Standards or communities of practice?
Competing models of workplace learning and development

by
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Abstract

Drawing on interview data derived from two case studies of teachers in their first year in the profession, this article examines the difficulties that confront new teachers as they move from a PGCE course into their first teaching post. It questions the value of those discursive practices, promulgated by the Teacher Training Agency through *Qualifying to Teach*, that construct teaching as a set of discrete competences or standards, and argues that Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice are useful tools with which to analyse the sociocultural complexity of the new teachers' experiences.

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Standards or communities of practice? Competing models of workplace learning and development

In this paper, we use a case study approach to investigate the workplace-based learning and development of newly-qualified teachers. We consider the experiences of two teachers in the context of national government policy. We counterpose the standards model that this policy has enforced, in a way that has parallels in Australia, Portugal, Thailand, Brazil and China as well as the United States (Beyer, 2002), with the sociocultural, situated model of workplace learning proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991).

In England, the training and induction of new teachers falls under the aegis of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). Established in 1994, the TTA has responsibility not only for regulating the supply of new teachers but also for the oversight of both initial and continuing professional development. Soon to be rebranded as the Training and Development Agency, its role is, it would appear, to be enlarged to encompass the training and accreditation of the growing army of teaching assistants who have become a significant part of the school landscape in the UK the past decade.

Central to the TTA's intervention as gatekeeper to the teaching profession has been the establishment of published, explicit, statutorily enforced standards. The role of the teacher has thus been conceptualised as a list of competences: this model informs *Qualifying to Teach*, the document published jointly by the Department for Education and Skills and the Teacher Training Agency which sets out the standards "which must be met by trainee teachers before they can be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)"

((DfES/TTA, 2003)). *Qualifying to Teach* encourages the view that the acquisition of professional and pedagogical knowledge and expertise is reducible to a set of separate – or at least separable – standards: "Only those trainee teachers who have met all the Standards will be awarded QTS" (DfES/TTA, 2003). It is emphasised that the Standards "apply to all trainee teachers" and that they "are a rigorous set of expectations and set out the minimum legal requirement" (DfES/TTA, 2003: 4). Such statements have been influential in determining the ways in which the Standards have been interpreted and mediated by Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions and other providers, whose concern to demonstrate compliance has tended to lead to a mechanistic assessment of trainees against each individual Standard.

A similar model informs the use of a *Career Entry and Development Profile* (TTA, 2003), the portfolio that newly-qualified teachers carry with them from their initial training to their first teaching post:

> During the induction period, newly qualified teachers can build on the strengths identified in their initial teacher training (ITT), and work on the areas which they and those working with them have highlighted as priorities for future professional development (DfES/TTA, 2003: 3).

The profile of the new teacher is one of context-independent strengths and weaknesses. Development is thus to be seen in relation to the absolute scale of the Standards and is primarily the responsibility of the individual teacher. The new teacher's professional identity, then, is conceptualised as being both as stable and as portable as the portfolio that she carries with her to her first teaching post.

The model of teachers' professionality as a set of isolable individual attributes, measurable against a fixed scale of competences or standards, is one that has gained considerable currency in the discursive arena of education policy. Yinger and Hendricks-Lee argue for "standards as a powerful tool in the development of teaching as a profession," see virtue in their expression of "simple, desirable statements of goals and outcomes," and celebrate the "abstract, decontextualized, almost inarguable nature of standards" (Yinger and Hendricks-Lee, 2000: 94, 95, 99). For Wise and Leibbrand, the standards agenda in the USA offers the opportunity to align accreditation with results – "results that demonstrate that the teacher candidate knows the subject matter and can teach it effectively so that students learn" (Wise and Leibbrand, 2001: 249).

The standards model has also attracted a great deal of critical analysis. Cochran-Smith (2004) cautions against the easy equation of what is taught with what is learned and against a narrowing conception of the teacher's role. Beyer casts doubt on the "technical-rational-behaviorist approach" on which Standards Based Teacher Education is premised (Beyer, 2002), while Delandshere and Petrosky challenge "the assumption that knowledge is a commodity that can be objectified, represented in the form of standards, and measured in terms of immediately visible outcomes (Delandshere and Petrosky, 2004: 5). Both Korthagen (2003) and Bullough *et al.* voice similar concerns that "Complexity in the education of teachers is denied in an ill-fated quest for certainty and uniformity of outcomes" (Bullough *et al.,* 2003: 49), while Blake and Lansdell argue that

"The 'standards' may be too discrete, losing sight of the wholeness of teaching

performance" (Blake and Lansdell, 2000: 64).

All of these critiques of standards-based approaches focus attention on what tends to

become prioritised and what becomes marginalised – on the redefinition of what is

involved in the business of teaching, as it were. A second strand of analysis has directed

attention towards the abstracting, decontextualising effect of the standards. Apple

expresses concern at "the dismissal of any types of situation-specific and qualitative

understanding that is grounded in the lived experience of teachers in real schools (Apple,

2001: 188). Furlong *et al.* make a similar point:

> in real life a competence can be applied only within specific
> contexts. These will vary considerably according to circumstances,
> and in order to perform successfully a practitioner needs to be able to
> respond to new situations in a way that goes beyond a
> decontextualised set of practised procedures (2000: 108).

