

Teaching Practice Groups: a case study of social constructive learning.

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Declaration

'I, David Mallows, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is the teacher learning of trainee teachers of English as a second, other or foreign language to adults, within a particular model of initial teacher training: Teaching Practice Groups. It contributes to knowledge in the field by centering on the mechanisms by which the Teaching Practice Group model supports prospective English language teachers in learning to teach. To do so it draws on socio-constructivist and cognitive theories of teacher learning to explore the learning of trainees within the model, through their interaction with their fellow trainees, the trainers, and the activities of the course. It suggests that within the Teaching Practice Group model the classroom is both the focus and the place of learning about how to teach. The Teaching Practice Group model provides contextually meaningful experiences for trainees, engaging them in situational decision-making, both in advance of teaching in the form of lesson planning, and on their feet in front of a group of learners.

The study identifies ways in which both subjective and objective understandings of knowledge impact on the judgments trainees make about how to act in the classroom. It shows how objective descriptions of teacher knowledge are used in order to help trainees to name elements of the teaching and learning process - the classroom and its moves, while subjective knowledge is foregrounded in the focused reflection that Teaching Practice Group model provides on the experience of teaching.

The thesis uses concepts from social constructivist theories of learning. Teaching Practice Groups are highly social; trainees on courses using the model interact a great deal with each other, with their peers, with the learners in the teaching practice classroom, and also with the course documentation and activities. I suggest that the development of trainees' knowledge and understanding of teaching within the model is highly scaffolded, allowing trainers to progress trainees' attention beyond their own actions, to the learners and their learning. The teacher learning examined in this thesis is driven by engagement with concepts of teaching and learning, with other players (peers, students and trainers), in the specific cultural environment of the shared language classroom.

Impact Statement

Every year thousands of prospective English Language teachers take courses of initial teacher training around the world. The focus of this thesis is the teacher learning of trainee teachers of English as a second, other or foreign language to adults, within a particular model of initial teacher training: Teaching Practice Groups. It centres on the ways the Teaching Practice Group model supports prospective English language teachers in learning to teach. Traditional forms of initial teacher training have been criticized for their failure to adequately integrate theoretical and practical knowledge. The study suggests that Teaching Practice Groups are an effective method of initial teacher training, centring trainees' learning on the classroom, and providing trainers with mechanisms to guide trainees' attention to relevant aspects, and structure their reflection. In this impact statement I will describe how the knowledge gained through the development of this study, has been put to beneficial use.

The Teaching Practice Group model is used on thousands of courses around the world each year. The study has the potential to inform the work of teacher trainers working within the Teaching Practice Group model on the many initial teacher training courses for English language teachers around the world. The study suggests that trainers can work in both planned and contingent manners in order to support teacher learning, guiding trainee's attention to the content of learning to teach.

The study has had a direct impact on the experience of participants studying on the UCL IOE MA TESOL (Pre-service). In 2015 I developed an optional 30-credit MA module, focused on classroom teaching, in which I incorporated the Teaching Practice Group model. Participants take part in the three-part cycle of planning, teaching, and feedback described in the thesis. The structure of the module, particularly the use of designed-in scaffolds, was greatly influenced by my learning through this study. The module has run over six iterations with a total of 184 participants benefiting from the experience.

The potential beneficiaries of this study are not limited to trainers using the Teaching Practice Group model. The study provides knowledge about teacher learning in general, and the role of the trainer within that, which can be of use to trainers working with trainees within other course structures. The concept of a progression in attention, that trainees'

learning to teach is necessarily a staged process, has great implications for the design of initial teacher learning in this area.

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1. Introduction

This is a study of a particular model of initial teacher training, Teaching Practice Groups, which is used with trainee teachers of English as a second, other or foreign language to adults. With the Teaching Practice Group model trainee teachers teach classes of adult learners of English language that are recruited and run specifically for the benefit of the trainee teachers. Working with this shared group of learners, trainees take turns to teach a part of each lesson, observed by their peers and their teacher trainer¹. The teaching is done under the supervision of the trainer who leads group feedback sessions immediately after the taught session to reflect on and evaluate the teaching and begin the process of planning for the next session. In this model all the trainees contribute to collaborative formative discussions on the basis of their shared experience with a known group of learners. Trainees also plan their teaching collaboratively with their peers and their trainer.

The field of English language teaching to adults (ELT) is a complex one and that is reflected in the terminology used to describe it. Teachers may consider themselves predominantly as teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). As the training courses included in this research are from the ESOL tradition, ESOL will be used as the catch-all term in this study.

I began work as an EFL teacher over 30 years ago and have been a teacher trainer for the last 20. During that time, the majority of the courses that I have worked on have used the Teaching Practice Group model. Firstly, as a trainer on the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA), an internationally recognized initial teacher training qualification, in which the Teaching Practice Group model is a central part of the course, and more recently I was part of the team that introduced Teaching Practice Groups in the Institute of Education Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). As a trainer, I greatly enjoyed working with

¹ In this study I will refer to the person who leads the process as the 'trainer', while some of the research participants have referred to the 'trainer' as the 'tutor'. The choice of the terms trainer or tutor is institutional and does not imply a difference in role with the Teaching Practice Group model.

the model and became interested in exploring how Teaching Practice Groups support trainees in learning to teach. I was particularly interested in the ways in which trainees work with both theoretical and practical concepts as they develop their understanding of the classroom and their role(s) within it.

I have so far referred here to teacher training rather than teacher education. In this thesis the term teacher training will be used to talk about the model under study, largely because this is the term that is most commonly used in the context of Teaching Practice Groups. Indeed, Teaching Practice Groups are often referred to as 'training classes'. However, this does not imply a belief that learning to teach requires just 'training' at the expense of 'education'. I am aware that the distinction between training and education of teachers is a significant one. In the field of ESOL teacher training it is common to find professionals who consider themselves teacher trainers and others who consider themselves teacher educators, with the former group being far more likely to work in colleges and the latter in universities (Mallows, Cara & Casey 2010:). For teacher educators, training is often seen as more suitable for learning to operate a piece of machinery than for something as complex as learning to teach, which requires knowledge as well as skills. However, it can also be argued that, while the distinction is a valid one, both types of input are needed in the process of learning to teach. To be able to come to an understanding of what it means to be a teacher and to be able to perform in that role, may require a training stage as well as an education stage. In this thesis, when discussing theories of teacher learning more generally, away from the specific context of Teaching Practice Groups I will refer to teacher education, and where I am discussing teacher learning on specific courses, I will refer to teacher training.

Initial teacher training courses in England, such as the PGCE, generally include a practical teaching element, often in the form of a placement in an organisation other than the training institution. While this allows the practical teaching experience to be part of the trainee's learning, giving the trainee something to relate the theoretical elements of the course to, it also has the effect of placing practical teaching outside the course itself. There is a danger with this that trainees experience the theoretical and practical elements of the course as quite separate and disconnected (Wideen et

al. 1998, Tarone and Allwright 2005, Korthagen (2010). The theory introduced in the lecture hall can be decontextualised and fail to reflect the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the classroom environment (Bailey and Nunan 1996, Doyle 1986, Johnson 1996). Unless effective mentoring systems are in place, the onus is on the trainee to make the connection between the theory of the course and practice as they experience it in the classroom.

Not only is there usually a physical separation between the taught elements of the courses and the teaching practice placements as the trainees are usually based in a different organisation for their teaching practice, there can also often be a division of labour between the training team in the teacher training institution and those supporting the teaching practice placements. There is a danger that formative support for teaching practice is unconnected to the content of the taught sessions and can even conflict with it, which can be confusing for new teachers early in their development as teachers.

in order to explore the distinctiveness of the Teaching Practice Group model of ITT it is first necessary to describe its key features. What follows is an outline of the key elements of the Teaching Practice Group model of Initial Teacher Training.

1.1 Teaching Practice Groups

Teaching Practice Groups, a model that has been used extensively in English language teacher training, in particular on the Cambridge CELTA course and its predecessor the RSA CTEFLA, is an alternative way to organise the practical teaching element of a teacher training course.

The CELTA syllabus describes the purpose of Teaching Practice Groups as providing opportunities 'for candidates to show that they can apply theory to practice in classroom teaching' (Cambridge ESOL, 2009). In the following section I will describe in detail the Teaching Practice Group process in order to identify the elements and procedures experienced by trainees and used by trainers on courses using this particular approach to teacher training.

Teaching Practice Groups, such as those used on the CELTA course, give teacher trainees on initial teacher training programmes the opportunity to work with real

learners in a semi-controlled environment. It is an intensive model which provides a high level of support to the trainee and gives the trainer the opportunity to model good practice and to make connections for trainees between the practical experience of being in a classroom with real learners and the theoretical input and readings that make up the rest of the course.

The Teaching Practice Group model is made up of a cycle of planning, teaching, and feedback revolving around a shared group of learners. Within each cycle trainees' engagement with teaching is organized and guided by the procedures followed and the documents used by trainees to prepare for, carry out and reflect on teaching. The documents include formal lesson plans, self-evaluation forms to be completed by trainees following their teaching, written feedback forms on observed teaching completed by the trainer, and observation tasks carried out by trainees while observing. I will suggest that these documents, and the actions of the trainer in interacting with trainees around the shared class, mediating trainees' learning, guiding and focusing their attention to relevant elements of the teaching and learning process.

One feature of the Teaching Practice Groups observed as part of this study is the shared nature of much of the activity. The trainees taught the same class and observed each other teaching this shared group of students. The opportunity to watch others teaching is central to the Teaching Practice Groups model. By giving trainees the luxury of observing 'their' group without being in front of the class, with responsibility for managing the learning, they are able to focus on the teaching and learning activities taking place and to reflect on what they can gain from these in terms of their own approaches to teaching.

The number of students per Teaching Practice Group and the length of the taught session itself varies between courses, but there are a number of consistent features in this model. This was reflected in the courses studied as part of this thesis. There were six trainees per group; the lessons were two hours long and were broken down into equal 'slots' for the different trainees to teach. In the first week of the course, each teaching session was broken down into 20-minute 'slots', giving each of the trainees the opportunity to teach the class on the same day. Subsequently, the slots

were extended to 40 minutes. Here half taught that day and the others just observed, with roles reversed in the subsequent lesson. Finally, the slots were extended to an hour, with only two trainees teaching and the others observing.

The trainer usually teaches the first session and may step in if trainees are absent, but generally the trainer is solely an observer. Trainees are encouraged to collaboratively act as the teachers, with responsibility for taking the register, informing the students about changes in the timetable, and checking their homework.

Over the whole course each trainee teaches for the same length of time, but they also teach at a different point in the class, so that they experience the beginning of a class when students are 'cold', as well as the end of a class when they may be tired, or of course energized, after the other trainees have completed their slots. Different slots also generally require different types of teaching, for example language presentations are more common in the second, or middle, slot while freer practice is more likely to take place in the final slot. Accordingly, timetabling the teaching practice slots, a task carried out by the trainer, is complex.

In the courses studied as part of this thesis, there were two Teaching Practice Classes at different levels. The trainees were divided into two groups and allocated first to one level or another and then swapped half way through the course in order to gain experience of, and be assessed at, teaching learners at the two levels.

One of the distinctive features of the teaching practice group model is the high number of observers in the classroom. When there are six trainees in the group, five of these, plus the trainer sit at the back of the class observing and taking notes. This is in contrast to the general culture of closed classrooms in which it is rare for there to be observers in a classroom other than for inspections or other formal assessments of the teaching.

The use of a group of learners, a Teaching Practice Class is central to the Teaching Practice Group model. The Teaching Practice Class is usually made up of adults who have been recruited specifically for the purpose and who do not pay for the course.

In a sense they volunteer for the class, with the understanding that they will be taught by a group of trainees, rather than by a professional, trained teacher.

1.1.1 Planning

Not only do trainees share the group of learners, giving them a common set of challenges in terms of designing and delivering learning that takes account of the learners' levels, prior knowledge, learning styles and personalities, they also plan for the sessions together. Planning is an important part of the Teaching Practice Groups process - joint planning sessions are part of the formal timetable of the course and generally take place in a communal area where course books, grammar books and resource books are available as well as pens and scissors and a photocopier. Here trainees sit together and discuss their learning aims, brainstorm ideas, select and design resources, and sketch out rough drafts of their lesson plans. This environment encourages sharing of ideas, resources and even craft skills (those who are good at drawing and laminating are highly sought after).

Within any particular planning session trainees may be at different stages, with some about to teach and others in the initial stages of planning for a class the following day. For the former group it is too late to start over and so the planning discussion provides an opportunity to fine tune elements such as timing of activities; to better understand any language items that require attention; and to anticipate any difficulties for the learners or the teacher. For the latter group a more exploratory discussion is necessary, with the trainer reacting to their initial ideas and suggesting activities and resources for them to consider.

Common to each is the need to coordinate their planning to ensure coherence across the whole teaching session as well as within their own 'slot'. They are made aware of the importance of their individual 'lesson' building on previous work with the learners and preparing them for whatever the next trainee has planned. This is achieved, or not, largely through the shared lesson planning sessions which encourage and facilitate such coordination. Requiring trainees to work together in this way also gives them opportunities to look beyond their own lesson and to discuss and contribute to the development of their fellow trainees' plans, for which

they receive reciprocal support. As we will see from the data collected in this study, not all trainees are able to take these opportunities.

Teaching Practice points

The trainer is also likely to join the planning sessions to give pointers and guide the development of trainees' understanding of the planning process. The trainer does not direct the planning, but they do set Teaching Practice Points – the aims for each of the trainee's teaching slots. The use of Teaching Practice points varies between trainers. I have worked with trainers who make very perfunctory use of these – perhaps just specifying a page in a coursebook. However, some provide trainees with detailed points at the beginning of the process, with clear guidance on the specific language and / or skills that they are required to work on with students in their particular teaching slot. They then reduce the detailed specification of Teaching Practice Points as the course progresses, until trainees are just given very general lesson aims, such as 'give them some speaking practice', 'do some reading with them' or 'revise the past simple'. This withdrawal of guidance on planning is intended to encourage trainees to become more independent and to make their own decisions about what aims to include and how to achieve them.

The lesson plan

Planning within the Teaching Group Practice model is structured by the teaching practice points that trainers give trainees and by the formal written lesson plan that trainees are required to produce. The structured nature of planning for teaching slots is intended to guide the attention of trainees to relevant elements of the teaching and learning process, such as the target language or the interaction patterns between learners. These then need to be considered and a thoughtful response, in the form of a lesson plan, produced.

Lesson plan pro-formas differ from one teaching centre to another, but generally share a number of common features (Harmer 2015, Scrivener, 2011) and mean that trainee teachers, in their planning, are forced to consider certain aspects of the teaching and learning process. Most lesson plan pro formas ask for trainees to specify the aims and objectives of the class and sometimes they are also required to

state their aims for each stage of the lesson. As well as outlining the aims, most lesson plans require a chronological description of the procedure the trainee is planning to use. The planned activities are generally divided into discrete 'stages', each with its own aim, timing, description of procedure and expected interaction patterns. Assessment of learning and materials to be used may also be part of the lesson plan pro forma.

Within trainees' planning discussions there is a focus on solving problems – what to do, when and how. Their attention is focused on the coherence of the content they are proposing to work with, and the variety and appropriateness of inputs and interactions that they have included in the lesson plan. The lesson plan scaffolds their developing understanding of the nature of each element and its interplay with the other elements of the lesson.

1.1.2 Observation

As well as planning jointly, trainees also teach the same class and observe each other teaching this shared group of students. The opportunity to watch others teaching is central to the Teaching Practice Groups model. By giving trainees the luxury of observing 'their' group without being in front of the class, with responsibility for managing the learning, their attention can be focused on the teaching and learning activities taking place and they can be encouraged to reflect on what they can gain from these in terms of their own approaches to teaching.

Observation tasks

Within the Teaching Practice Group model trainees can be given a specific observation task to complete while observing their peers. Guided by an observation task pro-forma, trainees collect data on particular elements of a class they are observing, such as interaction patterns, teacher voice, or questioning techniques. Wajnrb (1992:7) suggests the use of observation tasks is useful for trainees due to the complexity of the language classroom.

...such a lot happens in the language learning classroom there is a lot to observe: teaching behaviour and learning behaviour, patterns of interaction, different learning styles, concentration spans, patterns of group dynamics, to

name some. Sometimes what is happening is very overt, such as when a student asks a question and a teacher responds directly. Sometimes it is far more covert, such as when one student generalises from another's utterance and echoes an error. Often the connection between cause and effect is not immediately visible or retrievable.

Using an observation task helps the observer in two important ways. Firstly, as noted above, it limits the scope of what is to be observed enabling the trainee to focus on particular aspects and reflect on these. Without an observation task the danger is that the trainee is overwhelmed by information and is unable to see any patterns in the noise of student and teacher activity. Furthermore, the objective data collected through the observation task encourages peer contributions to feedback that are grounded in reflection on what actually happened in the class, rather than subjective assessment of what worked.

Self-evaluation

Immediately after finishing teaching, trainees are asked to complete a written self-evaluation of their teaching slot. One of the centres in which my observations took place used a form with five separate sections:

- 1. Your feelings.** How did you feel before and during the lesson? What elements of your lesson were you nervous/unsure/confident about and why?
- 2. Planning.** Was your approach and staging appropriate for the teaching aim and for the students? Were the materials appropriate?
- 3. The lesson.** Did the lesson go as planned? Were you the teacher you planned/expected to be? What were you a) pleased with and b) disappointed with? (Consider learning aims, personal aims, class management, teacher roles/activities, learner involvement/motivation.
- 4. Achievement of lesson aims.** Do you feel you achieved your aims? Why/why not? What evidence do you have that the students learnt something in the lesson?
- 5. What would you do differently next time?**

By revealing the thinking of the trainee, the self-evaluation form provides useful information for the trainer to use in deciding on the focus of his or her feedback. It is also of value in revealing how clearly the trainee is able to notice and record the events of the class.

As can be seen from the detailed sub-questions within the first four sections of the form, it not only encourages trainees to reflect-on action following their teaching, it guides that reflection to specific aspects of the teaching and learning process, focusing attention of trainees. Instead of very general 'how did it go?' question, trainees are asked to think about their planning, their teaching performance and the reactions of the learners. Once completed the self-evaluation forms were given to the trainer and informed both oral and written feedback.

1.1.3 Feedback

Each stage of the Teaching Practice Group cycle builds on the previous stage and prepares trainees for the next. I will now introduce the third stage in the cycle, that of feedback. Constructive feedback on teaching practice observations is an essential part of any teacher training programme. Trainee teachers need clear and honest feedback to help them reflect on their strengths and act on their weaknesses progressively as they develop their expertise. The feedback sessions in the Teaching Practice Group model are used to reflect and evaluate on the teaching and begin the process of planning for the next session. The trainees watch each other teach and discuss the interactions that they all have with the same group of learners in the same learning context.

Unlike the majority of teaching practice feedback sessions, which are dyadic with one trainer and one trainee, feedback within the Teaching Practice Group model involves between three and six trainees as well as the trainer. A number of the trainees participating in the feedback will not have taught in the teaching session under discussion, while others will have.

Trainees get feedback from both the trainer and their peers with all of the trainees contributing to collaborative formative discussions on the basis of their shared experience of teaching and / or observing their peers teaching, the group of learners.

The intention is that much of the commentary on the teaching comes from the trainees themselves rather than from the trainer, who will often follow a pattern of eliciting comment from the group, then expanding, or restating, or mediating as appropriate. However, as Copland (2012) notes, the reality in group feedback sessions is often that the trainer does most of the talking, and that trainees pay most attention to what the trainer says. This will be explored in more detail in section 3.4.

