Instead, the participating student teachers in this study resorted to mediational activities (observation and emulation) and mediation by others (peer interaction) in order to link theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experiences effectively.

As for the research question four in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.1), "Do student teachers perceive that there is a gap between theory and practice?", for the student teachers in this study, it was definitely the case. All the participants in the study continuously saw the divide between the two elements in ITE, at different stages of their professional development. With regard to the research question five, "If student teachers see it as a problem, how do they mitigate the disparity between theory and practice?", the teacher expertise models of

teacher trainees, such as the studies of Tsui (2003), Roberts (1998) and Borg (2003), will be revisited<sup>126</sup> first, in order to delve further into the complex processes of EFL student teachers' development in this section.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature on teacher education has told us that the process of learning to teach is to a large extent an *individual* process of cognitive development and behavioural change informed by various factors. The factors usually include student teachers' prior knowledge and experiences, drawing on both generalised knowledge, such as language acquisition or language learning and teaching in the case of ELT, and contextualised knowledge of school and classroom circumstances. Student teachers are also expected to reflect on their own teaching behaviours and explain their professional decisions in the light of the aforementioned elements in order to re-construct theories and improve practical skills. For example, Tsui's (2003) empirical study on ESL expert/non-expert teachers argues that teacher expertise is a dialogical interaction "between the theorization of practical knowledge through reflection and conscious deliberation, and the transformation of 'formal knowledge' into practical knowledge," (p.261) within a teacher herself, and practical experience is essential for such interaction to take place. Based on the vast amount of literature on second and foreign language teaching, Borg (2003) also concludes that language teachers' cognitions and practices are mutually informing and are transformed as they accumulate experience. In his framework, teacher cognitions are informed by teachers' former schooling experiences, professional coursework as well as contextual factors. In line

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<sup>126</sup> See Chapter 2 (sections 2.2.2 and 2.5) for the more detailed description of these models.

with these two previous studies, Roberts (1998) describes a constructivist learning-to-teach model of typical ITE programmes for language teachers in the UK. In his model, student teachers are to make choices, test them out, and reflect on their knowledge and practices, drawing on both decontextualised and contextualised knowledge bases. What all these models have common is a highly self-exploratory and hypothesis-testing process in which teacher trainees are expected to reconstruct their theories and values through reflecting on their *own* knowledge bases and practices.

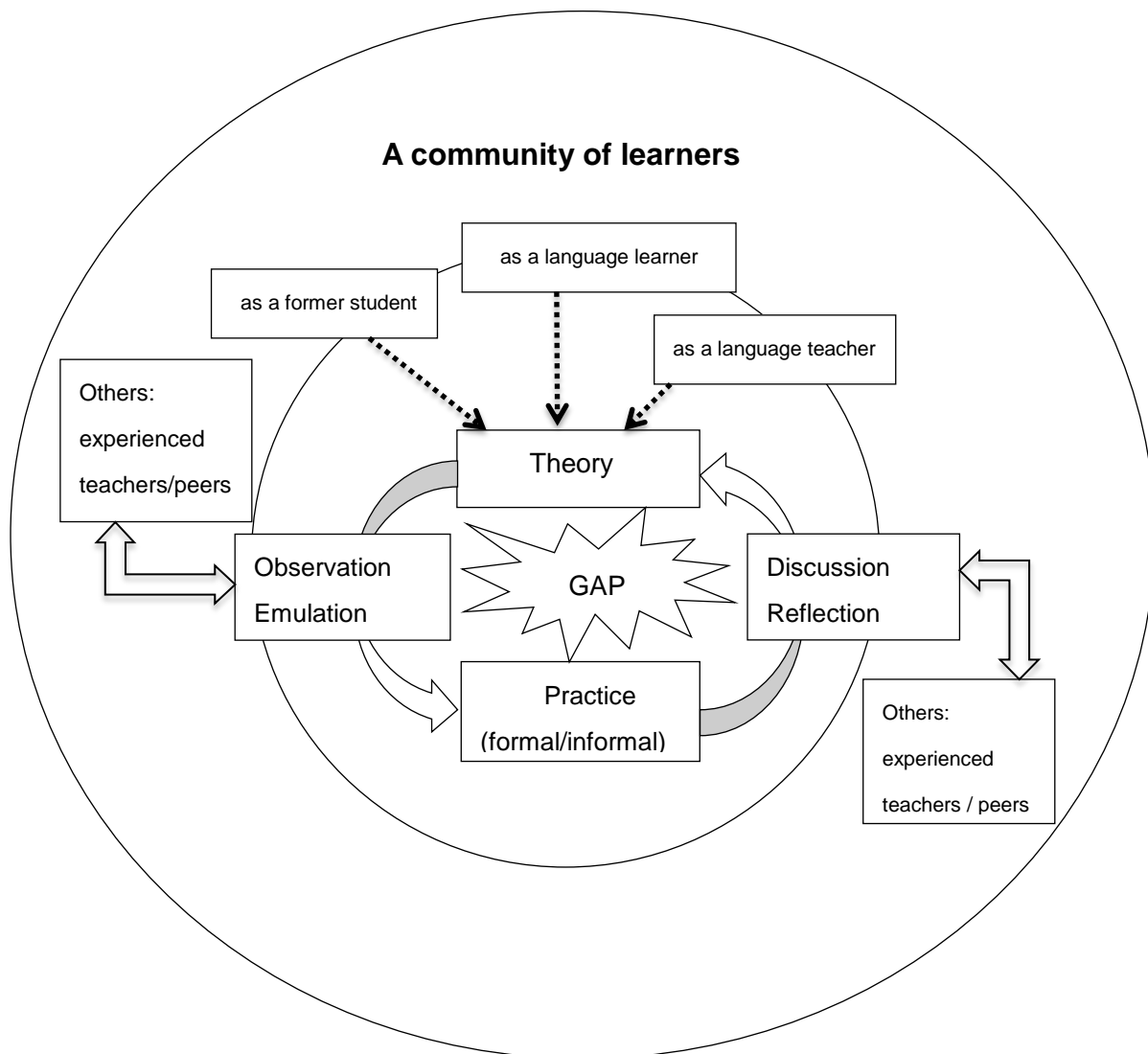
Such a constructivist and experiential process of language teacher education, however, does not fully tell us what it means to socialise into and become a member of the learning community of teachers and how other members contribute to novice teachers' socialisation into the community. In contrast, within the framework of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), this study has addressed that personal pedagogical practice of teacher expertise should be re-interpreted more from a perspective of "social interactionist dimension" (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p.267), by adding another layer of observing and emulating *others* in the learning community and interaction with them to the process. These elements are particularly important in the process of learning to teach in ITE in Japan because of the curriculum constraints. As was previously noted, it provides only a limited amount of formal practical training, the length of which is not long enough for student teachers to dialogically engage in the interaction of theory and practice on their own.