At the same time that the competences or standards model has attained a dominant

position within official, policy-oriented discourse, there has been sustained interest in

accounts of work-related training and workplace-based learning that have emphasised the

situated, context-specific nature of development. Lave and Wenger's (1991, 1998) work

has been influential in this respect, particularly in their articulation of three key

interlinked concepts: situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation, and

communities of practice (for evidence of Lave and Wenger's influence within the field of

teacher education, see, for example, Banks *et al.* [1999] Drever and Cope [1999], Fox

[2000], Fuller *et al.* [2005], Maynard [2001]). Apprentices or newcomers are positioned

as legitimate peripheral participants in communities of practice: they work alongside, and

learn from, their more experienced colleagues, the "old timers". In Lave and Wenger's accounts of workplace learning, attention is paid to the importance of learning by doing, of embedded, context-specific knowledge and of narrative as a significant means whereby knowledge is socially distributed. There is a recognition, too, of the fact that communities of practice may be more or less stable, more or less resistant to change, and that the relationship between "old timers" and newcomers may be more or less dialectical [more refs]. The model of learning that Lave and Wenger developed is explicitly counterposed to practices of explicit instruction within formal educational contexts; more than this, though, as Fuller et al (2005: 50) acknowledge, their intention was to develop a fully social, situated theory of learning in opposition to theories which located learning in the individual and which conceptualised the process of learning as the individual's acquisition of context-free knowledge. It is this sociocultural perspective on learning which encouraged us to make use of Lave and Wenger's model in our own research on the development of professional knowledge among new teachers.

The research project

Together with two other colleagues who teach with us on the English and English with Drama Postgraduate Certificate of Education course at the Institute of Education, we have been engaged in a small-scale research project, funded by the TTA, to investigate the development of teachers' professional knowledge in their first years in teaching.[1]

The research was conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews with English teachers in their first two years of teaching, together with lesson observations. Reference was also made to some of the writing that had been done by the teachers in our sample during their PGCE year. Each of the teachers was interviewed twice, once near the start and then again towards the end of the school year. After the first round of interviews, full transcripts were read and discussed by the four researchers. Common themes and further questions were identified, which were then pursued in the second round of interviews. This process enabled us to produce a series of case studies generated by the specific, subjective narratives of the new teachers, accounts that were analysed and interpreted by a group of researchers, all of whom had a longstanding interest in the development of teachers' professional knowledge.

To represent the research in this way is, however, to misrepresent it: what is left out of the picture is the extent to which the researchers were implicated in the development of the six teachers in our sample. All the new teachers had completed their PGCEs at the Institute; all had taken jobs in partnership schools – that is, schools where PGCE students were placed on periods of practical teaching experience (teaching practice). At the time

the project data were being gathered, one member of the research team (John Yandell) was working part-time in the same school as one of the new teachers in the sample (Jude).[2]   One obvious and marked effect of this was that the research was informed by a great deal of local knowledge: knowledge of the particular institutions in which the new teachers were working, knowledge of their colleagues. More specifically, the fact that the new teachers already knew their interviewers, had already established other professional relationships with them, inevitably affected the dynamic of the interviews, the content and shaping of the interview material. We return to the relationship of interviewer and interviewee later in this paper; for the moment, though, it is important, particularly given our interest in a model of situated, context-specific learning, to register the multiple nature of our connections with the teachers and school settings that were the immediate focus of our research.

The case study methodology that we have adopted is one that, following Freebody (2003), entails a recognition that:

> teachers are always teaching some subject matter, with some
> particular learners, in particular places and under conditions that
> significantly shape and temper teaching and learning practices.
> These conditions are not taken to be 'background' variables, but
> rather lived dimensions that are indigenous to each teaching-learning
> event. In that important respect, case studies show a strong sense of
> time and place; they represent a commitment to the overwhelming
> significance of localized experience (Freebody, 2003: 81).

In this paper, we want to focus on two of the teachers, Sarah and Jude. Both women were in their first year of teaching at the time when the research was undertaken. Both were working in coeducational, ethnically diverse, comprehensive schools in inner London.

What emerged in the course of the research project was just how different were the two teachers' conceptions of teaching, of their role and identity as teachers – and how different their experiences as newly-qualified teachers were. In juxtaposing the two case studies, we hope that the contrasts between them will help to illuminate what is peculiar to each, while also suggesting something of the spectrum of possible experiences and responses to those experiences that might be taken to be characteristic of new teachers more generally. In exploring aspects of these two case studies, we want to draw attention to what seems to us to be most problematic about the model of development promoted by the standards/competence approach of the Teacher Training Agency, which we contrast with Lave and Wenger's model of situated learning in communities of practice.