As well as taking part in the oral feedback session, trainers also complete a written feedback form. This is used to reinforce messages from the oral feedback and to ensure that the trainee and the trainer have a shared record of the discussion.

Teaching Practice Groups provide logistical challenges for course planners. There is a need to organize and look after a group of learners specifically for the trainees. This is often done by offering free classes additional to the core offer of the institution, but it is also possible to add additional hours on to existing courses. On many courses the trainees are given responsibility for the administration of the classes in terms of registers and monitoring student attendance. This has the added advantage of reducing the strain on the course trainers and giving trainees valuable experience as well as increasing their contact with the students.

The three elements of the Teaching Practice Groups model (planning, teaching/observation, feedback) should work as a seamless set of iterations, a cycle revolving around the language learning of a group of students and driven by the need to complete, document and learn from, the practical task of teaching them. Teacher learning within this cycle is situated within teaching itself and is facilitated by the intensive nature of the interactions that trainees experience: between the trainees themselves in planning and feedback; between the trainees and the trainer; between the trainees and the teaching resources they draw on to plan and to teach; between the trainees and the course documentation that they complete; and of course between the trainees and the students in the teaching practice group. These constant, structured interactions around the teaching process are central to the model of teacher learning within the Teaching Practice Groups model and will be explored further in Chapter 6 and 7.

1.1.4 Teaching Practice Groups in practice

A project carried out by the Institute of Education's London Strategic Unit (2008 unpublished) gathered interesting interview data from three groups of trainers in Further Education colleges in London who were introducing Teaching Practice Groups into their courses for the first time. The trainers identified a number of ways in which the model impacted positively on the trainees' learning. In contrast to other courses in which trainees all carried out their teaching practice in separate classes, often in very different institutions, the Teaching Practice Groups provided the opportunity for trainees to work together on planning with the same students in mind. As one trainer commented:

Previously where people were out there in their own workplaces and coming into the course, in response to a suggestion for a particular learning activity, they'd say: "oh, that wouldn't work in my situation or with my learners"; with training groups this resistance never happened again, because you've got a shared group of learners, you are doing collaborative planning. And you can support trainees in trying out approaches they feel uncomfortable with.

(trainer 1)

Another benefit noted by the three trainers was that the Teaching Practice Groups provided a safe place to make mistakes and learn from them and had given trainees confidence. It is important to understand what is meant by 'confidence' in this context and what impact it has on the trainees' learning to teach. Confidence in most activities comes from perceived success and teaching is no different. It can be argued that trainees' perceptions of success come from three areas: language awareness (giving good explanations); social interaction (enjoying being the teacher and interacting with learners in that role); basic teaching techniques of classroom management (getting the learners to do what you want).

Another trainer interviewed for the LSU project noted that the natural focus of her trainees when observing was on how well their fellow trainee had done rather than how well the lesson had progressed the students' learning. As will be explored in Chapter 3, the literature is consistent in suggesting that trainees at the beginning stage of learning to teach find it difficult to focus on their students' learning because

too much of their attention is self-consciously fixed on themselves and their own actions (Kagan, 1992, Richards et al 1996).

Trainees interviewed following their courses seemed aware of their need for formal guidance at an early stage. Indeed, one suggested that it would have been useful (for the feedback) to have been more prescriptive about what to teach and how at the outset.

The most common setting for Teaching Practice Groups, and the place in which the model was first developed, is the internationally recognised English as a Foreign Language initial teacher training course currently known as the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). CELTA has developed over nearly fifty years from a two-week course started by International House London in 1962, designed by John and Brita Haycraft, the school's founders. Their intention was to create a pool of teachers they could hire to work at their school (Haycraft, 1988, 1998). The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) took over what was by then a four-week course in 1978, and when in 1980 the RSA TEFL scheme was transferred to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), the course became the RSA UCLES CTEFLA and subsequently the Cambridge / RSA CELTA, before control over it was taken fully by Cambridge and it became the CELTA.

One of the most important qualifications in private sector English language teaching, with over 1500 CELTA courses held each year in over 70 countries worldwide (UCLES, 2015), it is also recognised by public sector teaching institutions across the world. Among many private language schools in particular, the Certificate is widely accepted as a reliable form of English language teacher accreditation (Mackenzie, 2018, Anderson, 2019).

While the CELTA is an initial teacher training qualification, on most courses there are also experienced language teachers with no formal teaching qualifications or experienced teachers of other subjects who come on the course in order to acquire a qualification in a different subject area. Nevertheless, the certificate was designed for pre-service teachers.

The course has a strong practical element which very much reflects its origins. The design of the course was dictated by the need to produce teachers who could go straight into a teaching position on completion of the two weeks. Haycraft saw the need to train teachers to teach multilingual beginners' classes, in English (Haycraft, 1998: 193-4) requiring trainees to develop practical skills to overcome the linguistic barrier between the teacher and the learner and between the learners themselves. In these early days of TEFL, the only course available to trainee teachers in EFL was a one-year PGCE which tended to focus on the philosophy of education and lacked the practical training which the Haycrafts felt necessary (Haycraft 1988:3).

The model they used for their original short two-week course was one taken from business and industry where training tended to be short and applied (Haycraft, 1988). The stated objective of this early course was '...to give the trainees as much practical grounding and exposure to the classroom as possible' (Haycraft 1988:4). Haycraft has commented on the difficulty of finding resources to support such training, suggesting that there were '...few inspiring or instructive text-books' and that '...practical teacher training was largely unexplored.' (Haycraft, 1998: 185)

Many of the original features developed by Haycraft persist, including the practical nature of the course and the combination of theoretical input with teaching practice in a single site of learning. Teaching Practice Groups were and are a central part of the model; trainees begin teaching very early in their course - in the present CELTA design the Teaching Practice Group starts on the secondly of the course.

The course, in its current form as CELTA, still focuses on practical aspects of teaching and seeks to give trainees a broad perspective of current classroom practice (UCLES, 2015). It is often, and perhaps correctly, criticised for a lack of theoretical content (McCabe, Walsh, Wideman, & Winter (2009), and for a lack of reflection on the connection between theory and practice (Borg, 2003, Anderson, 2016). The short duration of the CELTA, the focus on practical teaching, and the required academic level of the course assignments (Level 5) all reduce the likelihood of practical teaching techniques and routines being explored or contextualised theoretically in any meaningful way.

My focus throughout this thesis is the Teaching Practice Group model, not the CELTA course with which the model is most closely associated. This study also includes data from a one-year Level 7 PGCE course in which Teaching Practice Groups following the model used in the CELTA provided the practical teaching element.

1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

In this section I will briefly introduce a number of theoretical ideas that are of central importance to the study of the Teaching Practice Group model. These will be explored in more detail through reference to academic literature in Chapters 2 and 3 and will then be used as analytical frames for the data collected as part of this study.

1.2.1 Theory and practice

What constitutes knowledge in teacher learning is a question that I will address in Chapter 2 of this thesis. I will explore understandings of teacher knowledge as subjective and objective, with a particular focus on the practical manifestation of such views on the environment in which trainees learn to teach. I will also explore the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge: the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of a particular teaching situation.

Macintyre describes progression on a teacher training course as concerning the need to ensure that trainees are able to think ‘rationally and analytically about their teaching’ (McIntyre, 1995: 376), implying the need to first allow them to develop the skills of classroom management to enable them to make sense of the classroom before they can begin to understand the impact of their own actions. At the beginning stage of learning to teach trainee teachers are often overwhelmed by the complexity of the classroom and are unable to see beyond their own actions and behaviours to begin to understand the impact these might have on the learners (Kagan, 1992). Within the Teaching Practice Group model there is an early and sustained focus on practical aspects of teaching enabling the trainer and the trainee to work together to make sense of the classroom and understand the impact of teacher behaviour on learning.

While a focus on basic teaching techniques at the beginning of a trainees’ learning journey is of great importance in providing trainees with the confidence to see and

understand the classroom, this does not imply that this should be done in isolation from theory. In this study I will show how Teaching Practice Groups provide rich contextualization for theoretical discussions. For example, in feedback on trainees' teaching sessions reference can be to earlier theoretical input, while in the theoretical sessions themselves reference can be made to the class that the trainees are teaching.

Schön criticised what he called the 'technical rationality' (Schön, 1983) that have often underpinned the training of professionals such as teachers. Technical rationality describes an approach in which theory and practice are presented separately (Freeman & Johnson, 2005). Trainees are shown theoretical models of language learning through lectures and discussion of readings. The practical business of teaching is often dealt with in a completely different part of the course and sometimes even in a different institution. The focus of these practical sessions is often marked by an absence of reference to the theoretical assumptions underpinning the techniques and procedures trainees are encouraged to use (Ramani, 1987:3).

An example from Dellar (1990) is indicative of the dangers of such an approach. She describes how two teachers in Morocco who had recently completed their initial teacher training were observed using pair/group work in an inflexible way, presumably because they had been trained to use this in their initial teacher training. She comments

It would seem that the techniques of pair and group work do not appear to have been sufficiently analysed and criticised and problems in using them not to have been studied in enough depth. The teachers appear to have learnt the trappings of a particular approach without being fully aware of its theoretical underpinnings. (Dellar, 1990:69)

Within a practical teaching course there is a danger that teachers can be trained to behave in a particular manner in the classroom without gaining the understanding that what works with one group of learners at a particular time may not work with another. Teachers need to understand the why as well as the how, the theory and the practice, in selecting techniques and resources to support their learners'

learning. In this study I will focus on ways in which Teaching Practice Groups facilitate the examination of the theoretical underpinnings of a practical technique and also the practical implications of theoretical ideas.

In the Teaching Practice Group model, the trainees learn about teaching by watching each other teach and discussing the interactions that they all have with the same group of learners in the same learning context. This shared experience can lend greater focus to the group feedback discussions and can also be drawn on in the input sessions, thus enhancing the link between theory and practice. And the link works in both directions. In feedback discussions reference can be made to a taught session to illustrate or elicit a point and in feedback the trainer can refer to theoretical knowledge to underpin discussions of what happened in the teaching session.

This trainer describes how she was able to use the content of a taught session to revisit and clarify issues around an activity used with beginner readers in the Teaching Practice Group:

I can remember observing someone doing a language experience activity and she was really getting into a tangle and getting stuck and as soon as we sat down to reflect on it I was able to say “do you remember when we looked at it in the session, what were we focusing on?” And she made the connections herself. But if I hadn’t been in that input session, I wouldn’t have been able to do that. (Casey et al, 2007:9)

It is possible for the trainer to set practice teaching tasks to ensure trainees try out a range of methods and cover a range of subject knowledge. They can also give observation tasks to the whole group and focus on this in the feedback session. Trainers can also model techniques with the training group by teaching the group themselves or arranging for trainees to observe other experienced teachers working with the class.

In this study I will explore the ways in which teacher knowledge is conceptualized and operationalised in the Teaching Practice Group model. I will also look at the presentation and use of both theoretical and practical knowledge about teaching,

with a particular focus on ways in which such knowledge is integrated with theory in teacher learning. I will consider how, within the Teaching Practice Group model, theoretical elements are grounded in the practical context of the shared classroom, and how trainees are encouraged to conceptualise the classroom-based practice that they observe and take part in.

1.2.2 Learning to teach

Teaching Practice Groups are highly social in nature. Trainees constantly engage with others - trainers, peers and learners - in the social context of planning for and acting within the classroom. Thus, a key underpinning concept that will be explored within this thesis is the extent to which our understanding of the world, our learning – in this case, our learning to teach, is produced through engagement in social activities such as those engendered by the Teaching Practice Group model.

A social constructivist model of learning (Vygotsky, 1978, Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). suggests that individual cognitive development is mediated through social interaction in a particular cultural environment. Learners need contextually meaningful experience through which they can actively engage with others, as well as with learning content. Within the Teaching Practice Group model, learning content is always interpreted in reference to the shared group of learners, as trainees plan, teach and discuss their lessons (Borg, 2002).

Social constructivism also suggests that learning is a cumulative process (Piaget, 1985), with learning through the educational experience of the course building on, and being influenced by, the existing beliefs and knowledge that learners bring with them. Through active engagement with the content of the course, and with others engaged in the same process, the learner's conceptual map, their own individual organization of the knowledge that is relevant to the activity they are learning about, is changed.

In this social environment, social constructivism suggests that learning to teach is mediated through the activities carried out by the trainees and by the structures and requirements of those activities (Richardson, 1998). In this thesis I will look in detail at these structural elements as experienced by trainees in order to better

understand how learning to teach is mediated in Teaching Practice Groups. I will also explore with trainees and trainees the contribution of the trainer role.

In the initial stages of the Teaching Practice Group model, the teacher trainer takes much of the responsibility for assessing the shared group of learners, drawing up an overall scheme of work and suggesting specific activities and resources for each teaching slot. As the trainees gain in experience and confidence, they take on more responsibility for planning; they remain under supervision of the teacher trainer, but the latter's active contributions are gradually reduced. Thus, planning is scaffolded (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) by the trainer.

The term scaffolding was introduced by Bruner (in Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) in describing Vygotsky's (1960/1978) explanation of how learning occurs as a result of support coming from more knowledgeable others that helps learners to internalize what is being learned. Such scaffolding should be appropriate to the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD), the gap between their current and potential level of development. For each trainee this will be different depending on their prior experience and pace of adaptation and learning.

Descriptions of scaffolding most frequently focus on the role of the more knowledgeable other in learning situations (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005), in the case of initial teacher training this is the trainer but also the trainees' peers. Indeed, in the Teaching Practice Groups model the peer support role is greatly accentuated. Where peers provide this support the term contingent scaffolding (Lantolf, 2000) is often used.

It is also possible to interpret Vygotsky's (1960/1978) description of learning as a process of internalization with the implication that scaffolding is always guided by the learner with the support of more knowledgeable others acting as scaffolding. Under this interpretation internalization of teaching theory and application as practical teaching only occurs when the trainee is ready and able to benefit from peer or trainer support and only in those areas on which they are focused. Such a conceptualisation of trainee learning suggests that placing a real classroom with actual learners at the centre of the concerns of the trainee, rather than on the periphery, separate from their course, is important in ensuring that trainees are

receptive to peer and trainer support in learning to teach. In this thesis I will explore the Teaching Practice Groups model as a constructivist learning environment in which social interaction around the shared group of learners plays an important role in the development of participating trainees².

For the trainees, Teaching Practice Groups provide a context for what Schön (1983:2) termed 'reflection on action. According to Schön, 'reflection-on-action' should be distinguished from 'reflection in action', reflection in the midst of an action without interrupting it. However, both concepts are of great relevance to the Teaching Practice Groups model. Trainees are constantly required to evaluate and feedback on their peers' teaching and to respond to their peers' feedback on their own teaching, thus reflecting on action. They are also encouraged, through the use of personal development objectives, to anticipate such feedback and consider the impact of their teaching and the learning activities they have devised while in front of the learners. In so doing they are forced to think about and make sense of issues related to their own practice and to respond immediately in the classroom. They are then given the opportunity to explore and develop their reflection on action through the collaborative feedback session. The Teaching Practice Groups model and reflective practice will be explored in detail in the literature review

1.2.4 Becoming a teacher

A key element of the Teaching Practice Groups model is that trainees work together on planning with the same students in mind. This shared experience of teaching and learning is central to the Teaching Practice Groups model. Learning to teach can be understood as becoming able to participate in the discourse and practices of that particular community. This process of enculturation into a community of practice (Barduhn, 1998: 27) involves understanding and assimilating the thinking and the language used by a particular community to describe the acts that make up its practices. In learning how to talk about teaching, and learning how to talk like a

² That is not to suggest that the Teaching Practice Group model is the only way in which such learning can be achieved – the effective use of mentors in individual placements can also support trainee reflection on a shared class

teacher, trainees attain membership of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1990).

Freeman and Cazden (1991: 244) note two purposes of such professional discourse. Firstly, a '*social/referential function*' giving trainees access to the discourse community of teachers, and thus able to engage with them in professional discussion. Secondly, a '*...cognitive function*', through which they are able to identify and name parts of their teaching experience thus supporting them in organizing and developing their conceptions of teaching.

Not only does this internalization of the discourse and metalanguage of the course allow trainees to talk about their own and others' lessons using shared language and with the appropriate technical terminology, it also acts as a filter directing the trainees' attention to aspects of teaching that can be described in these terms and the understanding of which are important for trainees' development as teachers (Richards, Ho, & Giblin, 1996: 249).

Thus, in their planning and their feedback sessions, use of 'L1' to refer to the learners' first language, reflects their growing perception of themselves as a part of the community of teachers. Talking like a teacher plays a role, not just in increasing trainees' confidence, but it also provides greater focus to their reflections on their experience in the classroom.

In their study of an early version of the CELTA course using Teaching Practice Groups Richards et al note that through the course trainees came to internalize the discourse and metalanguage of used by the trainers and became able to use it to discuss their own and others' lessons in feedback sessions using the appropriate technical terminology (Richards et al., 1996: 247)

This learning to think, talk, and act in ways that characterize being a member of the language teaching community, is an important aspect of initial teacher training. In this thesis I will suggest that centering the course around the Teaching Practice Group supports trainees in learning to talk about teaching. Teaching is the constant and most immediate topic of conversation in each stage of the Teaching Practice Group cycle. There are myriad opportunities for the trainers to engage trainees in

discussions of teaching that are not abstract but rather deal with the events of a class that they have all just witnessed. The trainer is also able to use these discussions to support trainees in learning to talk like a language teacher.

1.3 Research questions

I have not found formal academic studies in which the use of Teaching Practice Groups has been investigated, or attempts made to theorise how Teaching Practice Groups work. This study is a response to that lack of theorization of the model.

Through my reading of the literature on initial teacher training for language teachers it has become apparent that there has been little academic research carried out on the CELTA and other initial teacher training programmes for prospective English language teachers. Ferguson and Donno (2003: 26) describe this as 'curious' in their discussion of the CELTA, pointing out, that the number of studies carried out '...hardly seem commensurate with the scale of the training activity and its significance for the profession' (Ferguson and Dunno 2003:26).

Thus, this study, with its focus on the mechanisms of the core element of the CELTA course, the Teaching Practice Group process, addresses an under-researched area in order to add to understanding of wider issues around teacher knowledge and teacher learning.

The aim is to gather empirical data from trainees and trainers with experience of the model to investigate the Teaching Practice Groups model.

The questions that this study seeks to address are:

1. What are the main factors in the organisation and implementation of Teaching Practice Groups on initial teacher education programmes for ESOL teachers that impact on how effectively teachers are prepared?
2. How does the use of Teaching Practice Groups support the development of trainees on initial teacher education programmes for adult ESOL teachers?

The research seeks to understand the use of Teaching Practice Groups and also describe in detail the impact they have on trainees' experience through their initial teacher training.

It is qualitative in approach, seeking to describe, understand, and explain specific issues pertinent to the use of the Teaching Practice Group model. Schofield (1993: 109) discussing the use of qualitative research notes the importance of structuring qualitative studies in a way that allows for exploration of their implications for the understanding of other situations.

In this study I have been aware of this. While the findings are specific to the context of Teaching Practice Groups, the study also offers a contribution to more general knowledge about initial teacher training for English language teachers.

Through the development of this thesis I have learnt a great deal about the theories underpinning a major area of my professional expertise, that of teacher learning. I have come to realise that, as a teacher trainer, I had not given much thought to concepts of teacher knowledge or teacher learning and so examination of the literature has been enlightening and has enriched my professional, as well as academic, work.

As the ideas in the thesis have developed, I have also become much more conscious of my own role as a teacher trainer and of the mechanisms available to me within the Teaching Practice Group model. I have used this in my own work with trainee teachers, but also in training sessions which I have run for trainers new to the team who have not used the Teaching Practice Group model before. The experience of introducing others to the model has forced me to be explicit about the mechanisms and the way that they can be best used to support teacher learning.