In this qualitative study, examining the growth of the EFL student teachers in ITE in Japan, it became clear that they developed their expertise in

distinctive ways, slightly differently from novice teachers in the previous literature, which provided us with a new expertise development model (see Figure 2). In the early part of the first phase of the main study<sup>127</sup>, without much chance to practise teaching, the participants were largely informed by their prior perspectives based on former and current schooling experiences (section 5.2.1 in this chapter) as well as theoretical principles that they acquired in the ITE coursework (section 5.2.2 in this chapter). By the latter part of the first phase, their theoretical framework was further shaped by informal practical experiences, which in many cases they sought voluntarily (section 5.2.3 in this chapter), in addition to the aforementioned two constructs. At this stage, some of the participating student teachers actively sought a role model of experienced teachers or peers and experimented with emulation in their pseudo-teaching contexts, often with interaction with them to discuss and reflect on their teaching. Peers served as providers of critical and honest feedback on their teaching in a less threatening manner, as well as role models who could provide craft skills and thinking processes, challenging but possible to replicate because they were at a similar professional level (Murphey & Arao, 2001). In the meantime, the student teachers did not stop being English language learners (Akira in section 4.4.1, for instance), so they also learned from interacting with their own English teachers in an EAP classroom at the university, which added an additional aspect to their identity as an English teacher who is a non-native speaker of the target language.

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<sup>127</sup> See Table 6 in Chapter 3 (section 3.4.2) for the timeline of the main study.



**Figure 2: A Dialogical Process of Theory and Practice Revisited**



At the stage of the teaching practice, which took place as the second phase of the main study, many participants had clear purposes when interacting with experienced teachers, largely due to informal practical experiences, as Noriko's case indicates earlier in this chapter (section 5.2.3.1). Furthermore, through observation, emulation and reflection, most of them were able to further shape their theories and perspectives. In this new expertise development model, the following mediational means, observation, emulation and peer learning, were actively utilised as a springboard for connecting theory that they possessed and their practical teaching experiences (see the case of Chiyo in section 5.3.1.1 in this chapter for example).

With regard to the influence of peers, according to Johnson (2009), there is increasing evidence of the role played by peers in the process of learning to teach in teacher education. In line with Johnson's theory, the results of this study (section 5.3.2 in this chapter) also reveal that peers in the same learning community can help student teachers verbalise and internalise their thinking and co-construct the meanings in the process of learning to teach. Furthermore, Roberts (1998) suggests that teacher trainees are supported by "regular discussions with supervising teachers and peers" (p.185) in the constructive model of learning to teach, while in this study most of the participating student teachers learned to teach not just through sharing ideas with others; the process was more complex, incorporating observation, emulation, and discussion and reflection on their emulated teaching into teacher expertise. This implies that teacher expertise is developed more effectively not at the personal level through critical reflection on individual

experiences, but learning and interacting *with others*, the members of the same learning community. In line with Pachler et al. (2007) in relation to reflection, the findings of this study also indicate that an additional layer of reflection on the interaction of the individuals within the professional community needs to be added to the more traditional teacher expertise models.

The new model of student teachers' expertise development in this study is congruent with sociocultural theory of learning (see section 2.3 in Chapter 2) in which learning is considered as a socially-mediated process that occurs as people participate in cultural and social activity (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Within this framework, this study has found that learning to teach in ITE in Japan is a process that takes place as novice teachers participate both in pseudo and real teaching contexts with the assistance of more experienced teachers as well as peers at the similar professional level. This also implies that in both teacher education programmes and school settings, researchers and educators should create environments in which they support and accommodate student teachers and let them co-construct the values, understandings, performances, and reflections.

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of a dialogical process of theory and practice of EFL student teachers in ITE in Japan. It represents an update on Figure 1 in Chapter 2 in five ways: (1) it situates theorisation of teacher expertise at the centre within a community of learners; (2) it includes student teachers' prior schooling experiences as a student as well as on-going

experiences as a language learner<sup>128</sup>; (3) it adds an element of *others* (experts and peers) to the stage of observation, emulation, discussion and reflection to reflect the fact that these mediational activities are often collaboratively done with *others* in the learning community<sup>129</sup>; (4) it adds practical experiences in a broader sense to the stage of observation to reflect the fact that student teachers find a model and learn from informal practical experiences prior to the teaching practice; and (5) it clarifies the most-frequently-used mediational means which connect theory and practice as observation and emulation of experienced teachers at both formal and informal settings as well as peers, and discussion and reflection on their teaching behaviours collaboratively done with experienced teachers and peers.

The relation between theory and practice in EFL student teachers' professional development processes is not straightforward. In this study, since the participating student teachers were at the beginning stage of their professional career, all of them experienced the modulating perspective-shifting in their expertise development. In addition, with the help of mediational activities such as observation, emulation and reflection, and others, they struggled to make sense of their learning. In other words, they tried to continuously mitigate the discrepancy between theoretical knowledge bases and practical experiences; theories and concepts that the student teachers first acquired in the ITE coursework were externalised, and then internalised, by former schooling experiences, current experiences as a

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<sup>128</sup> Dotted lines in Figure 2 indicate that the influence of these elements on student teachers' professional development is not as strong in comparison to mediational activities of observation and emulation as well as interaction with peers.

<sup>129</sup> Double-headed arrows in Figure 2 show that they mutually construct assistance.

language learner, observing and emulating experienced teachers and peers, sharing ideas with them, and actually experimenting with the ideas and skills in both formal and informal practical situations. This study also revealed that EFL student teachers' process of learning to teach is a continuous and dialogical one of positioning themselves professionally in a "community of practice" (Wenger, 2005) and a community of learners such as cohort student teachers, supervising teachers and teacher educators. Membership in a community of practice enabled the participants to explore their expertise by interacting and sharing ideas with others; as a result, professional growth occurred through interactions with peers and experts, which is what Johnson describes as the interactive aspect of the ZPD (2009). However, as the findings of the study also indicate, the process of EFL student teachers' professional development is not straightforward, as each meditational activity found in this study was not sufficient enough in itself, each had some limitations. Thus, it is necessary to re-evaluate the system of ITE programmes in Japan, which should provide a combination of various meditational activities and training systematically.

## Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusion

*In writing journal entries [for this study], I was surprised to find out that there were many clues and hints [for improving my teaching] in daily living that I wanted to think and write about. Also, when I was interviewed [for this study], [I had an opportunity] to look anew at and express my thoughts on what kind of a teacher I want to become, which I found very rewarding. While expressing my thoughts, I realised myself that I wanted to become such and such a teacher, or when I sorted the cards [during the card-sorting task], [it turned out to be] an opportunity for me to think even more keenly on which qualities are important for me [as a good English teacher]. Well, participating in this project was like taking a one-year-and-a-half-long special course [of professional development]. I felt as if I took the [professional development] course on my own will in order to motivate myself and become a better teacher.*

[Chiyo, Final interview]

### 6.1 Summary of the main findings

This qualitative study began with the aim of exploring student teachers' perceptions and experiences during their initial teacher education (ITE) in becoming a more autonomous secondary-school English teacher in an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) context in Japan, which is still under-researched. In ITE in Japan, regardless of their subjects to teach, undergraduate students spend four years developing their theoretical knowledge including both subject-related theoretical principles and general-education-related theories. However, the length of school-based practical teaching experiences is usually limited to three to four weeks during their final year in ITE. As the present study indicates, the quantitative imbalance between theory as represented by higher education institutes (HEIs) and real-world practice that is experienced in school is one of the major issues that ITE in Japan currently faces. This study also clearly

highlighted the lack of clarity in the goals and standards for EFL student teachers in Japan to achieve during ITE as another issue. On the one hand, they are expected to become good subject teachers who are proficient enough and can conduct their classes in English, and who can raise the students' overall English language skills so as to respond to the demands of the international community. On the other hand, they are also expected to become good homeroom teachers<sup>130</sup> with good behaviour management skills because primary- and secondary-school teachers in Japan are considered responsible for the holistic development of their students. These issues are found particularly problematic. For example, for some participants, the imbalance between the university-based part of the ITE curriculum and practical teaching experiences resulted in feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and confusion. The latter problem, unclearly defined goals to achieve in ITE, also led some student teachers to a dilemma of a goal to reach, whether to be a good subject teacher or a good homeroom teacher. The curriculum content which lacked consistency and coherence at the HEI and during the school-based practices also contributed to the variability of the student teachers' experiences in ITE.

A case study approach was employed in this study in order to examine student teachers' individual experiences in developing their teacher expertise while facing these problems of the current ITE system in Japan. A close analysis of the qualitative data of interviews and journal entries resulted in the development of a dialogical process model of filling the gap between theoretical knowledge provided by ITE to practical teaching experiences in

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<sup>130</sup> Cultural connotation of a homeroom teacher in Japan is discussed in Chapter 4 (see section 4.4).

school of the student teachers, as was described in Figure 2 in Chapter 5. As the dialogical model shows, student teachers in ITE in Japan resort to employ various meditational activities, such as observation, emulation and peer interaction, in mediating their teacher learning and mitigating the disparity between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experiences.

What emerged from the qualitative data, therefore, was the student teachers' struggle to adjust and apply their theoretical knowledge bases to their practical teaching experiences on their own. Without systematic and consistent support by the ITE programme or by supervising teachers during school-based practice, the participants struggled to find solutions in mediating their teacher learning, which resulted in the variability of their experiences at school-based teaching practice. Hence, in this final chapter, the four elements in ITE that are found to be influential on the participants' early professional development (observation and emulation, reflective practices, cohort student teachers, and supervising teachers) will be revisited in order to explore some ways to provide more practical and systematic support by the ITE programme as well as by supervising teachers so that student teachers' professional development will be enhanced more efficiently.

## **6.2 Student teachers' struggle in narrowing the theory/practice gap in ITE**

Developing teacher autonomy is one of the ultimate goals in teacher education. An autonomous teacher is one who has the willingness and capacity to self-direct their own professional development. Self-regulated professional development is possible and effective for experienced in-service teachers who have theoretical knowledge bases to draw on and places to

apply their knowledge and skills, whereas student teachers often enter an ITE programme without enough knowledge bases and practical experiences of English language teaching to draw on, and even less ability and fewer opportunities to apply theory to the practice of teaching. Systematic opportunities thus must be given to student teachers through their teacher education programmes to assist their early professional development.

As was stated earlier, an essential problem of the current ITE system in Japan clearly highlighted in this study is the lack of opportunities for enough practical teaching experiences in school. Student teachers are still at the early phase of the process of laying the foundations for their future professional development, not always equipped with capacities and willingness to self-direct their own learning yet. Therefore, they often find it difficult to apply theoretical knowledge that they acquire in ITE to practical teaching in a classroom, especially because many opportunities are not provided for them to experiment their own teaching and practise analysing and reflecting on it.

In struggling to find ways to mediate their teacher learning in a short period of time, student teachers find observing and emulating other members of the same learning community beneficial and helpful. This approach has been a much appreciated and accepted element in professional development in Japan. It is beneficial because student teachers can vicariously experience what others are doing and thinking behind through emulating another teacher's practice. It is also helpful because they can emulate what they think works well in a particular teaching context, and thus, benefit from the teaching practice, rather than through trial and error on their own, or making repeated unsuccessful efforts. The findings of the study also suggest that peer learning,



especially with cohort student teachers in the ITE programme, is another mediational tool actively sought by student teachers. Peers can play an important role as co-meaning makers as well as model providers in ITE. As they support and learn from each other, student teachers can collectively develop their expertise as well as confidence.

However, the results of the study point to the fact that the content and quality of student teachers' struggle is idiosyncratic, which results in varied ITE experiences. Some student teachers are more proactive in finding a good model to emulate, reflecting on their teaching, or objectively analysing others' feedback on their teaching; thus, the struggle they experience successfully leads to some improvements, *kaizen*<sup>131</sup>, of their teaching. In contrast, there are some student teachers who struggle because they have not cultivated critical reflective skills yet, or they cannot find a good model to emulate, or they are less able to examine and value others' critical feedback. As the study illustrated, a notion of reflective practices is not so familiar in Japan; thus, some students experience feelings of anxiety, confusion or vulnerability when asked to self-critique and reflect on, or be critiqued during their ITE experiences, which is limiting their early professional development.

Unsuccessful experiences of student teachers' early professional development are not entirely due to them, however. Failure to find an appropriate solution for mediating teacher learning is not necessarily their fault, as they are still at the early stage of laying the sound base for their future professional development. Their unsuccessful experiences are rather

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<sup>131</sup> *Kaizen* is the term that Chiyo and Mari often used in their reflection. It is a Japanese word that is now also used in English, meaning 'making continuous improvements'. See footnote 64 in Chapter 4.

due to shortcomings of the pre-service teacher training programmes, not student teachers' inherent characteristics. Novice teachers who begin the socialisation process of teacher development are peripheral members of the professional learning community. They may not possess sufficient theoretical knowledge to draw on, or possess teaching routines and skills to experiment, or the critical reflective skills to analyse and scrutinise them.