In adopting this approach, we would want to recall Kathy Carter's advocacy of narrative as a research method, particularly in relation to the study of teachers and their development:

> Stories became a way … of capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and, thus, redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness (Carter, 1993: 6).

Our case studies are not narratives, in any straightforward sense, although the interviews can be seen as containing narratives contextualised in conversation. But we are also mindful of Carter's comments (1993: 10) on the unequal power relationships of research, of the issues of who gets to tell the story, and of the inevitability of acts of interpretation of the complex phenomena that are the stuff of the interviews we conducted.

Two Case Studies: Sarah and Jude

Interviewed at the end of her first half term at Albion School, Sarah was clearly

preoccupied with issues of classroom management. Such concerns, it would be

reasonable to assume, are common to many new teachers (see, for example, Revell,

2005). The problem for Sarah is that these issues loom so large that they blot out any

other focus for reflection. More than this, though, the concentration on classroom

management entails a deficit view of Sarah's role and her place within the school: these

are the things she cannot do, or at least cannot do as proficiently as her colleagues. Sarah

compares herself unfavourably with the more experienced Lynn:

One teacher I observed at the end of last term is Lynn and she's amazing. She seems to
have good discipline and they get on with the work.

But this observation doesn't help Sarah; rather, it enforces a sense of her own inadequacy.

The opportunity to observe a more experienced colleague merely emphasises the

difference between Lynn's practice and Sarah's own: amazement, rather than imitation, is

the product. It is not so much that she is left without models or advice, but turning the

advice into successful strategies is problematic:

Shereen's been quite good about trying to pass on to me her systems …. A kid swore at
me and Shereen said just get him straight out but you try and do that! You say, 'Right get
out of my classroom.' 'No.' and you put him in detention and he doesn't turn up and
you're made to look a fool…. There is a problem with the top-down system that works
here.

The "top-down system" enforces Sarah's place at the bottom of the hierarchical

organisation of the school. When those in positions of greater authority intervene, the

effect is, at best, a temporary amelioration – but one that is bought at the cost of

emphasising even more clearly Sarah's own powerlessness:

… but with this class I can't have them in groups / it doesn't work in groups. There's just absolutely no way you can have group work. I tried, really: I mixed up the groups. I let them choose who they worked with. I numbered them off – 1,2, 3, 4 and nothing really worked. I had pair work and–

AT: Was that better?

Sarah: Well, it was better – well, no, it wasn't. It lasted for a double and by the end they hadn't really done anything much. So the year head read the riot act to them and all that shit and we did a bit of work in the last 10 minutes of the lesson. It's just…I don't know… There's just no expectation that they should work in English. No expectation that they should sit where I ask or that I'm even there some days.

What the preoccupation with behaviour also does is to alter Sarah's sense of

the students whom she teaches. Like her, they become defined by deficit, by

the respect they fail to show, by the expectations they fail to live up to:

> I've asked myself, what have I have done wrong and what is
> fundamentally wrong with the class. … I don't feel, I don't feel I
> have a relationship with them. I totally agree that you don't want
> children to like you … but I do want there to be…ultimately, I want
> there to be a culture of respect and understanding.

It is worth teasing out some of the tensions that are embedded in Sarah's language here.

Is her concern about the students' lack of respect for their own learning, for the subject

that she is teaching them – or for her as their teacher? The ambiguity might be taken to

indicate the degree to which Sarah has identified herself with her subject: an attack on

one involves an attack on the other, as school subject and teacher's subjectivity merge

into one. On the other hand, Sarah's sense of being on the outside is communicated in the

use of pronouns when she talks about the systems of support:

They ARE a team. They do support what you do. You're never criticised for what you've done as a teacher in terms of your sanctions. You are backed up.

The systems of support are real, but their effect is not what is intended. Sarah

conceptualises the school as other – not a community of which she might be a part.

Even very specific pieces of advice don't seem to work:

> One thing [Lynn] advised me to do is to follow everything up: if
> you say you're going to do something, like phone home, you have
> to do it. So they know, if you do this, this will happen; if you do
> this and so on. It's clear. So there's been a lot of advice from
> teachers about picking up everything up. But I've found it's
> virtually impossible to follow everything up because…well, there's
> just so much! And for me it's incredibly difficult, this fairness
> thing, on the board, say. … The names you are gonna put on the
> board are those 6 kids who are disrupting everything and they're
> the ones in the school who have all this attitude talk-back problem
> like: 'Oh miss that's not fair! They were talking and you haven't
> put their names on the board. Not fair. Racist, racist, racist; sexist,
> sexist, sexist!' and then you've just started something else!

Following everything up only works strategically: in other words, it only works

if you are well established, already confident enough of your place in the

community of practice to decide which things you are really going to follow

up. And if you are already perceived by the students to be a part of the school

community – an effective or respected part – then following things up will

confirm this impression of you. By taking the advice literally, Sarah makes it

unworkable (and creates far more work – and more demoralising work - for

herself). Because she cannot follow everything up, she confirms – to herself

and to the students – the sense that she doesn't (yet) belong.