In my professional life, in parallel to the development of the thesis, I have continued to work as a teacher trainer, but this has become a smaller part of my role. Instead, I have mainly worked as director of research at a research centre focusing on adult language and literacy learning. This has given me the opportunity to learn about the research process, making choices about the suitable approach and methodology to address the questions posed by various funders. I have designed and run large and small-scale studies drawing on quantitative and qualitative approaches. I have used this experience to inform the methodological choices that I have made in addressing the research questions above.

2. Teacher knowledge

2.1 Introduction

This is a study of a particular form of teacher training, teaching practice groups, and the relationship between theory and practice within it. In any form of teacher training programme, knowledge about teaching is marshalled and offered to participants with an assumption that teachers will gain this knowledge through participation and engagement with the course. In order to understand the Teaching Practice Group model, it is first necessary to explore what teachers may need to know and how that knowledge is described in the courses that are designed to support their learning. Munby, Russel & Martin (2001) point out that ‘...different views have developed about what counts as professional knowledge and even how to conceptualize knowledge’ (2001: 878). Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising that there has been a long running and unresolved question about how to define the knowledge base of teacher education, and how to define what it is that teachers know. There has been recognition that teachers’ behaviour is influenced by their thought processes, that to better understand teaching we need to better understand the mental life of teachers - what they know, think and believe. Farrell and Ives (2015: 595) suggest that there is sufficient evidence that language teachers hold complex beliefs about teaching and learning, and that these beliefs have a strong impact on classroom practices (Basturkmen, 2012; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Kuzborska, 2011).

Borg uses the term teacher cognition to encompass ‘... the complexity of teachers’ mental lives’ (2003: 85). He draws our attention to teachers’ decision-making. He describes them as ‘active, thinking decision-makers’ who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs’ (2003: 81). This suggests that teachers’ actions in the classroom are informed by the more than just that which they learnt directly from their teacher education course. In making decisions they draw on their own personal experiences and the beliefs that they have developed in response to these experiences.

He notes that teacher cognition is a multidimensional concept. Indeed, such is the

complexity of this area that Borg (2003: 84) was able to list over 30 different terms that had been applied to research in this. He acknowledges that this is reflective of the difficulty in distinguishing between the concepts proposed. Within most descriptions of teacher cognition teacher knowledge is one component, often alongside or subsumed within, teacher beliefs - 'Unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught' (Kagan, 1992: 65). That beliefs are unconscious suggests that one job for teacher education programmes is to bring trainees' beliefs to the level of conscious awareness by encouraging trainees to reflect on their practical experience of teaching (Farrell, 2013). I will return to the role of reflection in teacher education in section 2.5.

Woods (1996) considered that it was possible to make the distinction between beliefs and knowledge, with beliefs as being more subjective and implicit, and knowledge more objective and explicit. However, Tsui (2011:57) questions whether in reality teachers can make such a clear-cut distinction between their knowledge and their beliefs.

Kubanyiova (2015) argues for a more comprehensive view of what teachers know, and accordingly what the domain of teacher cognition research should encompass. She criticises the focus on isolated constructs, such as beliefs or knowledge, arguing that this '...produces partial at best and irrelevant at worst understandings of teachers' sense making in relation to meaningful learning of both language teachers and their students' (2015: 436). She suggests that we should acknowledge the ecologies of language teachers' inner lives, the complexities of the psychological influences on what language teachers do, why they do it, and how.

For the purposes of this study I will use the concept of teacher knowledge to explore the ideas and concepts that trainee teachers construct about the teaching and learning process, as exemplified externally in their practice. I will assume that teachers draw on teacher knowledge, consciously or not, in planning for lessons, interacting with students, and making the numerous decisions that any teaching and learning interaction is made up of. In this chapter I will discuss the influence of objective and subjective views of teacher knowledge on the design of teacher education interventions. I will also consider conceptualisations of teacher knowledge as practical

and theoretical.

2.2 The knowledge base for teacher education

Verloop Van Driel & Meijer (2001: 1) conceive of teacher knowledge as ‘...all profession-related insights, which are potentially relevant to a teacher's activities.

Ayers (1988: 29) is more specific, listing what teachers need to know as:

...broad and general knowledge of the various disciplines that human beings use to make sense of themselves and their world. They must have access to the various subject matter literacies as well as the various ways of looking at teaching and learning.

Such knowledge should form the knowledge base for teacher education, ensuring that new teachers are exposed to and can benefit from accumulated teacher learning and research insights about the teaching and learning process.

In a training course the trainers and all of those who work on the course represent a particular knowledge base. This is codified in the documentation and materials, discussions and activities that make up the course, as well as any recommended or core reading. For the course to be viewed as of value to the profession, the knowledge that it, and those who deliver it, represents needs to be accepted as valid by the participants and also by the profession more widely. This is particularly true of initial teacher training programmes, which guard entrance to the teaching profession.

Verloop et al. (2001: 444) refer to the knowledge base of teaching as ‘...all profession-related insights that are potentially relevant to the teacher's activities. Within this they include both insights based on theories of learning or language acquisition, and those drawn from research into the knowledge and beliefs of expert teachers. They go on to distinguish between this collective knowledge base and ‘...the insights that guide an individual teacher's behaviour, that is, his or her personal knowledge base’.

Edwards Gilroy & Hartley (2002) stress that such a knowledge base would need to be definitive and not prone to redefinition. It would need to be:

...a source of certainty, providing a firm foundation for clear-cut unconditional statements about teacher knowledge and the justification for a

single and unchanging national curriculum for teacher education. (Edwards et al., 2002: 33)

There are differing views on how, and even whether, such a knowledge base should be formed. Kubanyiova (2014:1) notes that rather than focus on categorisation of 'units of disciplinary knowledge' that may make up the knowledge base of language teachers, we should attempt to understand what knowledge teachers actually use as they teach, and as they develop professional expertise. In this review I will focus on two approaches to the description of the knowledge base for English Language teachers that I will later draw on to analyse the teacher learning within the Teaching Practice Group model: that provided by objectivists, and that provided by subjectivists.

Objectivists argue that it is possible, and desirable, to fully describe and classify what teachers know. There have been a number of attempts to describe in detail what teachers know and therefore what beginning teachers need to learn. The CELTA assessment checklist (see appendix 6) is one such attempt. It is a list of things that a successful candidate should be able to demonstrate during their teaching practice. However, for subjectivists such an attempt to describe and delimit teacher knowledge is flawed as they do not see knowledge as objective, context-free and located outside the individual teacher. Later in this chapter I will introduce both objectivist and subjectivist views of teacher knowledge, considering what the implications of one view or another are for the establishment of a knowledge base for teacher education.

Eraut (2002) has argued the cognitive, personal, and practical nature of teacher knowledge means that it is highly contingent on the context, and the person of the teacher. And that teacher knowledge is thus integrally connected with the contexts in which it is acquired and used. He suggests three main contexts in which knowledge about education might be used: the academic, the school and the classroom context. In an initial teacher training programme these contexts are the academic classroom, the teaching practice class and the placement.

Eraut, and others, claim that it is misleading to assume that knowledge learnt in one context can subsequently be applied in another. For Johnson (1996:767) '...teacher educators must begin to recognize the situated and interpretative nature of teaching'.

By this she means that teacher knowledge is closely linked to the specific context in which it is developed; it is situated in the social practice of teaching. An understanding of teacher knowledge as situated knowledge (Lave 1988, Lave and Wenger 1991) and of teaching itself as a social practice implies that it is contextually developed by practitioners as they respond to the specific context in which they are working. Such knowledge is embedded in teachers' daily teaching practices dealing with their own particular classroom situation.

Freeman (2002) acknowledges this by observing that we should look to the activity of teaching itself rather than work about teaching in order to form the knowledge that 'animates language teaching'. For Leinhardt (1988) this knowledge makes use of the features of the teaching situation - the students, the classroom itself, the particular moment in the course, the time of the year and even the time of the day.

The situated nature of teachers' knowledge has been taken up by researchers such as Putnam and Borko (1997, 2000). They used theories of situated cognition, which view knowledge as integrally connected with the contexts in which it is acquired and used, to argue that 'different kinds of knowing' are produced through the various settings for teachers' learning such as placements and other forms of teaching practice, lectures, discussions and reading (Putnam and Borko, 2000).

Elbaz (1983: 6) goes further to say that knowledge gets reinterpreted during use and so what has been learned needs to be used before it can have real meaning for the user. Thus, while some knowledge for teaching can be gained outside the classroom, teachers' learning should be centred around the classroom, the context in which they will eventually have to act. (Feiman-Nemser, 2008:699)

Tsui (2003: 65) talks about a dialectical relationship between teachers' knowledge and their world of practice in which teachers' knowledge shapes their classroom practices, but their classroom practices also shape their knowledge, constituting 'knowledge of practice' and 'knowledge mediated by practice'. (1993: 47). She argues that they come to new understandings of teaching and learning through reflection on the contexts in which they work.

The Teaching Practice Group model is highly contextualized; it is based around a

shared group of learners to whom all of the planning and teaching activity is aimed and about whom the feedback discussions revolve. In this study I will attempt to understand the different 'ways of knowing' that are involved in learning to teach with the Teaching Practice Group model and the ways in which teacher learning in is contextually developed situated in this live, shared classroom by trainees as they respond to the specific context in which they are working.

2.3 Objectivism

One way to address the definition of teacher knowledge is to produce an objective list of what teachers should know. Such a list could then form the basis of a curriculum for teacher training. An objectivist view of teacher knowledge aims to produce such a definitive list of teacher knowledge.

The major assumption of objectivism is that the world exists objectively, independent of the human mind, external to the knower (Jonassen, 1992; Lakoff, 1987). This real world consists of entities structured according to their properties and relations, and can be fully understood and subsequently modelled and replicated. An objectivist believes that there is a correct way to do things which can be discovered by following the objective methods of science. By studying the world, it is argued, it is possible to identify its structure and the individual and collective entities, each with individual properties and relations, which we can then represent, using theoretical models and abstract symbols. Thus, an objectivist view of teacher education assumes that by studying and analysing the act of teaching it is possible to describe in detail what a good teacher does, so that this can be learnt and replicated by beginning teachers. It is

...predicated on the view that there is a clear-cut body of knowledge that all teachers should possess qua teachers, coupled to some sort of performance indicators." (Edwards et al., 2002: 34).

In teacher education this conception of knowledge, usually implied rather than clearly stated, finds expression in national curricula for teacher education and competence-based assessment of teacher education programmes.

2.3.1 The role of competencies in learning about teaching

One common manifestation of objective views of knowledge within teacher education is the use of competencies profiles to describe the knowledge that trainee teachers are expected to acquire and display through their learning on their course. In many teacher training programmes observation of teaching is an important element of assessment. For that assessment to be carried out it is necessary for the observer to make judgements about the effectiveness of the trainee teacher in the classroom, commenting on strengths as well as areas that need improving and do so in ways that are consistent with their own views on teaching. However, where that trainer is not required to make explicit the underlying criteria on which their assessment is based it becomes difficult for there to be consistency across training teams, between different courses and across time.

A common solution to this need to make explicit and justify the judgements made in assessing teachers through observation of their teaching is to produce an agreed list of teaching competencies that describes what a teacher at various stages of their learning to teach should be able to do. Such competencies approaches draw heavily on an objectivist view of knowledge and have been extremely influential in recent policy in teacher education.

Competencies approaches came to prominence in education in the 1980s and were conceptualised following the model used in vocational training, involving analysis of discrete, observable, measurable, behaviour. These behaviours were understood as verifiable performance indicators and acted as evidence that a particular skill had been 'performed'.

Competencies became popular beyond vocational education across other forms of education including that for teachers. Their popularity can perhaps be explained because they '...provided a new ideology with irresistible appeal to those seeking accountability and input output efficiency in the new economic realism of the 1980s (Hyland 1993: 59) .A competencies approach attempts to break down any process into a number of discrete skills which can be monitored and learnt. Carr (1993: 254) gives the example of a joiner to illustrate this.

A competent joiner exhibits his (sic) overall mastery of the trade in such particular competences as hammering nails straight, planing smoothly,

sanding finely and so on. Indeed, in this case, we might say that the joiner's overall competence is effectively no more than the sum of the individual items of practical knowledge, skill and ability he has acquired during his apprenticeship.

Producing a checklist of competencies is a way of defining what a teacher needs to learn. Such lists then provide the basis for agreed standards of what is required of a successful teacher and are commonly used to standardise expectations of assessment in training courses. The checklist acts as a reminder of all the elements to be taken into consideration and provides a framework for the analysis and discussion of teaching.

Such itemisation of micro skills is helpful in terms of assessment and accountability, as it requires all teacher educators to focus on the same things and makes explicit expectations in terms of required standards. However, the use of a competencies approach in teacher education has been criticised on a number of different counts.

The attempt to produce an overarching list of competencies that define what a good teacher does suggests an objectivist view of knowledge. Underlying the competencies approach is a belief that there are instances of teaching and teacher behaviour which are representative of what good teachers do. There is also a belief that the performance of any teacher in any given context can be measured and verified against this standardised specification of good teacher behaviour (Heilbronn, 2006: 5).

Those who support competencies approaches in teacher education necessarily believe that they can identify teaching behaviour that works to promote learning across contexts. They also contend that this 'can be described and encapsulated in abstract descriptions' (Heilbronn, 2006). For Ashworth and Saxton (1990) reducing something as complex as teaching and learning to statements of competence, means that the statements themselves become 'atomistic, individualistic and unable to cover all types of relevant behaviour or mental activity' (Ashworth and Saxton, 1990: 3).

Hyland (1993) notes two major problems with the use of competencies in education. Firstly, he argues that competencies approaches are essentially behaviouristic and accordingly are not equipped to '...capture and describe something which is

essentially non-behaviouristic, namely the development of knowledge and understanding.' (Hyland, 1993: 61). For Hyland learning is far too complex and multifaceted to be broken down into verifiable performance indicators.

He goes on to suggest that not only is the assessment of the competence conflated with the competence itself but the abstract performance criteria which is used to define that competence is confused with the competence itself.

In order to be capable of verification competency statements need to cover one discrete, observable aspect of competence. For them to be effective in specifying a teacher's developmental goals over a series of observations, they need to be detailed enough to capture the complexity of particular teaching contexts. To allow them to be applied effectively to a wide range of contexts, and to account for the different needs teachers have at different stages of their development, it is necessary to break down the competencies even further. Therefore, it can be tempting to increase the number of items in a competencies checklist to make each item more explicit and less subject to subjective interpretations of individual trainers. For the system to be subtle enough to capture the complexity of what teachers do, multiple and compound statements are needed.

A teacher's job ... is extensive and complex: the number of competence statements is likely to be large and therefore compound competency statements are required. (Heibronn, 2006)

This increase in the number and specificity of the items on a list renders it unwieldy and difficult to use. The longer and more specific the checklist becomes the more likely it is that many of the items, and the categories under which they are organised, are inappropriate in each lesson observed.

However fine grained the description of teaching is, however many competencies are included and however detailed they become in an effort to take account of the different contexts of teaching and stages of teacher development, they still need to be interpreted and that interpretation of achievement of competence of a trainee teacher by a teacher trainer requires the teacher trainer to exercise their own professional judgment. Competences are necessarily normative, based on a particular

view of good, or effective, practice. Verification criteria for the competences will be based on prior understanding of what constitutes good, or effective performance of the particular competence involved. To reach the prior interpretations of good and effective 'performance' some kind of professional judgement rather than adherence to predefined set of competences will have been used.

A further issue to be taken into consideration when using, or considering the use of, a competencies approach is that performance indicators measures competence in a time and context-specific way. Assessment against performance indicators may suggest that the teacher is competent at the time of the observation, in the specific classroom, with that particular set of learners at a specific stage in their learning and lives. However, it is not able to give an 'indication that a person will continue to be competent or will become more competent' (Hyland, 1993: 59). One-off demonstrations of competence, such as the snapshot of a teaching observation, should not be taken as proof that a teacher has the knowledge and understanding to adapt their competencies to the ever-shifting demands of the different teaching contexts they will encounter.

Hyland also questions whether performance, in the form of a public demonstration of knowledge through a test of some type (perhaps an assessed teaching observation), can be equated with knowledge itself. He suggests that "*...it would be a gross error to conflate the examination performance and the person's knowledge.*" (Hyland 1993: 61) Thus a teacher's performance in a particular observation should not be taken as representative of their knowledge and understanding of teaching. For Hyland '...advocates of competence-based education are guilty of mistaking and confusing the assessment of X with X itself' (Hyland, 1993: 66).

Usher and Edwards, arguing from a very different perspective, suggest that in order to create the conditions for acceptance of competence-based qualifications certain conceptions of knowledge are repressed and replaced with a '...regime of truth ... which derides certain forms of knowledge as 'theory', irrelevant to 'getting the job done well. (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 115). Thus, the competent teacher is not seen as someone who knows how to teach but as someone who can teach competently according to pre-determined criteria of competences.

One attempt to draw up a list of competencies for English language teachers is represented by the Cambridge ESOL CELTA criteria for assessment of teaching practice. This includes forty-one criteria linked to the CELTA syllabus covering preparing and planning for the effective teaching of adult ESOL learners and demonstrating professional competence as teachers in the classroom. In observing teaching practice, the teacher trainer is required to make judgments about the candidate's teaching using these criteria, which cover a wide range of areas.

Candidates should demonstrate competence by:

- arranging the physical features of the classroom appropriately for teaching and learning, bearing in mind safety regulations of the institution
- making use of materials, resources and technical aids in such a way that they enhance learning

The scope for variation in the value judgments made by different trainers assessing teachers against these criteria is clear. What is 'appropriate' for one trainer may not be for another. Similarly, there will be many different opinions on whether something 'enhances learning'. Indeed, how the observer is supposed to 'see' learning being enhanced is a moot point.

There is also the issue of the weight of the various criteria. It is difficult to determine whether it is equally important for a teacher to be seen to be:

- setting up whole class and/or group or individual activities appropriate to the lesson type

as to be

- selecting appropriate teaching techniques in relation to the content of the lesson

A checklist approach to defining teacher knowledge does not provide any guidance to answer that question.

Competence models provide a useful descriptive model of teaching and learning interactions and the knowledge and skills needed to engage successfully in them. They focus on behavioural exemplification of teacher knowledge, examples of teacher

actions that can be identified through observation and ticked off on a list by the observer. Thus they promise consistency of judgment and conceptual clarity for trainers and trainees alike. On the courses studies as part of this thesis, objective conceptions of teaching and learning, in the form, for example, of competence statements and assessment checklists, formed part of the infrastructure of courses. As part of the analysis of the data collected in will be necessary to consider the influence of that infrastructure of the trainee experience of learning to teach.

2.3.2 Shulman's Categories of Teacher Knowledge

Competences are one way in which an objectivist view of teacher knowledge is made explicit. However, there have also been other attempts to describe and categorise teacher knowledge. One such example of an objectivist view of teacher knowledge can be found in the work of Shulman (1986, 1987). He produced a theoretical framework that distinguished among seven categories which he saw as important for teachers, regardless of their subject specialism. The categories provide a useful analytical framework to explore teaching and teacher education.

- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- Knowledge of educational contexts e.g. schools and the wider community
- Knowledge of educational ends purposes and values
- Content knowledge
- General pedagogical knowledge
- Curriculum knowledge
- Pedagogical content knowledge

Knowledge of learners and their characteristics

This is largely self-explanatory. It comprises knowledge of a particular group of learners and includes different learning styles, motivations, cultural backgrounds, ages etc. It is also context bound.