At the same time, it should be noted that interventions that the student teachers in this study participated in, such as writing journal entries by reflecting on microteaching and the ITE coursework, actually encouraged some of them to develop their expertise, as Chiyo's quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests. This confirms that systematic intervention and coherent support must be given more to student teachers within the ITE curriculum in Japan. This leads us to suggest that the conditions of the ITE system in Japan ought to be reconsidered. In the following sections, what kinds of support and meditational activities should be included in a more coherent way as components of the ITE curriculum will be suggested.

### *6.2.1 The meaning of observation and emulation in ITE in Japan*

Many researchers and teacher educators have expressed deep-seated scepticism about emulation through observing others. This is viewed as a learning strategy that does not necessarily facilitate critical analysis and reflection of teaching, due to conceptions formed during their apprenticeship of observation. However, as the results of this study indicate, the notion of emulation is crucial as a mediational tool in student teachers' early professional development in ITE in Japan. Student teachers actively seek

someone whom they can observe, by focusing on the skills or routines that they wish to emulate and analyse. Observation and emulation are actively used as an essential tool in mediating their learning-to-teach process. The cultural specificity of emulation is also often recognised by ITE tutors as well as supervising teachers<sup>132</sup>.

Rather than experimenting with their theoretical knowledge directly in their teaching, student teachers start their training by observing and emulating English-language-teaching strategies of experienced teachers or peers, even when they are not encouraged to do so. Having a model to emulate is beneficial, particularly when student teachers find themselves lacking in confidence and experience. It should also be pointed out that using emulation as a learning strategy does not mean that student teachers are simply uncritical observers, as Chiyo's successful case of reconstructing the concept of learner-centred pedagogy<sup>133</sup> suggests. This supports Dunn's (2011, p.56) "creative form of imitation" of second-language student teachers; novice teachers do not simply imitate experienced teachers' language-teaching skills and behaviours, but rather, they try to *transform* what experienced teachers offer them as they experiment and analyse emulated teaching in particular teaching contexts. Emulation can be one possible tool that assists student teachers to promote their learning, examine their understanding of theoretical concepts in English language teaching, and develop their teaching skills.

Emulation is influential in student teachers' early professional development in Japan, since seeking a model in the community to emulate

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<sup>132</sup> Tutor A, the ITE lecturer that Akira respected, and many of the supervising teachers in this study, encouraged the participants to observe and emulate others' teaching.

<sup>133</sup> See section 5.3.1.1 for how Chiyo analysed her teacher's teaching as a model.

has long been culturally endorsed in Japan as part of the professional development process<sup>134</sup>. Emulating teaching skills as well as thinking processes of experts is considered as a powerful mediational tool for learning not only in the arts and business industry but also in in-service teacher training in Japan. Thus, student teachers in ITE in Japan are also often implicitly encouraged to identify teaching behaviours and strategies used by others as practices they can try out in their own teaching, which in turn leads to building greater self-confidence.

However, it should be remembered that meditational activities of observation and emulation are not usually explicitly provided by ITE programmes but are implicitly employed at student teachers' own discretion. Even when some supervising teachers ask student teachers to observe and emulate experienced teachers during the school-based training, they do not specifically instruct which aspects or skills of teaching on which to focus, or do not explicitly provide a model for student teachers to emulate. This is largely due to the cultural connotation of emulation in Japan by which experienced teachers treat novice teachers as equals and do not offer any explicit advice or guidance; instead, novice teachers are expected to "steal"<sup>135</sup> ideas and skills from experienced teachers by observing, emulating and interacting with them. Therefore, novice teachers in Japan are not provided with any training of emulation for critical analysis and graduated assistance by the ITE curriculum, which may promote the implicit process of "apprenticeship of

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<sup>134</sup> Cultural connotation of apprenticeship in Japan is discussed in section 2.3.6 in Chapter 2.

<sup>135</sup> To 'steal' is a literal translation of a Japanese verb, *nusumu*, which implies a positive connotation of emulating somebody's, usually experts' ideas or strategies, without his or her consent. The concept of *nusumu* in professional development in Japan is discussed in Chapter 2 (see footnote 36).

observation” (Lortie, 1975).

Ample opportunities of emulation through microteaching and training of reflective practices on emulated teaching at HEIs prior to school-based practical teaching experiences will benefit student teachers greatly, especially when there is only a limited amount of school-based teaching practice, such as in Japan. Emulated teaching will be also a good starting point for student teachers with lower confidence and fewer prior practical teaching experiences. Furthermore, with explicitly-assisted guidance by the ITE programme, student teachers could learn to focus on particular aspects of teaching and to analyse their emulated teaching later by drawing on theoretical concepts they acquire in ITE. Then, emulation can be a powerful and effective mediational activity and can be utilised more in reconciling the divide between theoretical principles provided by ITE and teaching practice in school. Having not been given explicit opportunities to critically analyse their emulated teaching, student teachers may intuitively emulate others whose teaching skills they find easy and familiar to emulate, and this may simply lead to the reproduction of current practices of English language teaching in Japan (i.e. focusing on grammatical forms to succeed in an entrance examination, for instance). Therefore, mediational activities of observation and emulation *per se* are limited, if not detrimental to student teachers’ early professional development.

### *6.2.2 The difficulty of developing reflective practices in ITE in Japan*

Since the necessity of training of reflective practices in ITE in Japan was mentioned in the previous section, another issue which should be raised here is the difficulty of developing reflective practices – a difficulty that some student teachers faced during this study. As discussed earlier, one of the strategies that the participating student teachers in ITE in Japan regularly employed as they struggled to apply their theoretical knowledge base to practical teaching contexts was the use of mediational means, namely observing, emulating and interacting with other teachers (including student teachers); however, as the results have shown, some used these mediational activities without reflecting on the theory and rationale underlying their emulated instruction. In other words, they simply emulated others' teaching in order to survive the teaching practice without reflecting on the deeper theoretical basis of that practice, or critically assess its value as pedagogical practice. It also means that they are still unaware that the teaching they emulate is not necessarily the best practice, because it might not work well in other teaching contexts and what works for experienced teachers may not work for novice teachers.