In the course of this first interview, Sarah provides a highly significant insight into where things went wrong. She has, in a sense, been guided – and even, perhaps, led astray – by that way of looking at a teacher's role that conceptualises it as a list of competences.

Within the Standards as outlined in *Qualifying to Teach*, there is a section on "Teaching and class management." Standard S3.3.3 outlines the expectation that those awarded QTS must demonstrate that:

> They teach clearly-structured lessons or sequences of work which interest and motivate pupils … (DfES/TTA, 2003, p.13).

Standard 3.3.9 addresses another aspect, namely the requirement that:

> They [those awarded QTS] set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and establish a clear framework for classroom discipline to anticipate and manage pupils' behaviour constructively, and promote self-control and independence (DfES/TTA, 2003, p.13).

For newly-qualified teachers, the Teacher Training Agency provides a further set of standards, the Induction Standards, which elaborate on the standards required for the award of qualified teacher status. Although the guidance on "Teaching: securing appropriate behaviour" provided by the TTA stresses that teachers "will already recognise the need to address these issues through your planning and teaching as a whole rather than as a discrete area of practice", the sectionalisation of the Induction Standards militates against any such holistic approach. Indeed, the questions that the TTA addresses to new teachers encourage a highly segmented view of their progress:

When thinking about your progress, and planning for development, you might want to use the following prompts.

This is not an exhaustive list and you may wish to add your own questions.

▪ How well do you know and understand the school's behaviour policy? What is your role within it? How confident are you about your ability to implement this policy?

▪ How have you found out about the particular behaviour issues that you may need to address in this school or in the class(es) for which you are responsible? From whom have you sought advice?

▪ How confident are you that you are achieving your teaching and learning objectives? What changes in behaviour or classroom organisation and management might improve this? How might these changes be achieved?

▪ What attitudes do pupils demonstrate in your class(es)? How have you sought to establish constructive relationships with your pupils? What do you do to promote positive behaviour in your classroom?

▪ How do you respond to inappropriate behaviour in your classroom? What strategies have you used in order to pre-empt such behaviour? When have you asked for help in dealing with inappropriate behaviour?

(from the TTA website, www.tta.gov.uk/php/read.php?articleid=1435&sectionid=195)

Even from the parts of the interview transcript quoted above, it is clear that Sarah has addressed questions in each of these bullet points: in writing the names of disruptive students on the board, she has attempted to implement aspects of the school's behaviour policy; she has sought advice from colleagues; she has experimented with different forms of pupil grouping; she is painfully aware of students' attitudes as these have been demonstrated in her class; she has responded to inappropriate behaviour and has sought help.

As Alex Moore has argued:

The typically list-like nature of competences – *particularly* those emanating from official sources in which a high degree of universality is implicit – along with the perceived need to 'leave nothing out' for fear of implying that some areas of competence are more or less important than others, gives teachers and teacher educators a very clear impression that identified competences do, indeed, provide 'the entire syllabus', that the skills listed are indeed 'discrete', and that the

lists are, indeed, intended as finite representations of essential truths (Moore, 2004: 82).

This approach to specifying a teacher's role and responsibilities is reflected in the priorities which Sarah set for herself. When she realised that there were departmental schemes of work which she could use off the peg, as it were, she assumed that this meant that planning had been taken care of:

I wouldn't say I'm actually really concentrating on my teaching, not really.

AT: That's interesting. Go on about that. What do you mean?

Sarah: I feel like … I feel… well, with these schemes … it's really brilliant that they're all in place…. And so you think, well, I'll just sort out all the behaviour problems after the lesson and then the scheme is there and you open it up and think 'this is what I'll do next lesson'…but… you don't necessarily think, 'Will this work with my class?' You don't necessarily think, 'Will so-and-so be able to cope with it?'
… So you haven't thought, what do I want to get out of this lesson?
… I took all the schemes of work and all the resources and everything home over the summer and read them all and I thought. 'Gosh they've done them all for me. OK, so, I'm not gonna know what I need until I teach it.' Obviously I could've re-written the whole *Animal Farm* scheme of work but you're not going to do that … it's not going to be your priority to re-write a scheme of work when you've got all this other stuff to do. And you don't really engage with the material beforehand, and you do fall back on handing these questions out, and you're in the classroom and …. I just don't think I've processed it [Sarah, first interview].

Sarah describes a process of compartmentalisation, a bifurcation between behaviour management and lesson planning as if the two occupied separate worlds – precisely as they occupy separate sections in *Qualifying to Teach*.[3] In articulating this in the interview, Sarah acknowledges her mistake: her approach has meant that the schemes of work, the lesson plans, the materials are not hers. She has not taken ownership of them, nor has she spent time working out how the existing plans might be best adapted to meet the needs of the students in the classes she teaches. It is possible, of course, to represent

this as a failure to meet the Standards for "Planning, expectations and targets" (DfES/TTA, 2003, S3.1), and specifically those that relate to taking account of "pupils' varying needs" (S3.1.2). But Sarah's insight here seems to us to be of central importance in reaching an understanding of just how unhelpful the Standards have been in developing Sarah's conception of the role of the teacher. Her point about planning is also of much more general significance – gesturing as it does at the dangers that are attendant on the notion that planning can happen at several removes from the activities of teaching and learning – a notion that can be fostered by the existence of downloadable schemes of work and learning materials on websites, as if one size might somehow fit all.