Knowledge of educational contexts

This refers to ways in which the sociocultural and institutional context will affect

learning and teaching. It includes the setting in which learning takes place but also includes policy changes, the legislation governing teaching and learning in the particular sector and the type, history and character of the institution in which the teaching takes place. It can also be broadened to include knowledge of wider social and economic factors that may impact on the classroom. Knowledge of educational contexts is important, as any teacher who has taught in a foreign country will know as what is acceptable or appropriate in one educational system will not necessarily be so in another.

Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and philosophical and historical issues

This type of knowledge is located in the foundational subjects of teaching such as philosophy and history of education and often forms a major element of general initial teacher training programmes. Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values represents the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching and includes professional issues. This type of knowledge is not usually seen as important on English language teacher training programmes and is usually confined to a historical survey of methods in ELT (Randall, & Thornton, 2001).

Content knowledge

This is knowledge of the subject matter to be taught; it includes theories, principles and concepts. It does not include knowledge of the curriculum which Shulman places in a distinct category. Within content knowledge Tsui (2003: 51) distinguishes between substantive structures, ‘...the explanatory frameworks or paradigms that are used to guide inquiry in the field and to make sense of data’, and syntactic structures from, ‘...the canons of evidence that are used by the disciplinary community to guide inquiry in the field’. The latter being the means by which the accepted body of content knowledge is added to.

The content knowledge of English language teachers encompasses the teacher’s own proficiency in the language and the degree of knowledge the teacher has about the formal aspects of English such as syntax, discourse and phonology. Yates & Muchisky (2003) emphasise the importance of knowledge of English among English language

teachers suggesting that developing declarative knowledge of English should be central to language teaching and therefore to learning to teach. They quote Yoo (2001:193):

You've got to know your subject matter. How can you teach the English language if you don't know English as declarative knowledge? There is much more to teaching than that, of course... But I really think they are going to have a difficult time . . . if they don't have an understanding of their subject matter.

For English Language teachers the declarative content knowledge needed is more than proficiency in use of the language, it also concerns knowledge about its structure. Gess-Newsome (1999) carried out a review of research into teachers' content knowledge and the link between this, their practice and student achievement. She claims that, while the research is limited, it is possible to state that for teachers to represent knowledge to students in effective ways their own understanding of that knowledge needs to be deep, well-organised and flexible. And that where that knowledge was lacking, where teachers had '*... low levels of subject matter knowledge*', their teaching was more likely to centre on:

...factual knowledge (and) involve students in lessons primarily through low-level questions, are bound to content and course structures found in textbooks, have difficulty identifying student misconceptions, and decrease student opportunities to freely explore content either through manipulatives or active discussion' (Gess-Newsome, 1999: 82).

An effective language teacher will have good content knowledge – understanding of the 'nuts and bolts' of the language, the ways in which the language works. This process can be begun, on an initial teacher training programme and developed further throughout that teacher's career. However, content knowledge is just a beginning and needs to be 'transformed' into a form that learners can understand. For teachers to effectively represent subject matter to learners it may be that other forms of knowledge need to be brought to bear.

General pedagogic knowledge

This is generic knowledge about education which is common to a range of subject areas. Grossman and Richert (1988) suggest that general pedagogic knowledge is principled knowledge and covers classroom management techniques as well as theories of learning but does not include particular teaching strategies. For Shulman it is related to the broader strategies and approaches that teachers use. It is informed by

...theories of learning and general principles of instruction, an understanding of the various philosophies of education, general knowledge about learners, and knowledge of the principles and techniques of classroom management (1998: 54).

It is related to the practical activity of teaching and is closely connected with classroom practice and its shape is strongly influenced by cultural perspectives on the objectives of schooling and on the role of teachers.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Of the seven categories proposed by Shulman, Pedagogical Content Knowledge is of particular interest. For Shulman Pedagogical Content Knowledge is:

...the amalgam of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that is the unique province of the teacher, their own special form of professional understanding' (Shulman, 1987: 8).

It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction.

Shulman argued that a focus on general pedagogical skills was insufficient for preparing teachers, as was education that stressed only declarative content knowledge. In his view, the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching rested at the intersection of content and pedagogy. Pedagogical Content Knowledge is required to transform subject matter knowledge into forms of representation that are accessible to learners, using analogies, examples, illustrations, explanations and demonstrations. In order for a representation to be effective teachers need to understand what makes a particular topic easy or difficult for students, what their

preconceptions or misconceptions are and what strategies are effective in dealing with their misconceptions.

Grossman described pedagogical content knowledge in the following way:

'Teachers must draw upon both their knowledge of subject matter to select appropriate topics and their knowledge of students' prior knowledge and conceptions to formulate appropriate and provocative representations of the content to be learned' (1990: 8).

Pedagogical content knowledge is thus 'expert' knowledge of the teacher and is an amalgam of the other categories of knowledge and experience. For the teacher to be able to carry out this transformation she requires an adequate understanding of the subject matter, knowledge of learners, curriculum, context and pedagogy.

The concept of pedagogical content knowledge suggests that teachers operate from a form of knowledge that derives from neither discipline-based content nor training-based pedagogy but is a hybrid of the two.

Teachers must draw upon both their knowledge of subject matter to select appropriate topics and their knowledge of students' prior knowledge and conceptions to formulate appropriate and provocative representations of the content to be learned (Grossman, 1990, 8).

Shulman was not the first to propose that subject matter knowledge is an important component of teacher knowledge, nor was he the first to make a distinction between subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, although the latter is his coinage. In expounding her conception of "practical knowledge", Elbaz (1983: 5) specifically points out that '...the teacher's subject matter knowledge, no less than other areas of her knowledge, is practical knowledge, shaped by and for the practical situation'.

In defining pedagogical content knowledge Shulman makes a distinction between general knowledge of subject matter knowledge and the particular type of knowledge of subject matter that is used for teaching. In this he is drawing on ideas first outlined by Dewey (1902) who argued that a scientist's knowledge of the subject matter is different from the specialised understanding of the same subject

matter by the teacher, with the latter concerned with

...how his own knowledge of the subject matter may assist in interpreting the child's needs and doings and determining the medium in which the child should be properly directed' (Dewey, 1902: 286).

In the world of English language teaching, pedagogical content knowledge in the form of the 'methodology' of language teaching, the way that the target language may best be presented and learnt, dominates initial teacher training. Theories of how languages are learnt and how they relate to approaches, methods and techniques used in language programmes form the core of most modern approaches to language teacher training.

Lucas, Casey, Loo, McDonald & Giannakaki (2004) suggest that, following Eraut's (2002: 60) distinction between 'public' theory, knowledge based on published research and theoretical argument, and 'private' theory, knowledge derived from individual experience, we should distinguish between two types of pedagogic content knowledge: public and private. According to Eraut (2002: 59) public theories are:

...systems of ideas published in books, discussed in classes and accompanied by a critical literature which expands, interprets and challenges their meaning and theory validity.

Emphasizing the relationship between theory and practice, Eraut describes public educational theory as comprised of '...concepts, frameworks, ideas and principles which may be used to interpret, explain or judge intentions, actions and experiences in education or education-related settings' (2002: 63).

Eraut warns that teachers may engage with public theories, discussing, criticizing and writing about them, without such theories ever affecting their practice. Private theories, in contrast, are 'ideas in peoples' minds which they use to interpret or explain their experience' (Eraut, 2002: 63). They do not have to be explicit and might only be recognizable from someone's actions.

Drawing on this division of private and public knowledge Lucas et al. (2004) suggest that it is useful to divide pedagogic content knowledge into two categories:

- Experiential pedagogic knowledge made up of beginning teachers' experience as learners from their own school days and other educational experiences that they have had. These will include cultural representations of teaching in film, TV and literature and general 'common sense' views of how people learn and what teaching should be like.
- Theoretical pedagogic knowledge concerns Eraut's 'public theory' based on the work of psychologists, sociologists and philosophers among others. It recognises the importance of research and theory, and the more formal, codified aspects of pedagogy.

Many beginning teachers arrive at initial teacher training programmes with a mixture of knowledge that does not include much formalised 'theoretical pedagogic knowledge' but is likely to include 'experiential pedagogic knowledge' derived from prior experiences as students and their exposure to society and common conceptions of teachers. Such knowledge, though often not explicit, can be firmly held by the trainee and hard to influence.

Teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge both affect classroom practice and are modified and influenced by practice. This implies that perhaps pedagogical content knowledge is an active process rather than a set of knowledge bases in combinations. Cochran, DeRuiter & King (1993) present a development model of pedagogical content knowledge based on a constructivist view of learning which includes four components of understanding—pedagogy, subject matter, students and the environmental context. However, they stress the interrelated nature of these and the dynamic nature of 'pedagogical content knowing' (Cochran et al., 1993).

Curriculum knowledge

This is knowledge of the curriculum to be taught, including the syllabus, the curriculum materials available, connections within and across the curriculum, what learners have studied in the past and what they will study in the future. Curriculum knowledge is often given a lot of emphasis within national educational systems where the training around the curriculum is seen as an important lever for policy

makers to ensure consistency of application of the curriculum and thus coherence within the national system. Changes in curricula require the engagement of large numbers of teachers in 're-training', emphasising the central role of curriculum knowledge in learning to teach.

2.3.3 Conclusion

Shulman's description and categorisation of teacher knowledge, as with other attempts to describe teacher knowledge in objectivist terms, is valuable in helping us to conceptualise what it is that teachers need to know and how we might support them in acquiring that knowledge. However, the categories outlined by Shulman, and their reworking and reimagining by other researchers under an objectivist paradigm, imply that knowledge can in fact be separated in this way. However, when teachers design and plan their curricula and subsequently engage with students, there is no evidence that they are able to select separately from each category. Instead the categories interact with each other. In practice, '...teacher's knowledge functions as an organised whole, orienting the teacher to her situation and allowing her to act' (Feiman-Nemser and Floden 1986 :513) and it is '...the melding of these knowledge domains that is at the heart of teaching.' (Tsui, 2003: 59).

However, objectivist conceptions of knowledge have had a great influence on the infrastructure of many teacher training courses. Categorisation of knowledge along objectivist lines is evident in the curricula, documentation and assessment criteria of courses such as the CELTA and the PGCE from which the data for this study has been collected.

All of the trainers and trainees interviewed as part of this study have experience of the Teaching Practice Group model within either CELTA or PGCE courses. Both of these courses have specified assessment criteria for use by trainers when observing practical teaching. Analysis of the data collected as part of this study will focus on how trainers make use of these assessment criteria and to what extent they are central to the model of teaching being proposed.

I will suggest that while the objectivist infrastructure of the CELTA and the PGCE is mostly for appearance – used as publicly agreed criteria for success, and is

infrequently referred to within the action of the course itself, the objectivist descriptions of good teaching that make up the assessment criteria appear to influence the approach of the trainers to feedback and assessment on these courses..

2.4 Subjectivism

If knowledge is not simply objective and non-personal perhaps it is instead created by and understood in ways that differ from one individual to another. A subjectivist perspective is based on an understanding of knowledge as complex, situated, and individual (Hall and Townsend, 2017: 5). Thus, the experience of an individual is seen as the only legitimate source of our knowledge of the world. This is not to argue against the existence of objective facts. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that our awareness of these objective facts is interpreted through the individual human mind and is thus interpreted subjectively and individually (Yu, 2016: 321).

If that is the case, direct knowledge derived from the experience of individuals should be seen as the foundation of all knowledge claims. However, if all knowledge was indeed subjective, and so dependent upon an individual's experience, then it would also be infinitely ambiguous and the knowledge-base of teacher education would be dependent upon each individual's experience of learning in their own particular classroom (Young, 2008: 7).

The subjectivist concept of knowledge finds expression in teacher education in arguments that trainee teachers should learn how to become a teacher through experience in the classroom rather than by studying in a university lecture hall. Proponents of such a view argue that there is no knowledge-base for university teacher educators to work from and what is needed instead is for trainees to learn 'on the job'. In the context of the teaching practice group model, a form of teacher training that is centred around the classroom and requires trainees to learn about teaching by teaching a particular group of learners, concepts of subjective knowledge are of great relevance.

2.4.1 Knowledge and social processes

Young (2008: 8) shows how knowledge can be understood as the product of social

processes, growing from social interactions between particular social groupings through which humans engage in social practices. These 'forms of life', perhaps a social class, a gender category, or a group defined by ethnicity or disability, produce their own meanings '...in the public domain in the context of collective situations and activities' (Young, 2008: 8). From a subjectivist position, it is open to question why the experience of one group should be understood as knowledge and that of another group as experience. As Young (2008: 9) explains, when it becomes difficult to distinguish between knowledge and experience, knowledge claims can be seen as political claims of the dominant class and, in fact, just one of many competing sets of knowledge all with equal validity as the products of particular social groups. Such an approach rejects 'any epistemological grounding of knowledge or truth claims'. Instead, a sociological approach is taken, and truth claims are seen as '...no more than the standpoints or perspectives of particular (invariably dominant) social groups' (Young, 2008:3). This 'voice discourse argument' (Young 2008:9) means that any knowledge base, such as one made explicit through a teacher training course, is open to dispute.

Acceptance that social processes impact on the generation of knowledge is more than just a question of epistemology. The relativism implicit in the argument, and its implication that there are other, equally valid understandings of what teachers should know, is problematic as it raises questions about the validity and authority of teacher educators, as well as the courses they work on. Indeed, Young warns of this as part of his argument for the need for sociology to develop its own theory of knowledge that:

... while accepting that knowledge is always a social and historical product, avoids the slide into relativism and perspectivism with which this insight is associated in postmodernist writings. (Young, 2008: 19)

For an experienced, but untrained, teacher joining an initial teacher training course there can often be conflict between the knowledge base as espoused on the course and her own practices and beliefs. Others may question the knowledge base of a course on more academic or theoretical grounds or by referring to new research. It is for teacher trainers to consider carefully how they might address these issues in the design and running of courses to ensure that they are explicit about the knowledge

base that they represent, and that they support trainees in critically appraising its legitimacy in relation to their learning to teach.

While accepting the social basis of knowledge, Young suggests that it is not necessary to deny the validity of all truth and knowledge, as is the logical conclusion of the relativist argument. He reasons that, for any knowledge claim to be accepted as true it should have: *external validity* by explaining something in a convincing way; *internal consistency*; and *external support* from a community of legitimate experts. To be accepted, the knowledge claim of a course will need to pass Young's three tests.

External validity will likely be institution-led. The course providers, the examining bodies for the qualification and also publishers may provide external validity. On a smaller scale, word of mouth, from an ex- to a prospective trainee, is another powerful source of external validity.

It is important that trainees are given a consistent interpretation of the knowledge base implying close cooperation amongst course teams. It is also important that this *internal consistency* is followed across practical and theoretical elements of the course so that they are not seen as separate, with the practical residing in the experience of a particular trainer and the theoretical making scant reference to the practical.

Coherence is greatly influenced by the internal division of labour on a course and the mechanisms in place to ensure that the course team interacts with one another and share information.

External validity for a teacher training courses can come from the wider training community, material shared with trainees, academics referred to, and the experienced, qualified teachers that trainees work with in their institutions and through the course in the form of mentors.

2.4.2 Conclusion

The understanding that some teacher knowledge can be subjective, and that exploration and consideration of this subjective knowledge plays an important part in learning to teach, can lead to a questioning of traditional forms of teacher education, with suggestions that there is a need for more exploratory and personalized forms, ones that facilitate sharing among participants to validate and encourage the

exploration of individual participants' experiences of teaching. The place of the trainer as the holder of knowledge is also challenged by a view of knowledge as subjective.

Toulmin (1958) suggests that the knowledge encapsulated in any teacher training course should be drawn from, and shared with, teachers and other practitioners engaged in collective activities working with learners. That is, knowledge acquired through engagement with the practical situation created by the course, through teaching and reflecting on teaching. The activities of the Teaching Practice Group model centre around such a 'practical situation', the shared practice class.

Toulmin contrasts knowledge acquired through engagement with a practical situation, such as the teaching practice class, with knowledge embodied in the infrastructure of the teacher training course (as expressed in the timetable, curriculum, assessment tasks, and documentation), and the declarative knowledge of the teacher trainers. For Toulmin both types of knowledge are valid, and they should be cultivated alongside one another.

In the analysis of the data collected as part of this study I will examine factors that impact on the development of teacher knowledge in the Teaching Practice Groups model, attempting to identify ways in which knowledge about teaching is represented in the infrastructure of the Teaching Practice Group model, and by the trainers in their guidance to trainees as part of the cycle of planning, observing and feedback.

2.5 Reflective practice

The difficulty in describing teacher knowledge using either objectivist or subjectivist approaches has led teacher educators to Schön's (2001) account of professional knowledge. Schön offered 'a new epistemology of practice' more appropriate to professional life than either objectivist or subjectivist approaches to knowledge. Schön rejects the idea of an objectivist description of professional knowledge and is also critical of subjectivism. He claimed to have identified a growing crisis of confidence in the professions and blamed it on the weakness of their theoretical base. He argued that the professional's traditional claims to privileged social position and autonomy of practice had come into question as the public had begun to have doubts about professional expertise.

...in a world where professionalism is still mainly identified with technical expertise, even such practitioners as these may feel profoundly uneasy because they cannot describe what they know how to do, cannot justify it as a legitimate form of professional knowledge, cannot increase its scope or depth or quality, and cannot with confidence help others to learn it. (Schön, 2001)

Schön argued against what he termed 'technical rationality' (Schön, 1983) as an underpinning principle behind the training of professionals. According to this, the trainee teacher, architect or any other professional, is expected to gain knowledge of theory in one place, usually a university, and then apply this 'school' knowledge or theory to the practical task, for a teacher, in the classroom.

Technical rationality implies a belief that this 'school' knowledge is of use in a practical situation. That it will simply be necessary to 'apply' this knowledge to the situation in order to achieve the results suggested by those who supplied this 'school' knowledge.

Elliot defines the rationalist conception of professional activity as,

The conscious application of formal theoretical principles which can be mastered prior to, and independently of, the study of the concrete educational practices it is claimed to apply to. (1979:138)

Freeman & Johnson (2005) describe a similar model in which,

Content was separated from teaching processes so that the what and the how of teaching fell into neat, hermetic categories, each with its own set of discipline derived definitions. (2005: 4)

Within descriptions of technical rationality an objectivist conception of professional knowledge is taken, with the knowledge such professionals need seen as specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised.

Schön criticizes 'technical rationality' on two counts. Firstly, for its implication that for professional learning theory directs practice in a linear and uni-directional manner rather than theory also being informed by the consideration of practice. And secondly that practice, being poor in knowledge, must be sustained with theoretical knowledge

from another source.

Schein (1974) uses a threefold division of professional knowledge to demonstrate its hierarchical nature. He proposes that there is an underlying discipline or basic science component upon which the practice rests or from which it is developed. A skills and attitudinal component that concerns the actual performance of services to the client, using the underlying basic and applied knowledge. Between these there is an applied science or "engineering" component from which many of the day-to-day diagnostic procedures and problem-solutions are derived.

To describe the hierarchical relationship Schön suggests that one layer of knowledge rests on another with performance resting on applied science and that itself resting on the theoretical knowledge of basic science.

In the epistemological pecking order, basic science is highest in methodological rigor and purity, its practitioners superior in status to those who practice applied science, problem-solving, or service delivery. (Schön, 2001:4)

This conception of professional knowledge requires that professional practice is thought of as essentially technical with the practitioner using professional knowledge to decide on the best way to solve a particular problem. In doing so it is important that deciding is kept separate from doing; the decision about what to do is drawn directly from levels in the hierarchy above practice and implemented in the form of applied techniques to solve the problem faced by the practitioner. In this way, it is argued, it is possible to maintain rigor through '*...the use of describable, testable, replicable techniques derived from scientific research, based on knowledge that is objective, consensual, cumulative, and convergent*' (Schön, 2001:4).