Learning to make professional judgements about, and critically analyse one's teaching is one of the primary goals of teacher professional development, and the development of reflective skills is essential for attaining this ability. With regard to this issue, one of the challenges that novice teachers face is that, as many prior research studies in ITE have revealed, upon entry into the first phase of professional development, novice teachers are expected to be autonomous to some extent, already equipped with

reflective and critical thinking skills. In many ITE programmes outside Japan, they are also provided with extensive opportunities to practise their teaching and reflect on their teaching, regardless of the value their programmes attach to theoretical foundations. The implication is that even from the earliest stages of their teacher development programmes, student teachers are introduced to the notion of reflective practice as the medium through which theory and actual practice are effectively mitigated. Consequently, they become aware that developing the cognitive capacities to self-reflect is essential to their early professional development. Reflection is also fairly personal; thus, the responsibility to improve one's teaching is in effect placed on the *individual* student teacher.

However, the findings from this study provide some conflicting evidence. As the quote of Chiyo's in the beginning of this chapter indicates, being provided an opportunity to explicitly reflect on teaching practices and the underlying theories and principles (i.e. interviews and journal writing) were greatly appreciated by some participating student teachers in this study. This implies that student teachers in ITE in Japan may find it difficult to narrow the gap between the theoretical knowledge they acquire in ITE courses and the practical teaching experiences in schools, without training or opportunities for reflective practices as a required element of the ITE curriculum at HEIs.

Thus, another essential problem of the ITE system in Japan highlighted in this study is the lack of a systematic and consistent approach to reflective practices, largely due to the limited amount of school-based training in ITE. In Japan, even when student teachers are naturally competent in critical reflection, they do not have many opportunities to implement their thoughts

into teaching, and to reflect on their own teaching either through self-reflection or discursive encounters with other practising teachers. Additionally, during informal teaching experiences outside of the ITE curriculum (i.e. teaching at *kyoku* as part-time teachers, or working as volunteer teaching assistants) that student teachers voluntarily seek out in order to make up for the imbalance between theory and practice, it is a challenge for them to reflect on their teaching and fill in the gap between theoretical principles and practical teaching experiences, without assistance from others.

At the same time, as the findings of this study suggest, the limitations of reflective practices in ITE in Japan also should be realised by teacher educators at HEIs. As discussed earlier, when the term *reflection* is translated into Japanese, it often connotes a negative form of reflection, rather than focusing on the aspect of generating *newer* insights and perspectives due to reflection. Therefore, when the notion of reflective practices is explicitly introduced in the ITE curriculum, a positive form of reflection should be emphasised, through which student teachers are expected to confront, analyse and challenge their pre-existing perspectives and discuss alternatives for making improvements in their teaching. Furthermore, while the benefits of reflection on teacher development are great, as many previous research studies in teacher education have suggested (Atkinson, 2004; Kojima, 2008), this study also suggests that it is effective only after student teachers have acquired a certain degree of capacity to critically reflect on their professional practice. They also need to acquire a certain degree of theoretical knowledge to draw on before they are able to practise structuring, verbalising and re-structuring their teaching practices.



Reflection itself is a very individual and subjective activity, and the impact of reflective practices on student teachers in ITE in Japan is an area of research which is as yet underexplored. The practices, *per se*, should not always be assumed an appropriate role in ITE, as other meditational activities are also limited in themselves. How the ITE curriculum can provide more systematic and consistent support in developing student teachers' reflective skills needs to be further investigated.

### *6.2.3 The impact of others in ITE in Japan*

As the results of this study have suggested so far, in order to assist student teachers in ITE in Japan effectively in mitigating the gap between theoretical knowledge bases and actual teaching contexts, explicitly providing mediational activities such as observation and emulation – rather than simply asking students to reflect on and critique their own teaching independently – is useful for, and even positively sought by, student teachers at early stages of professional development. These mediational activities are likely to involve *others* in the same learning community; they provide models to emulate as well as honest and critical feedback on teaching. They can also collectively develop a sense of teacher identity through practising reflection by analysing teaching contexts as well as going back to their theoretical understandings so as to underpin their teaching behaviours, develop pedagogical practices, and transform their perspectives of English language teaching. This is one way in which student teachers are able to practise and develop their reflective skills.

In one sense, one can draw an interesting parallel between the process of learning-to-teach and the process through which a foreign language learner

progresses to become an autonomous, communicative foreign language speaker, with the help of others in the same learning community. Beginning-level language learners, without confidence or sufficient language skills to articulate their ideas, should be first provided with clear and appropriate instructions as well as a certain degree of topic or subject-matter knowledge so as to feel comfortable in actively participating in communicative language activities. In other words, they cannot engage fully and effectively in language activities without appropriately scaffolded support by teachers or peers and plenty of practices. Similarly, novice teachers, who are not yet ready to be independent teachers without confidence and significant teaching experience and skills, need not only the theoretical underpinnings provided by HEIs but also some explicit guidance and assistance. In many cases, assistance can be provided by a “temporary other” (Johnson, 2009, p. 2), as novice teachers try to articulate their thoughts, reconstruct their personal knowledge, and engage in the learning-to-teach process.

A “temporary other” should be *temporary*, however, since student teachers need to develop the capacity to self-direct their own teaching; thus, assistance and guidance by others should be graduated as student teachers feel more confident. Just as a foreign language learner needs to develop the capacity to self-direct their own learning, as student teachers gain experience, they need to become more independent and responsible for their teaching through the use of reflection. It should be also pointed out that support by others is fluid but can be random at the same time. Because peer support is not usually strategically employed and scaffolded as a required component of the ITE curriculum, student teachers are likely to depend on peers randomly,

which can result in the variability of their experiences in ITE.

Therefore, the ITE system in Japan needs to recognise, from a sociocultural perspective, that the use of peer learning as a meditational tool for linking theoretical knowledge bases to actual teaching practices should be more strategic and purposeful as on-going intervention. Student teachers ought to be trained so as to give constructive feedback, and to be open to and flexible about critical feedback from others which may not match their own expectations or perspectives of teaching. Support by others should be leveled against the goal of cognitive development within the ITE curriculum, so that novice teachers learn to develop their agency and become more confident professionals, on their own.

#### *6.2.4 The impact of supervising teachers in ITE in Japan*

As the results of this study have shown, the variability of student teachers' experiences partly resulted from the influence of their supervising teachers. This means that student teachers in ITE are influenced greatly by their supervising teachers and their perspectives and attitudes toward the teaching practice. When a supervising teacher prioritises classroom and behaviour management over subject teaching, a student teacher perhaps comes to focus more on the development of behaviour management skills during his or her practical experiences in school. In addition, when a supervising teacher is able to provide a good role model explicitly as a subject specialist, a student teacher can learn a great deal about subject teaching. However, if a supervising teacher asks a student teacher to observe and emulate experienced teachers, but he or she does not provide any specific teaching

points or skills to pay attention to, then a student teacher may emulate their teaching intuitively.