There is, at the end of this piece of searching self-examination, a moment of optimism. "Next year," Sarah announces, "I'm really going to do some things differently." Her resolve here can be seen to spring not merely from her analysis of what has been amiss in her approach, but also out of her experience of what has worked well. There is another part of the interview when she talks about the best moment she has had with her Year 7 class:

I did this thing where you bring in an object which is special to you and you have to talk about it. And they loved it that I brought in this old recipe book that was given to me. And we drew time lines and I worked it into the scheme of work [Sarah, first interview].

It is easy to see why this should have been so successful: the subjectivities of both Sarah and her students have been allowed into the lesson, rather than it being a lesson delivered from on high. The advice that Sarah should "be herself" would, doubtless, have been no more helpful than the advice to follow

everything up. Here she is, though, allowing herself an identity more

complicated, more historied, than that of some idealised teacher – and

simultaneously developing a relationship with her students that is not defined

by issues of management. Here, too, one is struck by the pronouns used ("*we*

drew time lines").

The issue of planning, how it is done, who owns it and the extent to which the

process is articulated with reference to the learning needs of specific students,

is a dominant motif running through all the interviews we conducted. Jude,

interviewed towards the end of her first year as a teacher, provides a strong

example of planning for a particular class:

I think Maria was one of the reasons I tried to do a lot of drama work when we were
reading *Frankenstein* – just so everyone could be involved – and also it was good to do
some drama when we were reading a play! Because it brings out all sorts of things that
just sitting and reading it doesn't [Jude, second interview].

Maria was at that stage a newly-arrived student from Cabo Verde, literate in Portuguese,

highly motivated, but with very little English.[4] Jude's planning took account of Maria's

learning needs, the opportunities for development provided by the existing scheme of

work – and the social dynamic of the class.

This leads on to another salient feature of the case studies as snapshots of the

development of new teachers. In the same interview from which we have quoted above,

Sarah tells of a moment of unexpected warmth:

Charles and Mark stayed behind in English detention. I asked them 'Would you like to help me tidy my classroom?' And for some reason, Mark started to tidy up the classroom. I do this with all of them when I keep them behind. And normally they might pick up a newspaper and say, 'Not mine, Miss'. But he picked up the piece of paper and then proceeded to tidy up everything. 'Wonderful!' I said, 'I'll give you two merits if you finish the whole classroom.' So Charles says, 'If I tidy it up, can I have a merit?' I said, 'Of course you can. There's always merits going.' So they tidied it up, chatting away, and I kept them in twenty minutes. And I said, 'Thanks very much boys. That's really lovely. Why aren't you like this in my lesson?' And we had a bit of a chat and it was really really good. And I tried to… I have all these thoughts: Imagine what English is for them with all this other stuff going on in their lives [Sarah, first interview].

When we first read this, we were reminded of our own beginning teachers' case studies, tasks completed during the first term of the PGCE course, in which the trainees are asked to write about the learning and progress of an individual school student. In many of these case studies, there were moments outside the classroom, epiphanies almost, when the beginning teacher had suddenly become aware of aspects of the student who was the focus of their writing – and through this had come to glimpse their lives beyond their English lessons, beyond even the school gates. In this context, it is illuminating to contrast Sarah's attitude to the students, her understanding of them and the way she is placed, and places herself, with Jude's positioning of herself. From Jude's arrival at Wheatsheaf School, there was a sense that the relationships that she established in the classroom were part of a nexus of wider social and cultural relationships and understandings:

I am in a strange position in this school because I live … in a council flat, my kids go to the local school … I've known these kids since they were little – I feel very much not necessarily part of this community but there are kids who go here who are related to people … and my son plays football with [a child in Jude's Y7 class], so I probably don't feel like other teachers might feel, like I feel very connected within Camden to the community and also all my son's friends are like from other countries … and the school my kids go to is one where the majority are Muslim, and no-one is making cakes or having discos, my child is in a minority … so I'm used to making contact with the

Bangladeshi mums, and being aware that the dads won't want to talk to you, so I suppose I'm more culturally aware because of where I live … [Jude, first interview].

Once again, the sense of wider relationships – and of the importance of the extracurricular interactions in developing those relationships – is there in the significance that Jude affords to her trip to the cinema with Maria's class.

When Jude was interviewed for a second time, towards the end of her first year at Wheatsheaf School, she was asked about significant moments in the development of her relationship with particular classes and groups of students. Jude recalled

going to *Lord of the Rings* with them and sitting next to Jose and Maria and Jose was just going "Urrh! the baddies! the goodies!" and just being able to walk along the street and talk to them and make them realise that you – because with someone like Jose it's really important that he knows that you like him, that you're nice … and he's going to feel comfortable then coming into your class – oh, and I know, the defining moment for the whole class was when the fire alarm went off … [Jude, second interview].