According to Schön this hierarchy is a simplification of a complex process and actually misconstrues what professionals do. Following this model, the professional's activity is entirely dependent on their ability to implement in practice concepts, ideas and techniques that derive directly from scientific research. For Schön and others, professions such as teaching "...lack stable institutional contexts of practice, fixed, and unambiguous ends and a basis in systematic scientific knowledge" meaning that

because teaching takes place in varied contexts and has many different outcomes, as well as a lack of an agreed knowledge base, it is not possible to simply apply scientific knowledge to the solving of everyday problems of practice.

Schön argues that a positivist epistemology of practice by which “...rigorous practice depends on well-formed problems of instrumental choice to whose solution research-based theory and technique are applicable” (Schön, 2001: 5) is problematic for the professions. He calls into question its relevance as the type of problems that professionals deal with tend to be messy and indeterminate and cannot be adequately addressed by theory alone.

He points out that while it is true that there is a ‘high, hard ground’ where practitioners can apply rigorous, research-based theory, there is also ‘...a swampy lowland where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution’ (Schön, 2001: 6). Despite the lowly status of such problems it is in this swampy lowland that teachers must work, and it is for this reality that teacher educators must prepare beginning teachers.

Schön points out that even though such problems have a lower status in the hierarchy of professional knowledge than the problems addressed by rigorous scientific methods in laboratory conditions, they are the problems that are of greatest and most immediate human concern (Schön, 2001: 6)

Schön rejects ‘technical rationality’ on the grounds that it does not allow for ‘the ordinary practical knowledge’ that he believes exist in the professions (Schön, 1983: 54). He argues that the professions protect their own self-interest by sanctifying existing bodies of scientific knowledge. However, he rejected the specificity and distinctive nature of such professional knowledge (1983: 68) and argued that simply following handed down rules was not what professionals do.

Schön’s epistemology of practice takes full account of the competence practitioners sometimes display in situations of uncertainty, complexity, and uniqueness.

Schön proposes ‘reflection in action’ as an alternative way of building professionalism unbound by pre-determined rules. He argues that professionals work with what he

calls 'knowing-in-action' which is arrived at through a process he terms 'reflection-in-action'.

Schön distinguishes 'reflection-in-action' from 'reflection-on-action'. Whereas 'reflecting on action' involves thinking back over what has been done, reflecting-in-action is reflection which takes place during an action without interrupting it. For teachers reflection-in-action happens in the classroom while teaching. For Schön the resultant knowledge-in-action:

... goes beyond stateable rules – not only by devising new methods of reasoning, ...but also by constructing and testing new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems (Schön, 1987:39).

Through a process of reflection-in-action practitioners 'make new sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations of practice' based on assumptions that neither existing professional knowledge fits every case nor that every problem has a right answer' (Schön, 1987:39).

Schön's concept of knowledge-in-action is process oriented and individual and closely related to intuitive knowledge. For Schön doing is not separated from thinking because 'thinking' is reduced to describing what you do.

The notion of reflection as key to effective professional development has become so dominant in both policy and practice that it, rather than theory, now underpins both policy and practice in teacher training and education. Freeman (2002) argues that reflective teacher education must serve two functions: it must teach the skills of reflectivity and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience.

With reflective practice taking such a prominent role in teacher education it is perhaps pertinent to question whether Schön's alternative to technical rationalism, and the application of theory to practice which that implies, is in itself just another theory handed down to practitioners for them to apply to their practice:

If Schön himself is indeed proposing a theory of reflective practice by unpacking and explaining the process of reflection-in-action, as we believe to

be the case, then what is there to discourage would-be reflective practitioners from simply attempting to 'apply' Schön's analysis, i.e. treating it instrumentally, in the belief that they could thereby reach this state? (Usher Bryant & Johnstone, 1997:143)

It can also be argued that within a reflective approach to teacher education, practice itself is presented as theory, as the explanatory element of learning to teach.

Schön's conception of reflection as an alternative to propositional knowledge has been criticised for its individualised and subjective nature. Reflective practice is orientated entirely around practice and applies a subjective definition of knowledge and theoretical understanding. Within the rhetoric of reflective practice teachers are seen as enabled to develop their own personal theories of practice by reflecting on what happens in their classrooms (Farrell 2007: 167). In effect reflection elevates subjective experience and reflection over objective knowledge. For Freeman (2002) effective reflection involves the subjugation of theory to the individual's context:

the role of external input – of theory, prescriptions, and the experiences of others – lies in how these can help the individual teacher to articulate her experience and thus make sense of her work (Freeman, 2002:11).

The lack of reference to external theory implicit in the reflective approach may lead to teachers relying on what Russell (1993: 207) terms ritual, rather than principled, knowledge. Russell argues that an overemphasis on reflection on a teacher's individual experience of practice and a lack of explicit connections between that individual experience in the classroom and the theory they are exposed to as part of their training course can lead to unprincipled acceptance of existing practice. Thus, as a beginning teacher becomes more comfortable in the classroom, she is likely to adopt certain practices purely because of that comfort.

...practices developed on teaching practice easily become rituals without supporting principles, and theory, often seen as elaborate common sense, is comprehended but not related to practices. (Russell, 1993: 209)

Ritual knowledge in this context is a type of procedural knowledge – knowing how to do something. It has been defined by Russell (1993:208) as '*...essentially explanatory,*

oriented towards an understanding of how procedures and processes work, of why certain conclusions are necessary and valid'. Procedural knowledge becomes ritual when it lacks underpinning understanding of principles. We know (or assume) that something works but do not understand why. This becomes particularly problematic when the situation changes in any way and other factors are brought in that were previously not relevant. In this situation principled knowledge allows the teacher to analyse the situation and adapt their teaching to the new situation. Without principled knowledge, the teacher's procedural knowledge becomes ritual. This relates to Bourdieu's concept of Learned ignorance, the imitation of a practical activity without knowledge of underpinning theory, which I will discuss in section 3.3.6.

This adoption of ritual knowledge can be challenged by teacher educators by encouraging trainees to reflection on the decisions that they make in relation to their classroom practice.

2.5.1 Conclusion

The subjective process of reflection places the responsibility for understanding and improving professional practice on the individual. While 'reflective practitioners' may draw on and refer to theory, they do not contribute to its development as their knowledge fails to meet the criteria for acceptance into theory (McIntyre, 1993: 382). He suggests that beginning teachers need to be exposed to theory that is not relevant to their current experience of practice even if that makes the theory less valuable in terms of reflection on their own individual practice.

There is much to be read, to be discussed, and to be found in the practices of experienced teachers which merits examination and mental trial but which it will not be possible for the individual student teacher to test in his or her own practice, because of constraints of time, opportunity or expertise (McIntyre, 1993: 47).

Theories of reflective practice have influenced the infrastructure of the Teaching Practice Group model. Reflection on the experience of teaching, both as an observer and as a participant, is central to the model and is scaffolded in various ways by the trainer, the documentation and assessment. This study has drawn on documents and

interviews which exemplify and discuss these reflective techniques. Analysis of these will explore the reflections of both trainers and trainees on the learning process within the Teaching Practice Groups model, but also on the place of reflection itself within that process; how the Teaching Practice Groups model encourages, and formalizes reflection, and to what elements of the teaching and learning process it direct trainees attention.

2.6 Teacher practical and theoretical knowledge

2.6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the concept of teacher knowledge, asking what is meant by teacher knowledge and what are the different forms of teacher knowledge that may be of importance in learning to teach. My initial motivation to begin this study was to understand the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education. As discussed in the introduction I had often been involved in conversations with colleagues in which we considered ways to ensure that our training courses ensured this integration. Our goal was for theoretical ideas to be presented in connection to the practical teaching environment in which they could be of use, but equally that practice was not seen as separate from, or uninformed by, theoretical ideas. In these discussions teaching practice groups were often held up as a good example of integration, thus my decision to look more closely at the mechanisms that enable this.

In the previous section I introduced broad conceptualizations of knowledge and examined their meaning for the teacher education knowledge base. Now I will look in more detail at what has been proposed as valid and important knowledge for teachers. In this I focus in particular on the ways in which theory and practice have been used as a dichotomy, a dividing line to be bridged between different forms of knowledge necessary for effective teaching.

There is a general understanding that teachers need two forms of knowledge: theoretical and practical. When considering the learning of a task such as teaching, it is important that we give equal consideration to both the theoretical and the practical knowledge that is required. A key question for any course team to answer pertains to the relationship inherent in the knowledge base on which their training offer is built.

What is the relationship between theory (propositional knowledge, provided previously by educational theory and research and practice), and teachers' practical knowledge as experienced by individual teachers (Verloop 2001: 443)? As noted above, the knowledge base for teacher education was previously limited to propositional knowledge and failed to adequately attend to what teachers do – their practical knowledge. However, teacher's practical knowledge is hard to capture and examine. As McIntyre notes, such knowledge is often '...not codified or even very much shared, but instead implicit in their highly skilled professional practice' (McIntyre 1995: 372).

In contrast to theoretical knowledge, in the form of theoretical ideas and empirically demonstrated facts, teacher's practical knowledge is individualised and situation-specific and so is difficult to share. This contributes to it being less valued within teacher education, which emphasises 'the codified knowledge of university lecturers at the expense of the knowledge-in-practice of classroom teachers'. (McIntyre, 1995: 372)

Writing in a similar period, Freeman and Johnson (1998, 2004; Johnson 2002) also challenged the dominance of propositional knowledge within teacher education. They suggested that propositional knowledge of applied linguistics and other theoretical ideas should no longer be assumed as the knowledge base for language teaching. Instead, they proposed that teachers' practical knowledge should play a more important role in learning to teach. As Johnston and Goettsch (2000: 460) note 'in language teaching, it is the teaching that is most important, not the language'.

There have been many other conceptualisations of theory and practice in language teacher training. In the following section I will look in detail at types of knowledge that have been suggested as of use for teachers before going on to address the question of how these different forms of knowledge might be integrated within a training programme.

2.6.2 Teacher practical knowledge

Teacher's practical knowledge is knowledge related to human activity; it is knowledge employed in practice. For a teacher this will likely involve elements of propositional

knowledge, that we might term theory, as well as technical skills, in terms of classroom management, questioning technique and other 'practical' skills'. However, as we have seen above, teacher's practical knowledge also needs to account for the local, the particular. Teacher knowledge is most called into play when the teacher makes decisions and those decisions are largely in response to a particular learning situation whether that be within a classroom in response to need or in planning for learning.

According to Saugstad practical knowledge is '...something we are, do and are able to do, rather than something we have' (2005: 363). Saugstad uses the term participant knowledge to talk about teacher's practical knowledge. He contrasts this with spectator knowledge, which is general and not a part of practical life. The role of spectator knowledge is to '...illuminate and to give reasons and explanation' (Saugstad, 2005:356) rather than to be directly applied to practice. Saugstad's participant knowledge, in contrast, is directly related to practice.

I have found Aristotle's discussion of knowledge helpful in framing discussions of participant knowledge as practical knowledge. Aristotle lived in a time of transition between a predominantly oral and a literate culture and as such he was aware that much of the knowledge that informed the actions of people was not codified and yet had great value. We now have a predominantly literate culture, in which practical knowledge is often assigned less value than theoretical knowledge.

Aristotle described three distinct knowledge types: *epistēmē*, *technē* and *phronēsis*.

The distinctions that he made between forms of knowledge help us guard against an over-emphasis on one type of knowledge over another in defining the knowledge base of teacher education. It also provides a useful analytical tool to assess the knowledge that teachers gain through a teacher education programme and to consider the ways in which the structure of such a programme may facilitate or work against the acquisition of different forms of knowledge.

Aristotle discussed three distinct forms of knowledge: one which can be termed theoretical - *epistēmē*, and two which are practical in nature - *technē* and *phronēsis*. I will first describe the three concepts before suggesting their relevance to this study.

Epistēmē means “to know” in Greek and is generally related to scientific knowledge. Epistemic knowledge is universal, invariable and context-independent. It considers ‘...the general, principal, eternal and regular aspects of life’ (Saugstad, 2005:355) and is related to a positivist view of knowledge as objective. As Eisner (2002:375) explains, for Aristotle epistēmē was knowledge about which we can have absolute certainty

For the Greeks, to have epistēmē, what one believed to be the case needed to actually be the case. Put another way, if you knew something, that is, if you really knew something, it had to be true.

In terms of teacher training, epistemic knowledge is that which is applicable to a wide variety of situations and which needs to be ‘translated’ or applied to teaching in general and/or to a particular teaching context. It includes theories of learning, and of social interactions as well as, in language teaching, descriptions of language.

While teachers do need to see the bigger picture of educational theory in order that they might understand why certain actions should be taken and what impact they may have, they also need knowledge that is more practical, knowledge of how to do something. Practical knowledge relates to how we act, what we do.

For Aristotle every action or behaviour has a goal; there is a reason for our actions, an intention to achieve something. He makes a distinction between two forms of practical knowledge: "technē" (proficiency, skill) and "phronēsis" (practical wisdom).

As with epistēmē, technē implies the existence of a set of acknowledged principles, but it is oriented towards production, it is about doing, rather than understanding. Technē is often translated as skill or craft and is the origin of the word technique. It is closely associated with the learning of practical teaching skills within a teacher training programme.

However, for Aristotle, knowing how to do something was not enough. He argued that it was also necessary to know when to do it, which he termed phronēsis. This refers to practical wisdom, the knowledge that informs the decisions we make about how to act in particular situations. Phronēsis is closely related to technē, in that it governs our ability to use the particular techniques, or practical skills that we have acquired to make good decisions about how to act in any situation, to do what is right at the right

time. Eisner (2002:381) calls it 'the ability to deal with ... the dynamics of practical situations'.

Whereas *epistēmē* concerns theoretical knowledge and *technē* denotes technical know-how, *phronēsis* emphasizes situational decision-making based on practical knowledge and practical ethics. Saugstad emphasizes the situated nature of *phronēsis*, calling it '...an ability to judge which general knowledge, which rules and methods have to be transferred into a particular practical situation' (Saugstad, 2005:363)

In the learning environment the teacher is required to make constant judgments about whether, how and when to intervene. In making these decisions the teacher's *phronēsis*, their ability to match the correct *technē*, in the form of a technique, or activity or process, to an appropriate moment to support group or individual learning, is of great importance.

Aristotle's categorization of knowledge associated practical knowledge with the field of practice, with the implication that the field of practice does not lack knowledge or require this to be provided in the form of theoretical knowledge. Instead, Aristotle's categories of knowledge show practical knowledge as distinct from theoretical knowledge and made up of two forms of knowledge, *technē* and *phronēsis*.

Participant knowledge acknowledges both *technē*, in the form of knowledge to be applied in a particular situation, and *phronēsis*, practical wisdom to read the situation and act appropriately.

According to Aristotle's understanding, there is no given relation between general and particular knowledge, because the field of practice admits many different possible actions in each individual practical situation. Participant knowledge consists of expertise in deciding which general knowledge is suitable in a particular individual situation. This expertise is based on practical experience with similar situations. Aristotle's position, therefore, suggests that there is no single relation between theory and practice and between spectator knowledge and participant knowledge.

Participant knowledge is useful in solving practical problems. It is knowledge that responds to situations and it increases through experience with problems in practical

life. Spectator knowledge on the other hand does not support actions, but is knowledge which aims at understanding as well as avoiding problems. It is thus an important complement to participant knowledge, in that it is knowledge which responds to, rather than anticipating, situations.

The situated nature of a teacher's practical knowledge is frequently acknowledged. Schwab for example, conceives of teacher practical knowledge as the language of the particular suggesting that whereas the value of theory lies with its generalizability, practical knowledge '...consists of the richly endowed and variable particulars from which theory abstracts or idealizes its uniformities' (Schwab, 1971: 494).

Schwab talks about theory being drawn from practice, but in so doing losing the particularity of practical knowledge, that which is individual to each teacher and is learnt in response to their own situations. Other conceptualisations of teacher practical knowledge, such as the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1988) have also focused on the personal nature of teacher practical knowledge. For Clandinin and Connelly (1987), teacher knowledge is '*personal practical knowledge (PPK)*'. It is experiential, so it can only be gained through experience, and it is embodied in the narrative of a teacher's life.

It is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher's knowledge. It is the kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987: 125)

This PPK is constructed through the personal narrative of that particular teacher, influenced by various sources such as teaching experience, professional formation, observation of others in classroom contexts, and personal characteristics. It encapsulates what the teacher understands of the practical circumstances of the environment in which they work. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986: 25) call it '... a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation'.

Golombek, in her study of how the PPK of two in-service ESL teachers informed their practice, argues that not enough research has been carried out that focuses on teachers' experiential knowledge and how they use that knowledge. She believes that a narrow focus on developing an empirically grounded knowledge-base, separate from teachers' experiential knowledge runs the risk of limiting the horizons of beginning teachers. Defining the knowledge base in reference solely to theoretical knowledge may, in Harrington's words, '...lead to closed worlds of meaning rather than opening windows on possibilities' (Harrington, 1994 :190).

Golombek argues that to ensure that those windows are open we need to reconsider our conception of teacher knowledge to ensure that it includes, '... teachers' ways of knowing and how they use their knowledge in the language classroom' (Golombek, 1998: 447). In relation to beginner teachers, who lack direct experience of the classroom as teachers, such knowledge can also be drawn from their experiences as learners. Borg (2002: 81) suggests that there is good evidence to suggest that beginner teachers' "experiences as learners can inform cognitions about teaching and learning."

PPK encapsulates all of the learning that the teacher has drawn from their experience including any experience prior to their training programme. PPK is not static. It changes in response to the experiences of teachers, recognising their agency in the creation of their own knowledge about teaching. Within this study of teacher learning in a particular form of teacher training, the concept of PPK is useful in guiding analysis of the data collected to the ways in which trainees are asked to 'deal with the exigencies of a present situation' – the shared group of learners – and what knowledge they draw on to do so.

Another concept that is useful in conceptualising what teachers know is that of tacit knowledge. Polanyi (1967) famously said that 'we know more than we can tell'. He called the knowledge we hold and can apply but not articulate 'tacit' knowledge. Tacit knowledge comprises a range of conceptual and sensory information and images that can be brought to bear in an attempt to make sense of something. It cannot be formalised or packaged for direct instruction. It is constructed from repeated experience carrying out certain tasks in a particular context. It is difficult to articulate

tacit knowledge because 'it is embodied in skills that are located inside practices, ways of doing things, knacks, sensitive touches etc' (van Manen, 1991, p124).

Tacit knowledge cannot be expressed in words and numbers, nor can it be structured in ways that are easily translated into course content or assessment criteria. Explicit knowledge, in contrast, is easily expressed in such formats. Tacit knowledge is often gained informally through engagement with the practices that it encompasses. In this sense it is knowledge unconsciously, or unreflectively, gained through experience.

Schön takes Polanyi's idea further by proposing that what professionals do in their workaday life is 'knowing-in-action'. Their skilful practice reveals knowledge that does not come from a prior intellectual operation (Schön, 1983: 51). Echoing Ryle's (1949) conception of "knowing how", Schön points out that knowing and action are not two separate things but one; that is, the knowing is demonstrated in the action itself.

Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action. And similarly, the workaday life of the professional practitioner reveals, in its recognitions, judgments and skills, a pattern of tacit knowing-in-action (Schön, 2001:9).

It should be acknowledged that the tacit knowledge of teaching that beginner teachers bring to the training experience may be limited. What's more practical teacher knowledge is often not articulated; it is common for experienced teachers, perhaps acting as mentors to less experienced colleagues or trainee teachers, to find it difficult to describe the reasons behind the decisions they make in practice. Mentors and others can have difficulty in making explicit their tacit knowledge about teaching for the benefit of beginning teachers as '...when it comes to practical knowledge acquired through experience, people cannot easily tell you what it is that they know' (Eraut, 2002: 25).