The above examples indicate that what is lacking in ITE in Japan is the view of a supervising teacher during the teaching practice as a mentor, which is a critical aspect of teacher training in many discourses of ITE outside Japan. For example, in the UK, as ITE has come to focus much more on student teachers' school-based experiences, the role of mentors has also been given more importance, whose functions are often described by using various metaphors such as a "reflective coach" (Tomlinson, 1995) and a "critical friend" (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). In such a discourse, mentor teachers ought to provide models as continuous learners themselves in their professional development. They need to be trained to assist student teachers in analysing existing classroom routines and practices, discussing alternatives, and reflecting on the theory underlying their instruction. In this way, the supervising teacher becomes a role model of a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). They should also support student teachers to grow professionally and to become a competent and independent teacher, without leaving them to their own capacity and willingness.

As the results of this study confirm, more systematic training for mentors is needed in ITE in Japan. Mentor teachers should bear a greater professional responsibility to assist the development of student teachers as autonomous teachers. Well-trained and well-supported mentor teachers can influence and shape student teachers' practice greatly through professional dialogue during school-based teacher training. Student teachers in ITE in Japan seek models to emulate and see peers as co-meaning makers, but the reason why they are

placed in such a situation needs to be acknowledged in the first place. Clarification of the role of supervising teachers will certainly raise the quality of their supervision. It will also lessen student teachers' feeling of confusion caused by supervising teachers' attitude toward subject teaching and holistic teaching, as was observed in this study. In addition, it ought to be the responsibility of teacher educators at HEIs to work with schools more closely in order to clarify the roles of supervising teachers in school-based training, to share ideas and principles that are promoted by teacher education programmes, and to help them grow as reflective mentors.

### **6.3 Pedagogical implications**

What does this study tell us more broadly about secondary school English-language teacher education in Japan? Although the main purpose of this study was to depict and interpret the developmental processes and experiences of EFL student teachers, not to critically analyse the current ITE curriculum in Japan, it is worth noting what the results suggest for teacher trainers and educators in Japan and to explore useful insights for the better design of teacher education programmes in Japan.

The implications of this study are threefold. First of all, the positive effects of emulation on student teachers should not be ignored, but rather be more fully and explicitly incorporated into the ITE curriculum in Japan. As has been discussed in this study, learning to teach is a process of socialisation into the community of learners and seeking a model for emulation in the community has been culturally endorsed in Japan as a step toward professional development. Emulation could be limiting, especially when it is implicitly

provided or when student teachers are forced to adhere to routines and patterns of experienced teachers and/or particular groups. However, if student teachers are provided with opportunities to observe various aspects of experienced teachers with the use of guided observation formats, and if ample opportunities for reflection on observation and emulation are provided, emulation can be useful as an effective and influential mediational activity in ITE, which enables student teachers to narrow the gap between the theoretical knowledge they acquire in ITE and practical teaching experiences at school.

Nevertheless, all the stakeholders in ITE, student teachers, supervising teachers in school and teacher educators at HEIs, need to be made aware that emulation is just one of a number of strategies for novice teachers to use as a springboard to explore and further develop their professional expertise. It is effective since they are still at the early stage of professional development and often lack confidence and extensive teaching experiences; however, they do need to learn to eventually grow out of emulated teaching and become able to make their own professional judgements in teaching and reflect on their own process of developing teacher autonomy.

Second, from a sociocultural theoretical perspective, EFL teacher educators in Japan should attend more to the impact of *others* on student teachers' professional development. While it is recognised that people learn from cognitive thinking and problem solving on their own, the data of this study indicate that they also learn from interacting with others and working together to pursue goals and objectives, particularly peers. Even when peer learning is not explicitly incorporated in the ITE curriculum, as in this study,

EFL student teachers seek to find peers who can provide honest criticism and suggestions, as peers are viewed as less intimidating than experienced teachers. Student teachers increase their motivation when they observe teaching behaviours and skills of peers that they could emulate, which in turn transforms into developing their greater self-confidence. Because peers are more proximal to student teachers' cognitive, social and professional levels, they are easier for the student teachers to identify with. Thus, in order for them to grow more effectively and professionally, an environment needs to be provided in which they are encouraged to interact with their peers in an informal atmosphere, to practise reflecting on each other's teaching, to learn to provide assistance and guidance, and to grow together with an empathic attitude toward others.

Last but not least, the impact of supervising teachers on student teachers' professional development is far-reaching. In view of the very limited amount of practical experiences in school-based work that student teachers gain in their teacher education programmes, a more integrated and consistent approach to ITE is desirable in Japan. In order to make the role of the supervising teachers more central, their roles as mentors first should be clarified. As this particular study shows, student teachers may make arbitrary assumptions of what a good teacher is like, either as a good *homeroom* teacher or as a good *subject* teacher depending on whether their mentors stress student guidance and classroom management or English language teaching. Supervising teachers also need to continue developing their teacher expertise, become more conscious of their own professional practices, and become more aware that they themselves are the central participants of the community of learners

in which student teachers are peripheral members who need assistance and guidance from other members, particularly those who are more experienced. As Howe (2006) discusses, “the power of collaboration” is highly valued among in-service teachers in Japan, which should be extended to ITE and to the relationship between HEIs and schools. Both HEI teacher educators and supervising teachers at school should work more closely together and communicate regularly in order to structure ITE more effectively. For instance, HEI teacher educators’ more frequent school visits during the teaching practice or more coordination between HEIs and schools in terms of developing a scheme of focused emulated teaching and staged reflective tasks throughout the ITE curriculum are helpful.

#### **6.4 Directions for future research**

This study provides new insights for teacher educators in Japan to more fully understand the better design of teacher education programmes in future; for example, how *emulation* can improve or inhibit one’s teaching and how *others* can effectively benefit novice and experienced teachers in their professional development. Similar studies in the future with more informants at various career stages ought to be done to explore the area further.

There are a few issues that should be taken into consideration for future research. First, it is important for future studies to address professional development from a longer-term perspective. As discussed throughout this study, professional development programmes for teachers in Japan lack a perspective of continuity and consistency over career stages. For instance, no agreement has been reached in both pre-service and in-service teacher



training with regard to what kind of professional standards and competences should be achieved at each professional stage. A future study employing a longitudinal approach that looks at various sets of teachers' perspectives and experiences can illuminate how the development of teacher expertise proceeds. This may also allow a more finely-grained analysis of teachers' experiences with mediational means such as observation, emulation and reflection. For example, how can student teachers move away from the stage of simply imitating teaching behaviours without a full appreciation of the theoretical principles that underpins them? It may also be worth considering other possible mediational activities so that teacher educators can improve both the ITE system as well as the system of in-service teacher training by offering a more integrated and coherent approach and utilising *others* more effectively in the learning community.