Jude's sense of a particular student, her awareness of the needs of individuals and groups of students in planning and in evaluating her own teaching, is much more apparent in the interview that took place towards the end of her first year of teaching than in our first interview, conducted after her first half term at Wheatsheaf. By the time of the second interview, Jude talks about the performance and progress of individual, named students in her classes. The conversation happens in Jude's classroom: as we talk, it is clear that in her mind's eye she is placing each student in their seat, their presence a vivid reality in the room:

> I find Jose [a newish arrival from Angola] difficult but then the other day when he was sat at that table and he was just talking to me – and I know he gets embarrassed because he's difficult to understand and he doesn't speak brilliant English at all, but just the fact that at one time he used to just stand

in the corner and refuse to come in the room and now he's on the middle table trying to work with someone – I mean that's the first time he's tried to work with anyone – that was quite amazing [Jude, second interview].

What Jude has to say about the changes in Jose's attitude to learning is, of course, germane to the Teacher Training Agency's Induction Standard, "Teaching: securing appropriate behaviour", from which we quoted earlier. Jude's understanding of the social, cultural and linguistic factors that lie at the root of Jose's changed behaviour is, however, too layered, too complicated, to be meaningfully assessed by reference to the TTA's checklist of standards. Her account emphasises the social interactions through which learning occurs, in the classroom or beyond it; she shows an empathetic awareness of Jose's awkwardness and frustration; she understands the relationship between the social space of the classroom and the social relationships of the class – between students and teacher and among the students themselves.

As Jude has become more confident of her relationship with her students, she has taken ownership, one might say, of the physical space of the classroom. The connection between these aspects of her development is rendered explicit in the same interview:

I had put people in rows because I had gone to a meeting and they had said, "Well, you need to have everyone in rows" – it was about 7A – "Do you have them lining up outside?" "Yes, I line them up outside?" "Have you got them in rows?" "No." So then I decided to try these rows. And then it was like, the behaviour's worse, I'm really unhappy, the classroom looks awful, you can't do any group work – and then the lining up outside – I mean 7A are never going to line up outside and be quiet and all stand in a line, so why am I bothering? Why not have a pleasant start to lessons where I am happily greeting them – so just don't listen, it doesn't matter if they all line up in silence, that is not anything – so actually having the confidence to say I want people to do groupwork, I think it's really important that people speak to each other in English and do tasks together, specially for people who are learning English – so just putting my tables back this way offered so much more opportunity and so much more freedom of space, so that was a defining moment [Jude, second interview]

Procedures, such as those for managing students' entry into the classroom or seating

arrangements, are appraised in the light of Jude's knowledge of, and developing

relationship with, particular groups of students. She is able to take responsibility for

decisions which go counter to the advice she has been given because of her confidence in

the centrality of collaborative oral work to the business of English lessons, and because

of her preparedness to prioritise – to live with imperfection and not to allow

boisterousness in the corridor to preoccupy her unduly. It is worth referring back to the

checklist from the TTA Induction Standards, "Teaching: securing appropriate behaviour,"

which we quoted above. What Jude does is to consult other colleagues, to refer to whole-

school policy, just as the Induction Standards recommend – but then to evaluate the

effects of specific practices in the context of her overarching aim, which is to do with

learning, and in relation to the social model of learning that she articulates as central to

her practice.   Jude is able to take risks and to take responsibility for what happens in her

classroom because, for all her status as a newcomer, she has confidence in, and the

confidence of, the department in which she works. This seems to us to be precisely the

model of "transformative practice of a learning community" that offers:

> an ideal context for developing new understandings because the community
> sustains change as part of an identity of participation (Wenger 1998: 215).

Problems in the definition of peripherality and communities of practice

We started by looking at Sarah and behaviour. We suggested that the support that Sarah

had been offered had not, finally, been helpful because it did not address where she was

situated in the school community of practice. What she is experiencing, in an acute but by no means unique form, is, we think, the difficulty of the transition from the PGCE year to the first full year of teaching. There is much about the PGCE year that can be accommodated within the model of legitimate peripheral participation developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). Beginning teachers are introduced gradually to the activities that constitute a teacher's role; they are encouraged – and expected – to do some things (starter activities, for example) without taking full responsibility for the whole product (the lesson, the scheme of work, the class); there are plentiful opportunities for peer support and for the exchange of narratives that shape the beginning teacher's understanding of teaching. There is a validity, too, to the description of beginning teachers as those who are placed on the periphery of the community of practice that is a school. On the periphery, they are allowed to maintain a distance – to participate but also to draw back, to act but also to look on.

There is a sharp contrast with the expectations that meet a newly-qualified teacher. Suddenly, nothing less than full participation will do. The new teacher has her own classes, for whom she is (alone) responsible. And any shortcoming, any participation that is inadequate, places a burden on other full participants.