Brown and McIntyre (1993), discussing what teachers know, explain that to teachers

...most of what has happened in their lessons, and especially almost everything which they themselves have done in the classroom, is so ordinary and so obvious as not to merit any comment (1993: 67).

Accordingly, within teacher education programmes, trainees should be encouraged to articulate and elaborate on the practical activities they experience in the classroom, so that they can identify and build on their existing practical knowledge, it follows that one of the tasks of those who design initial teacher training programmes is to structure activities in which trainees engage in a way that requires them to be explicit about the reasons behind the decisions that they make. In analysing the data from this study, I will ask how the Teaching Practice Group model encourages reflection on decisions made while planning and in midst of live classroom action.

Schön exemplifies tacit knowledge in the following way:

A child who has learned to throw a ball makes immediate judgments of distance which he coordinates, tacitly, with the feeling of bodily movement involved in the act of throwing. Similarly, we are able to execute spontaneously such complex activities as crawling, walking, riding a bicycle, or juggling, without having to think, in any conscious way, what we are doing... (Schön, 2001: 10)

Indeed, as Schön goes on to note, tacit knowledge is knowledge that is not articulated. We may be able to juggle but we are unlikely to then be able to 'give a verbal description even approximately faithful to our performance' (Schön, 2001: 10)

Trentin suggests that we think of tacit knowledge as acting on two dimensions: a technical dimension of know-how and tricks of the trade; and a cognitive dimension concerned with convictions and mental models that 'delineate a way of viewing the world' (Trentin, 2001:10). This distinction reflects Aristotle's view of practical knowledge as being made up of *technē* and *phronēsis* suggesting that for trainee teachers the opportunity to apply the practical knowledge that they are exposed to in their training is of great importance, allowing them to build their own personal practical knowledge. A key question for this study to address is that of how the Teaching Practice Group model facilitates the application of practical knowledge in the form of teaching skills, in real contexts of teaching.

The distinction made by Aristotle also suggests that separating the ability to do something from the ability to know when to use it is key to improving our

understanding of teacher's practical knowledge. This suggests that asking trainee teachers to describe, and reflect on, their practice, with a particular focus on decision-making, in planning and in the classroom, may support their development of understanding of the

Within this study it will be of great importance to examine the ways in which the Teaching Practice Group model exposes trainees to practical teaching situations and facilitates their reflection on those activities and the theoretical ideas that can help support their understanding.

2.6.3 Teacher theoretical knowledge

Theoretical knowledge, in contrast to practical knowledge, is highly codified. It is expressed in texts and taught in classrooms. Dearden (1984: 6), writing at a time when theoretical knowledge was considered part of what teachers should know, unlike today, describes theory as '...a logically connected set of hypotheses whose main function is to explain their subject matter'. He suggests that for any theory to be seen as useful for application to activities such as teaching, it must be seen as referring to general practical principles and these principles must be justified by reference to their backing in various academic disciplines.

Theorising typically involves such activities as the careful testing of truth, either by critical argument or by empirical research. To assist in this, it typically makes careful distinctions, sets up hypotheses, teases out assumptions, assesses validity, reveals presuppositions, scrutinizes justifications and explores alternative interpretations or frameworks.

(Dearden, 1984: 6)

Dearden (1984: 9) suggests that theory can be relevant to practice and so should be included as part of teacher training programmes. He distinguishes between two ways in which theory can be relevant to trainees. He argues that it can be of 'thematic' or 'pragmatic' relevance. By 'thematic' he means that it should quite simply be about practice, somewhere or at some time; by 'pragmatic' that it should have a bearing on the solution of a current practical problem. However, he warns against the dominance in educational theorising of the criterion of pragmatic relevance.

...first, because that would put the purpose or ends of current practice themselves beyond theoretical criticism; and secondly, because in being so governed by practice, theory could very easily become mere apologetic ideology (1984: 10).

Another important distinction to note here is that made by Alexander (1984) between theory as product and theory as process. By theory as product Alexander refers to content knowledge, knowledge derived from ideas, texts or people external to the teacher. Theory as product is a way of describing the traditional view of theory as a body of public, codified knowledge presented within teacher training programmes through reading articles, attending lectures or input sessions and through discussions with trainers and other students on the course. The basis for much of the public theory in language teacher training is applied linguistics and research into second language acquisition. There is also a great deal of theoretical knowledge about general education to draw on; McIntyre lists some of the possible sources:

Understanding of, for example, the historical, social and organizational contexts in which they work, the processes which can occur in classrooms, the ways in which political, economic and cultural factors influence the outcomes of schooling, different philosophical conceptions of education or the different approaches to schooling adopted in different countries, cannot but enrich the thoughtfulness and intelligence with which teachers approach their work. (McIntyre, 1993: 47)

Theory as process refers not to external input but to the individual intellectual activity needed to theorize. It is an individual and subjective process based as much on the experiential knowledge of teachers and empirical evidence from relevant research, as on the thoughts of theorists. Theory as process is something that teachers do rather than learn, though they do need to be supported in developing their ability to theorise in this way. Theorizing as process is something teachers should be enabled to do in order for them to develop their own theory of practice.

Alexander (1986: 145) urges teacher educators 'to concentrate less on what teachers should know, and more on how they might think'. McIntyre (1993) takes this notion

further by breaking teacher's individual theorizing down into three levels: technical, practical and critical or emancipatory.

The *technical* level focuses on the management of the classroom and the activities the teacher wants students to carry out. It is short term and often dictated by ideas drawn from external experts such as materials writers or trainers.

At the *practical* level the teacher's theorizing moves beyond short term survival in the classroom to a concern with what assumptions and values underpin the classroom activities. Here the teacher is concerned not just with understanding what to do, but why particular things work, or do not work, with particular students or groups of students. The teacher's theorising here is about their own practice but also about their students, their subject and the process of teaching and learning.

At the *critical* or *emancipatory* level, the teacher looks beyond their own teaching context to theorise about wider ethical, social, historical, and political issues that impact upon the activities of their classroom. These institutional or societal forces may limit the teacher's freedom to develop their practice in the way that they see as most effective.

For this study of a model of initial teacher training, the first two forms of theorizing, and their relationship, are of most immediate relevance. However, there appears to be a suggestion in McIntyre's proposal that there is a linear relationship between these three forms, with trainees' theorizing moving beyond their immediate survival in the classroom to a concern with wider, underpinning ideas. One of the main criticisms of the type of initial teacher training course with which the Teaching Practice Group model is associated, the CELTA, is that it equips trainee teachers with technical skills, how to do things, but does little to help them understand the why behind the how. This danger is most clearly expressed in Bourdieu's concept of learned ignorance, which I will consider in the following chapter. In analysing the data collected as part of this study, I will explore how trainees on courses of initial teacher training using the Teaching Practice Group model are exposed to the 'how' of teaching and the 'why'.

The purpose of theory

There are a number of reasons why conscious learning of a declaratory body of information outside the context of the classroom can be important. While teachers can and do learn through teaching, what Tarone and Allwright call a 'learning by doing approach', there is also a need for such a set of declarative knowledge. The theoretical frameworks gained through academic content courses, help teachers to interpret what they see and experience in the classroom as well as to organize such insights into a system that is easy to access and refine in future.

It can be argued that such learning of theory will have little impact unless the teacher then takes that learning to the classroom and uses it to interpret the activity she finds there. As Polanyi has observed,

Knowledge of theory cannot be established until it has been interiorized and extensively used to interpret experience, and true knowledge lies in our ability to use it. (Polanyi, 1966:4)

Dearden (1984) also questions whether propositional knowledge of general principles that may be acquired by teachers through formal study can have lasting benefit unless the teacher is challenged to reassess his or her understanding of that knowledge in the light of changing circumstances. He argues that while the teacher may have internalised principles that suggest that, for example, certain actions and activities are appropriate at certain stages of a lesson, she will be not be capable '...of the detailed judgment, and the coping with the unpredictable, which the valid 'application' of these principles will bring' (Dearden, 1984: 6).

Without such a store of theoretical knowledge, understood in terms of practice, teachers may have difficulty to continue to learn on the job. Such an inability to learn from experience would limit the ability to adapt from one context to another, as what works with one group of learners may not work with another (Feiman-Nemser, 2008:701).

Knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of their teaching may support a teacher in adapting to a new context or understand the impact of new approaches or methodologies. Indeed, Bolitho (1987: 27) argues for the need for teachers to have an understanding not just of theory but of the relationship between theoretical principle

and practical technique so that they are able to critique new pedagogies, particularly when these are passed down to them as academic theorizing.

Thiessen gives four functions of theoretical knowledge in teacher education: to guide what trainees learn; to offer a lens through which to analyse observed practice; to judge the use of certain approaches in different settings; and to act as a jumping off point for the development of more personalized theories about teaching (Thiessen, 2000: 530). In all of these there are two important principles. Theoretical and practical knowledge intersect continually and are applied to the process of learning to teach concurrently.

Thiessen (2000) argues for an approach that values and incorporates teachers' practical knowledge alongside theoretical knowledge, and which confronts each element with the other. He suggests that these different types of knowledge will mutually inform what teachers do and engaging with them will enhance the quality of both. He sees the value of teachers using both types of knowledge to help them make sense of the activity of the classroom and also to develop their practical and theoretical understanding.

Teachers continuously engage, construct, or reconstruct their professional knowledge both in their spontaneous and often unpredictable interactions with students, and in their reflections and deliberations prior to or following the events of classroom life (Thiessen, 2000: 528).

It is important to note here that Thiessen highlights two ways in which teachers engage with theory through their teaching. Firstly, while in the classroom, to understand and respond to the practical teaching context, and secondly reflecting on that experience at a later time. Thiessen saw the challenge for beginning teachers as being to learn to use practical and theoretical knowledge '...in an integrated and purposeful manner' (Thiessen, 2000: 531).

The relationship between theory and practice is not one-way. Initially, practical knowledge may come from theoretical understanding; the development of a practical technique may be informed by the trainee's knowledge of theory. Subsequently, as

the trainee gains experience, this practical knowledge can be used to examine their theoretical knowledge.

The job of theory is to evoke judgment rather than rote obedience. The application of theory to practice is the bringing to bear of critical intelligence upon practical tasks rather than the implementation of good advice.

(Thiessen, 2000: 530)

Dearden (1984: 12) also criticises the idea that practice can only be intelligent if it is preceded by the rehearsal of a relevant bit of theory. As he points out, '...practice historically precedes theory, and ... there are many intelligent practices for which there is no body of theory'. Calderhead also rejects the idea that the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education is one of implementation. In his view theory is not translated into or applied to practice; in reality the relationship is more complex and interactive. Theory provides '...analytic and conceptual apparatus for thinking about practice' and practice is the context in which theory can be tested, adapted and assimilated' (Calderhead, 1988,9).

This implies that within teacher training programmes trainees should be encouraged, or rather required, to consider the relationship between theory and practice. For this to occur there need to be mechanisms to support trainees in reflecting on the relevance of theory to their practical experience as part of an iterative process of development of their own personal theories of practice. The intensely practical nature of the Teaching Practice Group model, centred as it is on the classroom and the shared group of learners, may provide a setting for such reflection. Exploration of the ways in which the infrastructure of the course facilitates such reflection will be an important focus for this study.

The practical and the propositional

While the concept of situated knowledge is a useful one, it should be stressed that some knowledge relevant to the development of teachers can be presented and understood without being tied to a particular context. Theories of learning or of second language acquisition for example can be seen as underpinning knowledge that

will subsequently need to be understood in context, but are not tied to any one particular context.

Wideen suggests that teacher learning in the early stages of a teachers' career involves the teacher constructing their own knowledge of teaching with little reference to the 'cognitive and technical' knowledge presented to them in input sessions of their formal teacher training course (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). However, he did not argue that academic knowledge should be excluded from initial teacher training programmes or that knowledge acquired in academic content courses can have no impact on actual language teaching. The argument that it is only in the context of the language classroom that language teachers can learn to teach and that theoretical ideas have limited value in the process, has been termed the non-interface fallacy (Tarone & Allwright, 2005:12). However, it appears unlikely that the theoretical knowledge that trainees gain through their training should always have an immediate impact on their practice. The impact on teaching performance of things consciously learnt in an academic course may be more long-term. The trainee may not know

...why they will eventually find it helpful to know about phonetics or morphology or L2 language acquisition. They may need guidance in understanding why certain kinds of knowledge are needed or when certain skills and bits of knowledge should be exercised in their classrooms. (Tarone & Allwright, 2005:14)

A well-developed framework of understanding, based on knowledge gained through academic content courses that trainees may draw on as they gain experience becomes increasingly important as their attention shifts from their own performance to the learning taking place in the classroom. Tarone and Allwright call this an 'interface' position, and argue that things consciously learnt in a content course can eventually have an impact on actual language teaching performance (Tarone, E and Allwright, 2005:13).

However, while it may be true that some of the knowledge gained on academic content courses will only be used at a later stage of a teacher's development and as such has little value until they can perceive the problems it may help them to

address, it is also possible to present the knowledge base highlighting the practical relevance of such knowledge.

This implies that not only will theoretical knowledge be of greater use to trainees if presented in the context of teaching but that greater understanding of the practice of teaching can come through the application of theoretical positions. Integration of theory and practice should work both ways, not just by applying theory to practice, but also by considering practice in the light of theory. Elliot stresses the need for theories to be consciously articulated so that they can act as 'abridgements of practical knowledge' (Elliot, 1993: 141). This way theoretical knowledge is available to help teachers critically examine their practice but is also open to critical examination in the light of teachers' practical experiences.

In this study of a particular model of teacher training, Teaching Practice Groups, it will be necessary to explore the ways in which trainees engage with theoretical knowledge, in particular how such knowledge is related to the practical activities of the classroom.

2.6.4 The integration of theory and practice

In the preceding sections I have suggested that practical knowledge covers the routines, procedures, techniques, materials and processes that a particular teacher uses. Importantly, practical knowledge does not go beyond the particular; it is unique to that teacher and only wholly applicable to the context in which the teacher currently works. In Saugstad's concept of participant knowledge, such knowledge is contextual and draws on Aristotle's *Phronēsis*, the wisdom to understand the situation. Participant knowledge is used by a teacher to react to a given situation. It is '...about both how to act and to produce according to practical life's shifting circumstances' (Saugstad, 2005:357). Again, the situation-specific nature of teacher's practical knowledge is highlighted. Much practice knowledge is uncoded, and so difficult to include in the framework of teacher education. It is also highly subjective. Theoretical knowledge is used to guide a teacher's actions in practice and to help the teacher make sense of the particular situations she encounters. It should be applicable across a range of contexts and has claim to some form of generalized validity.

However, distinguishing between theoretical and practical knowledge should not imply that the two things are completely separate. Theories underly any classroom practice in English language teaching even though individual teachers may not be aware of them. As Dearden points out, a teacher's work is always impacted on by theory

...through its invisible embodiment in the materials, equipment, buildings and general institutional arrangements which surround him. The whole environment in a school is an artefact, produced in part with the guidance of theoretical conceptions past and present (Dearden, 1984: 13).

Many developments in methodology in language teaching have been driven by research which has generated theories of language learning that have been translated into practical teaching methodologies. Indeed, for Brumfit specific teaching techniques are 'inseparably bound up with issues of educational principle' (Brumfit, 1984: 129).

In discussing the relationship between theory and practice Widdowson suggests first that all techniques used by teachers are principle based and "accountable to theory" (Widdowson 1984: 87). He later addressed the often-held assumption that teaching is a matter of common sense. He asks us to first consider what is meant by common sense and gives two features of common sense that are significant when we come to consider its use in defining teacher knowledge. Firstly, common sense is socially constructed. It is not universally agreed, instead it is limited to a particular community, and so there is a need to identify what that community is before we can accept this sense as relevant to our needs. Secondly, common sense is historically constructed. It developed in response to situations in the past and thus we cannot be certain that it is relevant to the current situation in which we find ourselves (Widdowson, 2003:2).

Widdowson does not dismiss common sense in teacher learning, rather he suggests that it is necessary for teachers to reflect on whether the common sense, or established practice, that they are exposed to is valid in their own teaching context. For this to be achieved teachers need to think about the 'why' of a particular practice as well as the 'what'. As Widdowson puts it, '...acquiring expertise is not a matter of

reflecting what other teachers do, but reflecting on why they do it' (Widdowson, 2003:3).

Widdowson terms this reflective process, in which the teacher identifies the general principles that lie behind the particular practice and then reflects on their validity and applicability in the new context, abstraction. He suggests that for this abstraction to be successful the teacher needs access to and understanding of general principles against which the particular practices can be judged. Thus, '... theory is not remote from practical experience but a way of making sense of it' (Widdowson, 2003:4).

So, while the conceptualization of teacher knowledge proposed by Widdowson accepts the separation of theoretical and practical knowledge, it does not see them as working in isolation. Instead one is informed by, and understood in terms of, the other.

Thiessen introduces two terms to describe ways in which theory and practice might be more effectively integrated on an initial teacher training course. He suggests that, in the academic context, the focus should be on 'practically relevant propositional knowledge' and that in practical sessions the focus should be on 'propositionally interpreted practical knowledge' (Thiessen, 2000, p. 530).

Here propositional knowledge co-exists with practical knowledge with student teachers alternatively using one as the foil for the other, each as a particular vantage point from which to view and make sense of the events of the day, or both to mutually inform their subsequent teaching decisions (Thiessen, 2000: 532).

This acknowledges the fact that propositional and practical knowledge intersect and, while initially, practical knowledge can be gained from propositional knowledge, increasingly trainees draw on their developing practical experience to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt their propositional knowledge. It also acknowledges the agency of the teacher in developing their own theory of practice, reflected in Clandinin's concept of personal practical knowledge.

Language teaching involves the use of practical knowledge of routines, procedures, materials and processes as well as propositional knowledge of theories of teaching

and learning and of language (Verloop et al. 2001:443). Gaining a better understanding of teachers' practical knowledge has driven many research efforts in recent years and teacher educators, in designing programmes, have sought to incorporate and build on this knowledge. However, as Verloop et al. point out: 'it is not at all clear how formal theoretical knowledge and teacher knowledge can be integrated and used as 'input' in teacher education" (Verloop et al., 2001). Indeed, an understanding of teaching as relying for its effectiveness on the integration of theory and practice has not traditionally been reflected in ITE. Teacher training courses have often been structured in such a way as to make explicit the divide between theory and practice. Indeed, it can be argued that theory has become largely implicit rather than explicitly acknowledged and valued within Initial Teacher Training programmes (Lawes 2006).

In this study a primary focus will be on ways in which the Teaching Practice Group model, in which teacher learning is centred around and grounded in the practical classroom with its shared group of learners, manages to bridge this gap. Key to the analysis of the data collected will be the identification and description of the mechanisms that support this integration and understanding of how they are experienced by participants.

The technical rationality approach discussed above implied that learning to teach was a simple linear process with the trainee required to learn the subject matter separately from any consideration of how to teach it. In English language teaching this might mean mastering linguistic content and learning theoretical perspectives on second language acquisition before going on to classroom techniques.

Implicit in the design of such courses is more than just a separation between theory and practice but also a difference in status between the two. General theoretical principles, located in the university, held the highest levels of this hierarchy and practical applications the lowest (Schön, 1983). It gives '...a view of professional knowledge as a hierarchy in which 'general principles' occupy the highest level and 'concrete problem-solving the lowest' (1983: 24).