Additionally, although this study stresses the importance of *others* during ITE experiences, student teachers usually cannot choose whom they encounter during the process of professional development. For example, as the six cases in this study depicted, the arbitrary arrangement of the teaching practice supervising teachers in each setting resulted in different student teachers having different experiences. Depending on the *others* whom the student teachers encounter (e.g. teachers in former schooling, tutors of methods courses in ITE, supervising teachers during school-based teaching practice, cohort student teachers in ITE, colleagues at *kyoku*) as well as the teaching practice settings, their professional experiences can vary tremendously. The susceptibility of student teachers to the influences of *others* and their effects on how they develop professionally ought to be further

investigated. Although this study mainly focused on student teachers' perspective changes and experiences in ITE, in order to develop a fuller picture of the ITE system in Japan, future research should focus on those of *others*, including supervising teachers and teacher educators, in the learning community of teachers. This expanded focus will lead to further understanding of why some student teachers are able to more successfully develop professionally, while others are less so.

As this study was conducted employing a case study approach, the idiosyncratic nature is a strength of this study. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue, the approach to theory building of qualitative researchers should be "one of emergence" (p.33) and concepts and relationships emerge from data which researchers are allowed to interpret, specify the conditions under which actions and behaviours are likely to occur, seek variations, and construct their own meanings, as the following quote indicates:

[I]f one asks a researcher, "Is this one case representative of all cases?" then the answer probably is "no" and further study will show why and how. But if one asks, "Is there something we can learn from this case that will give us insight and understanding about a phenomenon ...," then the answer is "yes".

(Strauss and Corbin, 1998 p.285)

In the future, a similar research study ought to be replicated so as to understand more fully the process of teacher expertise development concerning student teachers in ITE in Japan.

Finally, the effects of the participation in this study on some of the participating student teachers and their professional development should be considered. As Chiyo's quote at the beginning of this chapter shows,

participation in this study resulted in raising her awareness of professional development since she was instructed to keep a record of and explicitly analyse and articulate her perspectives and practices in her journal entries and interviews. To her surprise, verbalising her thoughts as a participant in this study became an opportunity for her to think about teacher qualities and her own language-teaching practices. This implies that participation in this research provided her with an invaluable opportunity for engaging in reflective practice and making sense of her professional development as an EFL teacher. Hence, future student teachers in Japan should also be encouraged more to explicitly reflect on their practices during ITE so as to cultivate their willingness and ability necessary for becoming more autonomous teachers who can make professional judgements and improvements in their teaching. More research is also needed on how more direct engagement in reflective practices can influence the perceptions and practices of student teachers.

## **6.5 Final conclusion**

This study has identified some of the challenges that currently confront the ITE system in Japan: the imbalance between theory and practice due to the short period of school-based training; lack of common goals and objectives between HEIs and schools for student teachers to achieve; lack of training for supervising teachers to play an active role as mentors; difficulty developing reflective practices in ITE; and the ITE system itself which lacks consistency and coherence. This qualitative study also explored the perspectives and experiences of the student teachers who were facing these problems above and how teacher education programmes influenced their

perspectives and experiences. Each struggled in their own way to find solutions, to connect their theoretical understanding developed in ITE with practical teaching experiences, and lay the foundations for early professional development. One of the significant findings of this study of student teachers in ITE in Japan is that some meditational activities, such as observation and emulation, and external assistance from others provided them with temporary but crucial support in connecting theoretical understanding and practical teaching experiences. Without the systematic and explicit intervention by the ITE curriculum in mitigating the gap between theoretical principles and practical teaching experiences, student teachers' individual struggle resulted in the variability of their experiences in ITE.

Effective initial teacher education should expose student teachers to a variety of teaching models, approaches, contexts and philosophical ideas which they are allowed to experiment with, critically analyse, and practise making professional choices and judgements, informed both by theoretical knowledge and practical experience. As Moore (2000) claims, "there is no one model of good teaching, any more than there is any one model of the good student or the good school" (p.127); pursuing a universal model of competencies will deprive student teachers of their creativity in teaching. Instead, freedom to develop good teaching should be encouraged even in the early phase of professional development, especially when relative autonomy and academic freedom in providing ITE is still allowed in Japan. In collaboration with schools, ITE should take a more significant role as a provider of appropriate intervention that will help student teachers develop the teacher autonomy needed to be confident and effective professionals.

Hence, even if the period of school-based teaching practice cannot be lengthened immediately, the following issues should be considered for assisting future student teachers in ITE in Japan: more coordination between HEIs and schools, training and providing more substantial roles for mentors, and more systematic approach for training reflective practices in teacher education courses. As discussed in the beginning of this study, MEXT addresses the urgent task of reform of the English language education system; EFL teachers are expected to improve students' English language abilities so that students will have a better command of English and can live more successfully and be more active in the international community. In order to develop learners' language fluency, not just their accuracy, and motivate them to reach their fullest potential, EFL teachers need to employ more contemporary methods and approaches of language teaching, such as communicative language teaching, learner-centred instruction, cooperative learning and interactive learning, rather than adhering to the current practices that emphasise language accuracy and are often blamed for creating students who are not proficient enough in English. The ITE system needs to be more systematic and coherent as a whole so that student teachers learn to become confident, creative and autonomous in the process of their early professional development.

With many problems and concerns of ITE in Japan as yet unsolved, in order to raise and assure the quality of English language education, there is no doubt that what is the most essential component is to raise and assure *teacher* quality. Teachers should be at the heart of any educational improvement. Thus, this kind of a case study which delves into individual

experiences and perspectives is relevant and necessary. Furthermore, the challenge for English language teachers and teacher educators in Japan is not only conducting future research to enhance understanding of teachers' expertise development, but to use research of this sort to influence the implementation of educational reforms and to positively affect the ITE curriculum responsible for developing quality language teachers. Future language teachers should be the ones who can share and develop responsibilities for their professional development, can effectively link theory and practice with the help of meditational activities, and can make professional choices and judgements in a classroom. This will in turn help prospective Japanese EFL teachers in educating students they will teach in the future and promote the level of English language learning and teaching in Japan.



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## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix A Sample Informed Consent Form**

**Appendix B-1 Interview Guides for the Participants**

**Appendix B-2 Interview Guide for the Tutors**

**Appendix B-3 Journal Instructions**

**Appendix C Themes Emerged from the Journal Data and their  
Frequency**

## Appendix A: Sample Informed Consent Form

I am conducting a research study on initial teacher training in Japan and you are invited to take part in my study. The main purpose of this study is to examine student teachers' perspectives on their professional expertise development.