In Sarah's second interview, conducted towards the end of her year at Albion School, she reaches an understanding of how things might be, or might have been, different, had there been space within the department for the kind of learning-focused conversations in which Sarah's participation would not have been defined by deficit, or incompetence, but rather

by a more equal and enthusiastic collaboration – the legitimate peripheral participation

that would, with time, have blossomed into full participation:

… it needs a lot of discussion – as a department, I mean – about the particular classes
across Year 7 and what you would do with the poetry to make those aims *mean* anything
and we just don't have those discussions. …
I don't feel like anyone really values my opinion, or says, 'Wow what a good idea, I'd
love to try that', so I'm not going to suddenly say, 'I had this really good lesson. Do you
want to hear about it?'
…
To be honest with you, I don't think [Sarah's head of department] does know how to
value someone or credit them, or show that she knows you're really thinking through
your teaching and want to get the best out of the kids. You need to feel you matter…
intellectually if you know what I mean. And when you're really struggling with the
discipline which I am, you have to feel your brain is still working, that maybe you still
know what a poem is or whatever.
…well, to have [HOD] say something like, 'Sarah, I know you have some really difficult
classes and you have had a bit of a bum deal. Let's talk about how we can support you'.
I'm not saying I've got the worst deal: lots of people have difficult classes; but it would
have meant a lot to me to have her say that or something like it. Maybe more
observations would help and definitely more talk about the problems. Whenever [HOD]
removes a kid from my class I feel as if I'm burdening her or someone in the department
so badly that containment is easier.
…
I feel the discipline stuff is just taking over! Look how much of my teaching that I've
been talking about to you is about problems I'm having in the classroom! It really gets
me down
… if we looked at poetry … and we really talked about how the ideas I put forward could
work with a mixed ability class and I could hear other people's ideas, I don't think I
would get so down or so…obsessed with classroom management stuff…or so critical of
everything all the time [Sarah, second interview]

Enmeshed in this reflection is both a sense of unsatisfactory social/work relations – the

difficulties of working in a department which, for Sarah, is not functioning effectively as

a community of practice, in which resources and ideas might be shared, and in which

there might be a recognition of different members' expertise – and also Sarah's sense of

her dislocation from a wider community of practice – the community of English studies,

as it were. Feeling isolated – peripheral – in relation both to the department and to a

wider intellectual world, she still must shoulder the burden of her work as a classroom

teacher, work which becomes defined by behaviour management – and any peripherality

in this aspect of her work, any failure to "contain" the students, would merely increase

the load on her colleagues. Learning communities, as Wenger (1998) argues, need to

"make trajectories possible…offer a past and a future that can be experienced as a

personal trajectory" (Wenger 1998: 215). This is precisely what Sarah is not

experiencing: she doesn't feel she is contributing to a "valued future."

We have described the case studies of these new teachers as snapshots. The metaphor

does not quite encapsulate what was going on in the interviews: to be frank, it understates

the extent to which the interviews were interventions in the development of these

teachers. The interviews with Sarah provide Sarah with the space to reflect on what is

happening to her in the school, a chance to gain some distance – a sense of critical (self-

critical) perspective. For Sarah, in other words, Anne Turvey's continuing dialogic

presence provides a partial surrogate for the departmental conversations that she feels she

lacks. In a different way, Jude uses the interview to articulate – and develop – a sense of

the teacher she wants to be/become:

I know that I don't really want to be a big shouter. I know that I want to have a bit of a
sense of humour. I know that I want my classroom to be a relaxed place where people
learn rather than work, where people bring what they've got to the classroom as well, and
that I respect that, where we find different ways of doing things, or I find different ways
that are going to help everyone rather than just the same people achieving all the time and
not other people ever getting a sense of achievement [Jude, second interview]

Lave and Wenger recognise that there is a deal of elasticity in their notion of a

community of practice. The possibility of tensions and contradictions – and even of

change – is admitted:

In our view, participation at multiple levels is entailed in membership in a community of practice. Nor does the term community imply necessarily co-presence, a well-defined, identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries. It does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities (1991:98).

It might, perhaps, be instructive to compare how the term might be applied to the

experiences of new teachers at different stages of their development – and at different

historical moments.

While Jude and Sarah were PGCE students at the Institute of Education, it would seem

reasonable to construe the community of practice to which they were contributing (as

legitimate peripheral participants) as one that encompassed not only the Institute but also

the hundred or so departments in schools across and beyond London where all our other

PGCE English students were placed. It does not seem entirely fanciful to make a

connection between the inescapable diversity of so far-flung, heterogeneous and disparate

a community of practice and Jude's commitment to cater for the diversity within her

classroom. But when beginning teachers become (newly-qualified) teachers, there is a

real danger that the community of practice suddenly shrinks to the size of a single

department in a single school. Twenty years ago, when we were teachers in London

schools, this parochialism was counteracted, at the very least, by the London-wide

structures of support and accountability: by weekly in-service training sessions organised

across schools, by the interventions of the Inner London Education Authority's advisory

service - and also by the widely-disseminated, teacher-led curriculum development work of ILEA's English Centre. Now, as Sarah's story suggests, it can be harder for a new teacher to maintain a perspective beyond the confines of her school, to continue the open, collaborative dialogues of the PGCE year.