The reliance on theoretical knowledge, separate from the practical elements of a teachers' training has been termed the academic fallacy (Tarone and Allwright

2005:12). This describes the belief that it is possible to provide trainees with academic knowledge and expect them to transform that knowledge into practical pedagogical decision making. For a language teacher this might involve building a declarative body of knowledge about teaching and learning through content courses on teaching and learning, second language acquisition and language structure without these being related to the classroom.

However, despite the good intentions of those who designed such courses, there was increasing evidence that teachers who had been trained using such an approach found it difficult, if not impossible to translate their learning from the university element of their training course into effective practice in the classroom. The result of this may be that when faced with the full reality of the classroom they feel ill equipped to cope and quickly leave the profession. This phenomenon was termed 'practice shock' and was considered by researchers (e.g. Broekkamp & Van Hout-Wolters, 2007; Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Kennedy, 1997; Robinson, 1998 cited in Korthagen, 2010) to have as its base the divide between theory and practice inherent in a technical rationality approach.

The literature suggests that this positivistic 'training' model of teacher education, in which '...the university provides the theory, methods and skills; the schools provide the setting in which the knowledge is practised; and the beginning teacher provides the individual effort to apply such knowledge' (Wideen et al., 1998), is unrealistic and likely to be ineffective in preparing teachers for the classroom.

A major issue for this model of teacher education is that of transfer. By delivering theoretical content in isolation from the practical context in which it is relevant and then sending trainee teachers into such an environment there is an assumption that the trainee teacher will be able to transfer the knowledge from one context, the university, to another, the language classroom.

Korthagen (2010: 99) rejects the notion that teaching student teachers about educational theory leads to their learning to teach, or that it is feasible or desirable for trainee teachers to be required to effect the transfer of concepts learned within their training course to the classroom without adequate support and guidance. He prefers to conceptualise teacher learning as a social process involving active engagement of

student teachers in authentic educational contexts., ‘...part of the process of participation in social practice, especially the social practice in the schools’ (Korthagen, (2010: 99)

The conceptualisation of teacher learning as socialisation, into the world of teaching will be further discussed in section 3.2.6.

2.7 Conclusion

There is a lack of clarity in the literature about the knowledge base of English Language Teaching. Both objectivist and subjectivist views on teacher knowledge have had great influence on the ways in which teachers are prepared for the classroom. So far in this review I have suggested that we should accept that different ‘ways of knowing’ are involved in learning to teach with both theoretical and practical knowledge having value to teachers.

Teachers draw on various forms of knowledge, consciously or not, in planning for lessons, interacting with students, and making decisions live in the classroom. The literature examined in this chapter suggests that teacher knowledge, the ideas and concepts that trainee teachers construct about the teaching and learning process, should be informed by reflection on practice. This exploration of individual participants’ experiences of teaching, is carried out through engagement with the practical situations created by the course, through teaching and reflecting on teaching. However, the literature also suggests that external theory is another important source of teacher knowledge. There is not agreement in the literature on what theoretical areas are of most relevance for language teacher education. And this study does not set out to identify this. However, some broad conclusions can be drawn about what kind of theory trainee teachers should know and where this theory emanates.

Knowledge of the language being taught, its structure, and use, and of second language acquisition processes, are clearly relevant sources of theory for prospective language teachers. As Johnson & Golombek note ‘knowledge of how language is structured, acquired, and used remains fundamental to our understanding of language learning and the activity of language teaching’ (2002, p8). Propositional knowledge of

applied linguistics is a central element of most teacher education programmes. Indeed, applied linguistics forms the basis for much 'public theory' of language teaching.

As described above, various scholars have called for trainee teachers to be exposed to more than just knowledge of content (here knowledge of the language being taught). Shulman (1987) for example also lists general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values as important to teacher education. This recognition that teachers need to understand not just the content of their work – the linguistic description of the language and theories of second language acquisition, has led to other areas of theoretical knowledge, such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and education, also being considered foundational for language teachers, alongside applied linguistics (Byrnes, 2000; Grabe, Stoller, & Tardy, 2000).

The Teaching Practice Groups studied as part of this thesis took place within courses which were influenced by objective conceptions of teaching and learning, in the form, for example, of competence statements and assessment checklists. However, they also placed a high value on reflection, both in- and on-action in the classroom with the shared group of learners the setting for such reflection. Exploration of the ways in which the infrastructure of the course facilitates this reflection and guides trainees' attention will be an important focus for this study.

This study will suggest that the Teaching Practice Groups model of teacher training can integrate theory and practice. However, that is not to suggest that it is the only way in which this can be done. The presentation of theoretical ideas in a university classroom or lecture hall does not necessarily mean that those ideas cannot be related to practical issues for trainees. It is also possible to design an effective course in which the teaching practice placements take place in institutions separate from that which is responsible for the theoretical elements of the course. Input sessions in which theoretical ideas are presented can be designed to include reference to practice and exemplification of theoretical ideas in video or simply by ensuring that the trainer draws on his or her own experience in presenting concepts and prepares activities and

allows adequate time for trainees to do the same. Careful and inclusive mentoring arrangements can also do much to bridge the gap for trainees by ensuring consistency between the ideas of the trainers and the mentors.

3. Teacher learning

3.1 Introduction

In teacher education research, there is a great deal of concern about content, the theories, practices and skills that will be of use to new teachers as they develop into their new role and grow as professionals. This is also true in terms of policy, as policy makers stipulate the regulations that govern the work of teachers and of individual teacher trainers as they design courses. Establishing what areas this content should cover is key to ensuring consistency of approach between different members of the course team and across different cohorts of trainee teachers. However, while engagement with issues of what teachers need to know is important, and research in this area is welcome and has contributed greatly to our understanding, it can be argued that what teachers need to know is actually a secondary issue. It may be that what is of more urgent concern for teacher educators and others concerned with professional development of new and experienced teachers is how such knowledge, however that knowledge is defined and categorised, is effectively acquired. In attempting to understand this particular model of teacher training, of central concern is what is known about the way in which teachers learn to teach. Thus, questions about how teachers process, assimilate and use new knowledge are of great importance to this study. In attempting to answer these questions I will first consider two ways of conceptualizing learning, and in this context, teacher learning: social and cognitive.

3.2 Social approaches to understanding teacher learning

3.2.1 Introduction

There is an assumption behind social approaches to learning that our understanding of the world is produced through engagement in social activities, that we all interact with others in a wide range of social situations and that this interaction contributes to our learning. The development of knowledge and understanding of teaching within the Teaching Practice Group model can be seen as highly social in nature, driven by engagement with others, trainers, peers and learners, in a social context.

In this section I will discuss the central ideas of social theories of learning and their application to the specific field of teacher learning.

3.2.2 Constructivism

Constructivism is an epistemological position that posits that it is not possible to separate the knower from what she knows. This belief in individual interpretations of reality has been influential in education and has been drawn on extensively in the development and design of teacher training courses.

Constructivism does not see knowledge as an external, independent entity with an absolute value, such as can be contained in a textbook. It rejects the idea that meaning can be passed on to learners either directly or via symbols or that learners can incorporate exact copies of their teacher's understanding for their own use. Constructivists argue that acquiring new knowledge and skills involves more than receiving and memorising new content. As Richardson notes,

Knowledge is not thought of as a received, static entity that is separate from the individual. Neither is it separable from the activities within which knowledge was constructed, nor from the community of people with whom one communicates about the ideas. (Richardson, 1997:8)

Instead, constructivism focuses on the social nature of cognition, arguing that learners require the opportunity for contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models.

Thus, learning requires engagement with others as well as with learning content. And it is through social interaction around the learning content that learning takes place.

Kroll and Black (1993), for example, describe learning as a process defined by the acquisition of knowledge through active engagement with content. Within this active engagement with content, the individual's own understanding is constantly challenged and adjusted in reaction to his or her social environment and the stimuli therein.

One of the key areas of focus for this study is the nature of trainees' engagement with the classroom in the Teaching Practice Group model. The shared group of learners is the social environment within the model. Trainees plan for and teach these learners, and discuss the outcomes of the classes. This active engagement with the content of learning to teach may provide the challenges to individual's own understanding which Kroll and Black deem necessary for learning to take place.

3.2.3 A constructivist model of learning to teach

The manner in which individuals organise their knowledge is of central concern for constructivists. Each person's individual knowledge structure is different (Winitzky & Kauchak 1997:59). Research has shown that the knowledge structures of experts are more organised than those of people with less experience (Bruning, Schraw and Ronning, 1995) with the result that they are able to "...perceive, organize, and remember more details of a situation than novices." (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:61). The knowledge structures of experts also exhibit greater depth than those of novices and are structured around principles rather than superficial features (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:61). Experts are thus able to draw more efficiently on this more abstract, principled knowledge to solve problems, seeing beyond the immediate situation in front of them.

Within a constructivist view of learning to teach, the interaction of new and existing knowledge changes the conceptual map held by the trainee teacher influencing how she will understand it (Strike and Posner 1992). Such conceptual change is seen as an interactive process in which prior concepts and beliefs, the trainee teacher's existing conceptual map, influences and is influenced by new experiences (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:72).

Toulmin (1972) uses the idea of a conceptual ecology to describe the interactions between different concepts in an individual's organisation of knowledge. He suggests that the less than fully developed knowledge structure held by novices can be best understood as 'knowledge-in-pieces' or p-prims, '...isolated, disconnected bits of information floating about in memory that may be invoked by learners to help them make sense out of a new problem or situation' (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:73).

He uses the analogy of house building to explain the significance of this for any learning journey, describing a conceptual ecology as a fully constructed house and p-prims as pieces of wood lying around the building site ready to be used in the construction of the house or any other object for which they are suitable or can be adapted (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:73). For Toulmin it is the job of the trainer to help the trainee consider the particular p-prims of the specific field and 'integrate them with concrete experiences and concepts in the development of principled, structured knowledge' (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997:74).

Sigel introduces a model of constructivism which he conceptualises as dialectical, with the individual interacting with reality as his or her constructs develop. For Sigel the individual is '...in a dynamic relationship in reality – immersed - not of it, but in it' (Sigel, 1978:336).

He envisages a continual dialectic between the trainee's existing constructs and those they are presented. This idea of interaction between existing and new knowledge lies at the heart of constructivist conceptions of learning. The aim of constructivist teaching is to encourage learners to recognise their existing understandings and confront these with new understandings and ways of conceptualising the world around them. For Sigel (1978:336) change '...does not come about just by our immersion in the world, but rather by the quality and the quantity of our engagement with the world.' This requires active engagement with the world, and it is the job of the teacher to create the conditions for this to happen.

In engaging with the world our existing understanding is either confirmed or disconfirmed through a process of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance refers to an individual's awareness of conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. The conflict produces a sense of discomfort leading to a change in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviours to reduce the discomfort and restore balance.

The teacher is required to introduce tasks that challenge existing concepts and ways of thinking and allow learners the space and support to examine their beliefs and adjust these in the light of new knowledge.

The teacher's role is to facilitate this cognitive alteration through designing tasks and questions that create dilemmas for students (Richardson, 1997:7).

This is necessarily a social and active process with cognitive dissonance occurring through a process of negotiation of shared meaning within social interaction. Sigel emphasizes the need for the teacher to engage the learner actively:

If the teaching strategies and the structure of experience would engage the student as an active learner, then the probability of altering the construct system would be increased. (Sigel, 1978:337)

Conceptual change, in this model, occurs as a result of congruence or discrepancy between existing and new understandings and it is the role of the teacher to create the conditions for that to take place.

It is important to distinguish *learning how to teach in a constructivist way* and *constructivist teacher education*. The former aims to produce teachers who are committed to and skilled in teaching in a constructivist manner, while the latter is an approach to teacher education that avoids passive reception and recall, and instead aims to support trainees in actively constructing their own individually understood meaning about learning to teach.

Applying the ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner to learning to teach is far from straightforward, principally because their work focuses on child cognitive development rather than on the learning of adults. It is also true that constructivism is a descriptive theory of learning not a prescriptive theory of learning (Richardson, 1997:3) and so lacks direct practical application. As with any descriptive theory it makes a series of assumptions about knowledge, learning, and students. Unlike, a prescriptive theory, it has only theoretical statements about knowledge and learning, not practical suggestions for teachers. (Gordon, 2009: 41). Indeed, constructivism has come in for much criticism on precisely the grounds that it is only able to tell educators what not to do, rather than what ought to be done. It has also been argued that it lacks a clear and coherent notion; one that is not merely a set of abstract ideas about knowledge and human existence, but is pragmatic and grounded in good teaching practices (Gordon, 2009:41).

In considering the possibility of constructivist teacher education, an important consideration is the bounded nature of the knowledge base. Where the subject matter is part of a relatively bounded, concise symbol system which is generally agreed upon within the particular community, it will enter the constructivist classroom in a different way than if it is seen as highly interpretivist and based on individual or cultural meanings of concepts and ideas.

The content of teacher education is teaching - a subject area which is less bounded, for example than mathematics or science. And there is also less agreement on an important aspect of the content of teaching as a subject – the nature of good teaching practice. While some interpretations may be more appropriate than others, there are probably none that are wrong. So, even though certain techniques (e.g. echoing students' answers or correcting during free practice) are generally deemed 'wrong' and trainees are encouraged not to use them, they will likely observe experienced teachers echoing students' answers and correcting them during free practice.

3.2.4 Prior knowledge

Constructivist learning begins from the individual's existing understanding, so it is important that teacher training programmes help trainee teachers to explicitly identify and acknowledge their own tacit understandings about teaching and learning. This is reflected by Borko and Putnam (1996) in their assertion that "understanding candidates' prior knowledge is key to improving teacher education". In discussions of teacher prior knowledge in the literature on learning to teach it is acknowledged that such knowledge may not change over time without external stimulus. Furthermore, it may prevent trainees from learning anything that is not congruent with this pre-existing knowledge. It is thus important to design training activities that help trainees understand their own tacit understandings, how these have developed, and the effects of these understandings on their actions (Richardson, 1997:10).

Sigel (1978) posits a three-tiered developmental model to describe constructs trainees hold about teaching. The first is constructs of self, of others, and of physical reality. As these have been developed prior to educational experience Sigel suggests

that these be taken for granted. The second tier involves constructs of self and of others in relation to educational training, formed prior to the trainee having any experience as a teacher. And thirdly, constructs relevant to being a teacher following practical experience in the classroom.

To effect change in tier two and three constructs Sigel suggests that the educational experience that the trainee gains from the course should challenge the existing constructs held by the trainee (Sigel, 1978:337). To achieve this, teacher educators need to make trainees aware of their pre-existing constructs and encourage them to actively engage with the learning experiences provided to enable development of their constructs. The design of the learning experience is key in achieving this.

Trainee teachers' prior understanding will most likely originate from their own experience of schooling, but will also be influenced by cultural representations of teaching and learning as well as any professional experience in teaching and learning that they have had prior to their beginning their teacher training course.

Accordingly, there may be a conflict between trainees' prior knowledge and that which they are introduced to on the course, as well as potential for them to observe other teachers acting in ways that they have been told are less than optimal for learning to take place as described above. This reinforces the fact that while each teacher training course proposes a particular model of teaching and learning, the objective of such courses should not be to produce teachers who are able to simply replicate the model that they are presented with in the contexts in which they find themselves teaching.

Here we can also draw on Engestrom's (2001) discussion of discord within learning to better understand how individual trainee teachers interact with social norms of teaching as presented on training courses, not reproducing them but instead adapting them to their own needs.

Engestrom (2001) proposed a model of learning which he termed 'expansive'. According to Engestrom participants in learning programmes are supported to recognize and learn the norms for the activity that is the focus of their course, in this case teaching. However, it is likely that, influenced by their own prior knowledge, some will begin to question these norms and, by adapting them, create new norms

that are better suited to their own personality, disposition, skills set and of course, current teaching context. Thus, Engestrom sees discord as a central element of the process of learning.

In the literature on learning to teach trainees' prior beliefs about teaching are often presented as a problem, something to be corrected. Peacock for example states that

It is important to investigate trainee teacher beliefs and then work on them if necessary, because detrimental beliefs may affect their teaching, and therefore, their students' language learning for decades. (Peacock, 2001:181

This view suggests that the beliefs that trainee teachers hold prior to their training course should be challenged and changed rather than drawn upon as an important part of the development of their identity as a teacher. However, it is also important to be aware that a focus on changing trainees' prior beliefs can lead to an overemphasis on seeing the course as a means of fixing what is wrong with trainees' beliefs about teaching. A more useful approach is to consider how prior knowledge interacts with new learning. Engestrom's (2001) expansive learning model of learning centres on the generation of discord between the learner and the object of their learning. According to Engestrom teacher trainers should work with prior beliefs, encouraging trainees to confront these with the new knowledge that they are presented with as part of their course in the hope that the two will interact and produce new and meaningful understandings of the teaching and learning process. This interaction between old and new knowledge can of course leads to rejection and disharmony, as the proposed norms are rejected or modified in relation to prior understandings. However, while discord may result from this process, it is argued that it is more likely that engagement with the content of teaching and reflection on our own prior knowledge in relation to that content will lead to more positive outcomes.

3.2.5 Situated learning theory

Situated learning theory, which draws on the theoretical work of Lave and Wenger (1988, 1991) on learning as social and cultural participation in the workplace, is an important and useful conceptualization of professional learning that has been much

drawn upon in teacher education. Situated learning theory is concerned with how learning occurs every day. It claims that human knowledge is dynamically constructed in social interaction and suggests that for meaningful learning to take place it should be embedded in the social and physical context within which it will be used.

In developing their theory, Lave and Wenger start from a conceptualisation of learning as integral to practice not just situated in practice:

...as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be situated somewhere – learning is an integral part of generative practice in the lived-in world (1991: 35).

Situated learning considers how knowledge is acquired through engagement in activity. It is argued that learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it occurs, in this sense it is situated. Situated learning rejects the notion of transmission of abstract and decontextualised knowledge from one individual to another. It is argued instead that learning is a social process whereby knowledge is co-constructed, and that such learning is situated in a specific context and embedded within a particular social and physical environment.

Accordingly, knowledge is not seen as the sum of what is currently held inside a person's head, but the real-time formulation of understanding, combining what was previously known with new experiences.

Lave and Wenger see the knowledge and skills required to carry out a particular function as being necessarily learned in the contexts that reflect how knowledge is obtained and applied in everyday situations. Such learning is situated in the lived-in world of engagement of everyday activity." (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 47). As teaching happens with learners in a learning environment in which the teacher manages, to various degrees, the learning of the learners, learning to teach should be situated in the everyday activity of the classroom.

This view of learning as taking place in the world as it is directly experienced in engagement in social practices is the major feature of situated learning and distinguishes it from cognitive views of learning. Situated learning theory sees

learning as sociocultural rather than individual and rejects the idea of acquiring general information from a decontextualized body of knowledge (Kirshner and Whitson, 1997). It rejects the notion of a static objectively definable body of knowledge about teaching and learning, instead proposing a constantly evolving understanding of teaching and learning, shaped through the engagement of individuals in social practice. In situated learning theory individual activity is seen as ‘...an act of participation in a system of practices that are themselves evolving’ (Cobb and Bowers, 1999).

Teaching in this view is not made up of an agreed set of rules that can be learnt and applied in any given context. Instead, the trainee brings her own particular individual experience and understanding to the process of learning to teach and in turn contributes to the evolution of the social practice of teaching. This reflects the distinction made in Chapter 2 between objective and subjective knowledge, between understandings that are external to the trainee and those that they develop through the intersection of their existing knowledge and that they encounter on the course. The former is often presented by the trainers on a course, implicitly in their actions and guidance, or explicitly through course materials and teaching practice feedback, while the latter are individual and represent the trainee’s developing personal theory of learning.