Your participation would involve the following things. First, you will be interviewed to discuss your overall perspectives of learning to teach. Next, until the end of the autumn course, you will be asked to keep a diary to reflect on your own apprenticeship experiences and hand it in to me weekly. You will meet me three more times to talk about your diary entries and your professional expertise development over the spring/fall semesters 2009. Furthermore, in late May, 2010, you will be again asked to keep a diary in order to reflect on your apprenticeship experiences during the teaching practice. You will be asked to submit this weekly to me. I will also interview you twice, once before the teaching practice and once after the teaching practice to make comments on your diary entries and your school-based training. You will be allowed to choose a language, English or Japanese, for both interviews and diary entries. All the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. All the written texts related to the Methods of Teaching English I/II course as well as the teaching practice (diaries, reflective essays, lesson plans, worksheets, teaching logs during the teaching practice) will be copied and kept for final analysis.

All efforts will be made to protect your privacy. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Only the researcher will have access to the information that you will provide and it will only be used for research purposes. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University, the initial teacher training programme or the school you will be based in. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. The researchers conducting this study is Chitose Asaoka ([casaka@dokkyo.ac.jp](mailto:casaka@dokkyo.ac.jp)) of the English Department, Dokkyo University. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

### Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Prompts and Guides**

### **Appendix B-1: Interview Guides for the Participants**

#### Interview 1

1. Name
2. Which of the Methods of Teaching English courses are you enrolled in?
3. Your current TOEIC score?
4. Which ITE courses are you currently enrolled in?
5. Have you taught at a cram school or as a volunteer?
6. Why do you want to acquire a teaching certificate?
7. What do you think a good teacher is? What do you think a good English teacher is?
8. What has influenced your English learning/teaching?
9. What do you need now to become a good English teacher?

#### Interview 2

1. In the spring semester, what did you learn for your teacher expertise development through the Method course?
2. In the spring semester, what did you learn for your teacher expertise development through the other ITE courses?
3. In the spring semester, what influenced your teacher expertise development outside the ITE programme?
4. Generally speaking, what is a good English teacher like? Have your perceptions on a good English teacher made any changes?
5. In order to become such a teacher, what do you need to do? Have you tried anything this semester?

#### Interview 3

1. Please look at the cards. They are the statements that describe what a good English teacher is like, created from your journal entries and interview data so far. Based on your current perspectives of a good English teacher, first, delete the cards unnecessary. Then, add new ones if necessary. Next, please put them in a rank or group them and give labels.

#### Interview 4

1. Please watch a recorded micro teaching of yours. You can stop any time and make comments about your own teaching. What were you thinking? What made

you teach in a certain way? How did you feel?

2. Please look at the cards. They are the same as the ones you had during the third interview. Based on your current perspectives of a good English teacher, first, delete the cards unnecessary. Then, add new ones if necessary. Next, please put them in a rank or group them and give labels.
3. Through the Methods II course, what do you think you have learned regarding your teacher expertise development? Anything that have influenced your perspectives of a good English teacher?
4. What did you learn over the autumn semester in the other ITE courses? Anything that have influenced your perspectives of a good English teacher?
5. What did you learn over the autumn semester in the other courses or contexts than ITE? Anything that have influenced your perspectives of a good English teacher?
6. In the beginning of the project, what did you think a good English teacher was like? Has there been any changes in that perspective? Why and how?

#### Interview 5

1. When/which school/mentor/grade in charge/induction content
2. Regarding the induction sessions in April at HEI and at school, what elements have influenced on you and in what way? What kind of preparation are you doing now?
3. During the teaching practice, what kind of English lessons are you planning to conduct? What kind of an English teacher are you planning to be?
4. Regarding question 3, what made you think so?
5. What are your concerns now? How are you planning to tackle them?

#### Interview 6

1. Please freely talk about your practice teaching experiences. (e.g. flow of three weeks, relationship with a mentor/students/other student teachers, mentor's teaching policies, class observation, things which went well/did not go well, etc.)
2. How did the demonstration lesson go? (points that went well, points that need to be improved, points that you emulated, etc.)
3. Card sorting exercise
4. Through your experiences in ITE over the three semesters, what kind of English teacher would you like to become now? What kind of English lessons would you like to conduct in the future? What were major factors which have impacted your teacher expertise development?



## **Appendix B-2: Interview Guide for the Tutors**

1. What are the goals for your method course I and II?
2. What are the class schedule for your method course I and II?
3. Regarding micro teaching, how do you implement micro teaching in your method class? (Ex. size, lesson plan in J or E, revision, prep time, recording, feedback, frequency)
4. What do you think is a value of micro teaching in ITE? How will this help student teachers?
5. What do you think is a value of recording their micro teaching?
6. What do you think is a role of a tutor/peers in ITE?
7. What do you think is a role of theories in ITE?
8. Do you see any link between a method course and other courses in ITE?
9. What do you think a good English teacher is like?
10. What do you think is a role of a method course in student teachers' overall teacher development?
11. How do you think ITE will help student teachers develop their teacher expertise?

### **Appendix B-3: Journal Instructions**

#### *Your Reflective Journal*

I would like you to write your perspectives on the notion of a good teacher and how you develop your expertise as a teacher in this reflective journal. You may write your entries in Japanese/English/Japanese and English. Every day, please sit down in a quiet place, reflect on factors which seem to affect your notions of a good teacher and your teacher expertise development and try to jot them down as much as possible. Some of the things you might consider include your courses in the ITE programme, theories of foreign language teaching, theories of teaching in general, your current teachers at the university, your teachers in the past, your peers, your experiences as a volunteer teacher/ a cram school tutor, your mentors and mentees, educational or leadership activities you participate and your beliefs about teaching.

Every week, please submit a week's reflective journal. You can submit a hard copy as well as an attached file via e-mail.

## Appendix C

**Table 10: Themes Emerged from the Journal Data and Their Frequency**

Themes	Why teacher?	Beliefs in ideal teaching	Prof. development	Lesson planning	Conducting a lesson	Contexts	Methods	Others
Chiyo	7	6	5	4	9	4	0	1
	1	10	5	3	15	0	7	5
Aya	1	11	3	3	4	3	5	5
	0	20	2	11	16	1	11	2
Noriko	0	3	7	10	14	1	6	6
	0	4	6	6	15	3	5	7
Akira	0	2	2	1	4	7	5	1
	0	1	6	2	3	3	2	2
Mayuko	0	7	2	2	11	3	4	1
	0	4	1	1	4	1	4	0
Mari	1	5	1	7	8	3	2	3
	0	3	0	3	8	1	5	10
Saori	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	11	93	52	62	118	38	59	54

\*The upper and lower cells for each participant indicate spring and autumn semesters of the academic year 2009 respectively.