There are signs of increasing interest in continuing professional development, in the establishment of structures and courses to enable teachers to develop their practice. Such initiatives, our research would indicate, are particularly welcome when they provide opportunities for continuing dialogue and reflective practice.[5]

Fuller *et al*. (2005) are critical of the lacunae in Lave and Wenger, and in particular the siting of learning within the dyadic newcomer-oldtimer relationship. They observe that their school-based research has produced "clear examples of experienced teachers learning from one another through their normal work practices" (2005: 60) and suggest that such learning is not easily assimilable within the framework of legitimate peripheral participation. Our own research with newly-qualified teachers has led us, too, to question the universal applicability of the model of legitimate peripheral participation. There is a world of difference between the roles occupied by student teachers – roles that can readily be seen in LPP terms – and what is expected of even the newest of newly-qualified teachers, who are expected to participate fully in the practice of the school and the department from the first day of their employment: they have their own timetable, their own classes, their own workload that is, at the least, 90 per cent of that of more experienced colleagues. But Fuller *et al*. seem not to recognise quite how problematic

the model of LPP might be in a school context, in that assumptions are made about the (easy) transferability of knowledge of how to teach from one school to another. In our research, the provision of clear and detailed documentation has not always been so straightforwardly helpful to new members of a department. Their account treats as unproblematic what it is to be a good (or a better) teacher, just as it glosses over the "good reputation" of the department. We are acutely conscious of the sharp differences in judgements that have had a profound – and often profoundly damaging – impact on colleagues, departments and schools, where, for example, Ofsted's notions of worth and of standards have collided with the values and practices of the teachers whom they have been inspecting (on which see, for example, Yandell, 2000).

There is a difficulty, too, in Fuller *et al.*'s use of the concept of marginality. It would appear that the primary meaning of marginality for them is to do with the distribution of power within a subject department. In Lave and Wenger, the move from peripheral to full participation is a move that entails both a shift in power relations and in responsibility for work/production: the alteration in power is implicated in the move to full participation in the productive processes of the community of practice. Within the secondary school, though, a teacher's marginalisation, however real in terms of the relationships within the department, is unlikely to entail a similar shift to peripherality in the work of teaching. And this leads us to another and rather large problem with Fuller *et al.*'s approach to schools as workplaces and departments as communities of practice. Somehow the account manages to obscure the presence in these workplaces of rather large numbers of other actors – the school students.

The agency of school students remained a salient feature of the ways in which the teachers with whom we talked conceptualised their work. The development of professional knowledge involved, for them, the reworking of subject knowledge in a dialectical relationship with social interactions of the classroom.

Abigail, another of the new teachers in our study, observed how the experience of reading Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* with a class had changed the play for her (see (Turvey, 2005)). In reflecting on this experience, Abigail arrived at an understanding of the embedded nature of any reading of the text, the extent to which its meanings would be inflected by the contexts and histories of the readers. It is this sense of the dissolution of the boundaries between notions of subject knowledge and the embedded, sociocultural knowledge of school students that also characterises Jude's positioning of herself as an English teacher. In her first interview she reflected on her own formation:

I love the diversity of the subject, I love the fact that you can bring in history …I think English should be renamed communication, I think it should be about how people communicate … [Jude, first interview].

With so ecumenical a definition of the subject comes a practice that remains open to contributions from far beyond the academy – a community of practice that is a broad church indeed. Perhaps also, lurking in so richly hi/storied a conception of the practice lies a justification for the methods we have adopted in this research project. We referred earlier to Freebody's conception of the case study as representing a "commitment to the overwhelming significance of localized experience." What also emerges strongly from our case studies, though, is the significance of the subjectivity of the teacher, her values,

interests and sense of herself. We hope that what we have begun to suggest in this paper is something of the complex, dialectical interplay between such subjectivities and the larger power structures of school and society.

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1 TTA Initial Teacher Training Research and Development Awards (2003): To investigate the development of English teachers' professional knowledge in the early years of teaching.

2 Names of schools, teachers and school students have been changed.

3 Edwards and Protheroe (2003) observe, in discussing the evidence from their study of 125 student teachers on two training programmes:

> … it would seem that student teachers, operating in relative isolation as *quasi* teachers, are more likely to close down on complexity than independently seek it when interpreting classroom life (Edwards and Protheroe, 2003: 231).

4 At the time when this research was being conducted, John Yandell split his time between teaching on the PGCE course at the Institute of Education and working as a language support teacher in the school where Jude was teaching: hence his knowledge of Maria's background.

5 Particularly interesting here is the analysis of online discussion groups within the Master of Teaching course at the Institute of Education: see Pachler and Daly (2004).