Within the Teaching Practice Group model, this personal theory is developed in engagement with the social practice of teaching. For Lave and Wenger ‘...learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world’ (1991: 35). It is through engagement in social practice in the ‘lived-in world’, for teachers the classroom, that trainees develop their understanding of teaching. In so doing they contribute to the regeneration of the social practice of teaching.

3.2.6 Participation

One implication of the social theories of learning discussed here is that learning is an active process achieved through participation in the context of practice. Some limitations of this model of learning through participation have been noted. Chief among these is the assumption that simply participating, just being there, learning will occur. Fuller (2007:22) has termed this ‘the adequacy of participation’ and warns

that such participation may lead to imitation, not learning. This concern echoes Bourdieu's concept of learned ignorance³, the imitation of a practical activity without knowledge of underpinning theory. Here Fuller recognizes that participation in learning activities can lead to the learner imitating what they have seen rather than understanding how and why it should be done.

For both Greeno (1997) and Edwards (2005) a key weakness of the model of learning through participation is "how patterns of knowledgeable behaviour are built up in one setting and applied to a new setting" (Edwards, 2005:56). This is usually referred to as transfer. They argue that learning is more than just repeating what has been observed. Instead, the individual participates and observes, but then has to engage cognitively to make decisions about what to apply in a new situation and how to apply it. The problem of transfer, the need to apply learning gained in one context in another, the need for the individual to understand the practice that she observes and to interpret it for new contexts, implies that the trainee teacher cannot simply copy the practice that she observes, without modification or development.

To situate means to involve other learners, the environment, and the activities to create meaning. It requires that the cognitive processes used by experts to accomplish tasks are located in a particular setting (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In the adult classroom, to situate learning means to create the conditions in which participants can experience the complexity and ambiguity of learning in the real world. Participants create their own knowledge out of the learning experience drawing on, for example, relationships formed with other learners, the classroom activities, and the general social organization that develops as part of the learning process.

Central to situated learning is the idea that adult learners have rich and diverse sources of knowledge that can transform the classroom from a place for the transfer of knowledge from instructor to learners to a forum for interpreting, challenging, and creating new knowledge. Interactions among the learners and the environment encourage learners to directly intervene in and change the processes that surround

³ Learned ignorance is discussed in section 3.3.6

their lives at home, in the community, and at the workplace. By embedding subject matter in the ongoing experiences of the learners and by creating opportunities for learners to live the subject matter in the context of real-world challenges, knowledge is acquired and learning transfers from the classroom to the realm of practice.

In situated learning, students learn content through activities rather than acquiring information in discrete packages organized by instructors. Content is inherent in the doing of the task and is not separated from the activity prevalent in real work environments. Learning is dilemma driven rather than content driven. Situations are presented that challenge the intellectual and psychomotor skills learners will apply at home, in the community, or the workplace (Lankard, 1995). The structure of the learning is implicit in the experience rather than in the subject matter structured by the instructor.

Lave and Wenger argue that participation in social practices does not just lead to changes in otherwise autonomous psychological processes. Instead, they see learning as being made apparent through observation of changes in the ways that an individual participates in social practices. With the Teaching Practice Group model, the social practice is teaching and so changes in the way that the individual participates in that practice, the way that they teach, can be noted and built upon, principally through feedback, but also in the joint planning sessions. Within this study, it will be important to understand how trainers and trainees feel that such cumulative changes in understanding of, and ability to manage, the classroom is acknowledged within their experience of Teaching Practice Groups.

3.2.7 Situated learning and teacher training

Lave describes the processes through which knowledge is obtained as '*way in*' and '*practice*'. *Way in* is a period of observation in which a learner watches a master and makes a first attempt at solving a problem. *Practice* is refining and perfecting the use of acquired knowledge. As such, situated learning implies reflection upon previous experiences but also involves immersion in relevant experience.

Stein (1998) puts forward four premises for situated learning that should inform the design of educational initiatives:

- learning is grounded in the actions of everyday situations;
- knowledge is acquired situationally and transfers only to similar situations;
- learning is the result of a social process encompassing ways of thinking, perceiving, problem solving, and interacting in addition to declarative and procedural knowledge;
- learning is not separated from the world of action but exists in robust, complex, social environments made up of actors, actions, and situations.

We can imagine the social environment in the context of teaching. There are two actors – teachers and learners, who interact through a series of actions, mediated by language and written symbols. This interaction takes place in specific situations, some structured, such as the completion of language learning exercises in a course book, or the correction of learner language by the teacher and others less structured, such as the ongoing social interaction between the actors.

Stein goes on to outline what the implications for the design of educational interventions might be. He argues that situated learning implies an instructional process that encompasses content, context, community and participation. Content covers both the facts and the processes of the task to be achieved. The context is the situation itself, including the available environmental cues. We use environmental cues to associate concepts or ideas non-verbally. Many of these cues to learning are triggered by teacher behaviour, for example the teacher can signal the end of a particular learning activity by moving to the front of the class. Other cues lie in the layout or organization of the classroom. The community is the group with which the learner will create and negotiate meaning and participation is the process by which learners working together and with experts in a social setting resolve problems related to everyday life circumstances. As Stein argues:

Knowledge is created or negotiated through the interactions of the learner with others and the environment. Subject matter emerges from the cues provided by the environment and from the dialogue among the learning community (Stein, 1998: 21).

Situated learning does not allow for decontextualized learning. The learning content should be inherent in carrying out the task, it should include "...the noise, confusion, and group interactions prevalent in real work environments" (Lankard, 1995).

Social interaction is a critical component of situated learning -- learners become involved in a "community of practice" which embodies certain beliefs and behaviours to be acquired. As the beginner or newcomer moves from the periphery of this community to its center, they become more active and engaged within the culture and hence assume the role of expert in what Lave and Wenger (1991) call the process of "legitimate peripheral participation."

3.2.8 Communities of practice

Participation is central to another concept that is relevant to learning to teach, that of learning through participation in communities of practice. Communities of practice are constituted by practitioners who are equipped with shared procedures for talking and acting in a particular social context. Learning to teach can be conceptualized as learning to participate in the discourse and practices of the teaching community. Such a conceptualization of learning suggests that learning can be equated with gradually becoming able to master these procedures, as well as the semiotic and technological tools of the community, through participation in that particular community (Arnseth, 2008: 295).

In terms of teaching, the semiotic tools include staging and planning of lessons and analysis of the target language, as well as understanding of group dynamics and classroom management techniques. Technological tools include the board, teaching materials and resources, and classroom layout.

Fosnot (2005: 282) suggested that for trainees to construct their own ideas of teaching and learning, they must be immersed in a community of discourse that encourages them to be learners themselves, so that '...experience (can) be dissected, evaluated and reflected upon in order for principles of pedagogy and action to be constructed'. This suggests that teacher educators should carefully consider the ways in which, through their courses, trainee teachers are made aware of and encouraged to use teaching discourse.

The process of enculturation into a community of practice involves understanding and assimilating the thinking and the language used by a particular community to describe the acts that make up its practices. In learning how to talk about teaching, and learning how to talk like a teacher, trainees attain membership of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In such a community, social facts and common ways of perceiving are shared. Barduhn (1998) gives a useful example:

...trainees learn that they can use a term like 'L1' with each other and with other ELT professionals, whereas outside this new community it has no meaning (1998:14).

As noted above, Freeman and Cazden (1991: 244) note the dual purposes of such professional discourse: a social/referential function which allows the teacher to make themselves part of the discourse community, and a cognitive function, through which they are able to identify aspects of their experience and thus to organize and to develop their conceptions of teaching.

In their study of an early version of the CELTA course using Teaching Practice Groups, Richards et al. note that through the course trainees came to internalize the discourse and metalanguage used by the trainers and became able to use it to discuss their own and others' lessons in feedback sessions using the appropriate technical terminology. (Richards et al., 1996: 247)

This learning to think, talk, and act in ways that characterize being a member of the language teaching community, is an important aspect of initial teacher training and I will present data in Chapter 7 to show how the Teaching Practice Groups model supports trainees in becoming members of the community of practice of teaching.

Within the Teaching Practice Group model trainees are encouraged, and expected, to use professional language of teaching, teaching jargon, in discussions during planning and feedback sessions, and also in their self-evaluation forms. As we will see in Chapter 7, participants in Teaching Practice Groups are very aware of their growing enculturation into the community of practice of teaching through their increasing comfort in using the metalanguage of teaching.

3.2.9 Mediation

Constructivism does not have a single intellectual source. Instead, it has developed through work in the field of cognitive science principally by Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner, as well as from the work of the socio-historical psychologist, Vygotsky.

Piaget suggests that the individual's understanding of the world is wholly individual, in that it is constructed through the interaction of that individual's understanding with existing understanding and external sources which occur as she interacts with the world. For Piaget '...knowledge proceeds neither solely from the experience of objects nor from an innate programming performed in the subject but from successive constructions' (Piaget, 1985: v).

Central to Piaget's theory of learning is the concept of schema, categories of knowledge that help us to interpret and understand the world. He proposed that our existing understanding of the world – as described in our schemas - goes through a process of equilibration, as new information is encountered. He breaks down this equilibration into two types: *assimilation* and *accommodation*. *Assimilation* occurs when we take new information into our previously existing schemas. Such information is modified to fit in with our pre-existing beliefs and is thus subjective. Another part of equilibration involves changing or altering our existing schemas in light of new information. This is known as *accommodation* and involves altering existing schemas, or ideas, as a result of new information or new experiences. *Accommodation* can also result in the development of new schemas.

Vygotsky differed from Piaget in his emphasis on the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. He rejected the idea that learning could be understood through a single concept such as equilibration. For Vygotsky individual development cannot be understood without reference to the social and cultural context within which it is embedded, and the social interactions that individuals engage in within that context. It is here that Vygotsky suggests that '...cultural meanings are shared within the group, and then internalised by the individual' (Richardson, 1997:8).

Vygotsky argued that an individual's higher mental processes have their origin in social processes. He believed that human development and learning occur through

their interactions with the environment and the other people in it. Indeed, he suggests that the two cannot be separated:

... mental functioning in the individual can be understood only by examining the social and cultural processes from which it derives. (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992: 548)

He identified two basic processes operating continuously at every level of human activity: externalization, a social process between people, and internalization, a psychological process within the individual (Vygotsky, 1978).

He proposed that complex mental functions are first an interaction between people and then subsequently become a process within individuals. He saw this transition from external operation to internal development as central to changes in the understanding of individuals.

Vygotsky saw mediation as a process through which the mediator, often a parent, peer or teacher, organises and interprets the world for the benefit of the learning of the child. For Seng (1997: 1) the mediator:

...helps children select relevant from irrelevant variables, assists in abstracting rules for regularly occurring phenomena, and generally attempts to develop children's abilities to think, that individual is engaged in mediated learning. (Seng, 1997:1)

To introduce the concept of mediated learning Seng (1997) first presents an example of direct learning. She describes a child walking through a garden smelling flowers and watching the insects land on the plants. Through this interaction with the garden the child is able to learn directly from her experience. Vygotsky saw this direct learning as fundamental and necessary, but insufficient for effective learning. Instead he suggests that mediation is necessary. Seng again turns to the example of the child in the garden to distinguish between direct and mediated learning. This time the child is accompanied by her mother who focuses the child's attention on specific stimuli and in so doing interprets and gives meaning to the child's experiences in the garden.

She could focus the child's attention on similar and different colours and textures- thereby teaching the child the important thinking skill of comparison. Or she could interpret the bee's dance of pollination thereby giving meaning to the bee's actions and showing the interconnections or relationships among stimuli. (Seng, 1997:6)

In another commonly used example of mediated learning a young child is completing a jigsaw puzzle with its mother. The child asks the mother for help in doing this, but instead of giving direct advice the mother refers to the jigsaw puzzle, rather than giving the advice directly. In time the child learns to refer to the model puzzle herself.

We can see that the mediated learning paradigm explicitly rejects the notion of learning as being about the transfer of knowledge from one individual to another. The mother does not tell the child how to do the puzzle in the same way that the mother in the garden does not directly interpret what the child sees in the garden preferring instead to focus the attention of the child on particular aspects of what the child may see, thus guiding, or mediating, her learning. In both examples we see two important elements of mediated learning: observation and noticing by the child and repetition or explicit action to focus attention by the mother. The child cannot learn how to complete the puzzle or come to understand what is happening around her in the garden by simply copying the actions of the mother or appropriating her knowledge.

Alongside social mediation of collaborative activity in the negotiation of meaning Vygotsky also considered the symbolic mediation of learning through various psychological tools. The concept of psychological tools is central to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development. He claimed that, just as we use physical tools to enhance our physical capabilities, we also use psychological tools to similarly enhance our cognitive abilities. These tools, symbolic systems of communication, include signs, symbols, maps, plans, numbers, musical notation, charts, models, pictures and, most importantly, language. He suggested that we use such tools to help us to fix learning in our minds. For Vygotsky, we learn how to do something, a method or routine, and we store it in our memory associated with a

particular sign. The most famous example of this provided by Vygotsky is that of tying a knot in a handkerchief as a reminder of an important task or date. Vygotsky argues that by tying the knot and saying the task or date the two become linked in the mind and we are likely to remember the task or date as soon as we see the knot. In effect the knot in the handkerchief, both the knot itself and the action of having tied that knot, act as prompts to a fixed memory.

3.2.11 The zone of proximal development

For Vygotsky it was important to measure in learning not just what a child could do in a test working alone, but also what the child could do with the support of another person, usually an adult, but also possibly a more knowledgeable peer.

The most effective learning, Vygotsky argued, is that which occurs ...when the challenge presented by a task is ahead of learners' actual or current development. It is only when support is required that new learning will take place.... (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005: 8)

He called the difference between what a child could do alone and with support, the zone of proximal development. He saw learning as a continual movement, from the current intellectual level to a higher level, which more closely approximated that individual's potential. He saw this movement as occurring as a result of social interaction in this "zone of proximal development", the distance between the actual independent development level and the potential development level under the guidance of or in collaboration with peers.

What the child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow. (Vygotsky cited in Chaiklin, 2003:40)

For Vygotsky, the purpose of teaching was thus to create situations and processes that support the child in moving across this gap so that they are able to carry out the task without the support of the 'other'.

Acceptance of the concept of the zone of proximal development implies that without the assistance of the more knowledgeable other the learner will not be able to bridge the gap between their actual and potential levels of understanding. However, it is important to note that it is not the knowledge of the more

knowledgeable other that is of significance in supporting the learner in moving through their zone of proximal development. For Vygotsky, it is their support within the mediation process that has the impact.

There are a number of ways in which the zone of proximal development can serve as a useful concept through which the interactions between the participants on a teacher training course can be understood. In this study I will focus particularly on the mechanisms available within the teaching practice group model that create the conditions for movement of trainees through their zones of proximal development. I will study the situations and processes within the teaching practice group model that support trainee teachers in moving across the gap so that they are increasingly able to carry out the task of teaching without the mediators of the course around them.

3.2.12 Scaffolding

In this thesis I will argue that the mediators in the teaching practice group model are both the people, trainers principally, but also fellow trainees, as well as the structures of the course which guide and stretch trainees to notice elements of the teaching and learning process which will help them to realise their full potential.

These mediators guide trainees to notice and consider particular elements of the teaching and learning process. In this sense we can say that they scaffold the learning of the trainee teachers. The concept of 'scaffolding', while closely related to Vygotsky's concept of mediated learning, and the zone of proximal development, was not a term that he actually used. However, it can be seen as '*an inherent part of his theory of learning as collaborative and interactionally-driven*' (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005: 7). The term scaffolding emerged from the work of the educational psychologist Bruner's work. A major theme of Bruner's work is that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge. According to Bruner the learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, relying on schema and mental models, to do so. The interconnection of the new experience with the prior knowledge results in the reorganization of the cognitive structure, which creates new meaning allowing the individual to 'go beyond the information given'.

Hammond and Gibbons describe scaffolding as ‘task-specific support, designed to help the learner independently to complete the same or similar tasks later in new contexts. (2005: 8). It can be provided by any external source that supports the learner in working beyond their current independent development level. While the most important source of support for both Bruner and Vygotsky was found in collaboration with others, structured activities, worksheets and writing frames can all act as scaffolds. As noted above, in teacher education the scaffolds are provided by the trainers and also fellow trainees as well as the course structure with its documentation and assessment directing trainees’ attention and supporting them in increasing their understanding.

Hammond and Gibbons suggest that it is useful to distinguish between two distinct forms of scaffolding – ‘designed-in’ and ‘contingent’. They argue that both have the same purpose of supporting the learners through their zone of proximal development, but that while the former is pre-planned, the latter is not.

Designed-in scaffolding

Designed-in scaffolding can be seen in the way the course is structured, in the activities that learners are expected to engage with and the documents and processes through which these processes are managed (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005: 12). In a teacher training course, the pro-formas that trainees are asked to complete to plan for and record their work on the course, such as lesson plans, provide designed-in scaffolding. Such pro-forma supports the trainee teacher in developing their understanding of the teaching and learning process by focusing their attention on certain aspects of the teaching and learning process. In the case of the lesson plan, this scaffolds trainees’ understanding of planning, ensuring that they consider elements that the course team thinks are of relevance when planning a lesson.

For example, using a lesson plan which requires trainees to specify the interaction patterns in the planned class will ensure that the trainee considers the importance of this in planning their lesson. Without the designed-in scaffold of the lesson plan they would also be less likely to notice if the interaction patterns within their planned activities were, for example, repetitive.

Written assessments within teacher training courses can also be understood as designed-in scaffolding, directing trainees to reflect upon specific elements of the teaching and learning process identified as significant by the course team.

In this study, in which a particular form of teacher training, teaching practice groups, is the focus, the concept of designed-in scaffolding is of great relevance. I will explore the ways in which interaction with these designed-in elements of the course focuses trainees' attention in a way that is beneficial to their learning to teach.

Contingent scaffolding

Contingent scaffolding on the other hand is unplanned and usually provided by the trainer. It is the spontaneous actions and guidance of the trainer in response to the immediate learning needs of the trainee teacher. Much contingent scaffolding in teacher training courses comes in either the input sessions or in feedback. In the input sessions the trainer and the trainees discuss concepts and processes relevant to teaching and learning and the trainer responds to and guides the growing understanding of the trainees in a contingent manner. Much of this responsive work is not pre-planned, even though the activities and materials used are likely to be.

Hammond & Gibbons consider both contingent and designed-in scaffolding as essential elements of any structured learning process. However, they suggest that it is in combination that they are most effective with the designed-in features contextualizing the contingent scaffolding, which may otherwise '...become simply a hit and miss affair that may contribute little to the learning goals of specific lessons or units of work' (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005: 20). They argue that the designed-in level enables the use of contingent scaffolding and that both support students to work within their zone of proximal development.

3.2.12 Conclusion

In analysing the data collected as part of this study, concepts from constructivist descriptions of teacher learning will be of central concern. Constructivism suggests that our understanding of the world is produced through engagement with others in social activities, and that this interaction contributes to our learning. For Richardson this means that social constructivists should not focus on the individual, but on the

social, seeing that as ‘instrumental, if not essential, in both the construction and appropriation of knowledge’ (Richardson, 1997:7).

One implication of the social theories of learning discussed here is that learning is an active process achieved through participation in the context of practice. I will examine the extent to which the Teaching Practice Group model works to actively engage trainees with the content of learning to teach, exploring both the mechanisms for such guidance – the mediators of the trainees’ learning – and the agency of the trainee in the process. I will suggest that the active engagement of trainees with content, the world of teaching and learning, is mediated by the collaborative activities of the Teaching Practice Group model; the documentation that orders trainee participation in the model; and the contingent scaffolding of the trainers.

3.3 Cognitive approaches to understanding teacher learning

3.3.1 Introduction

In this study I draw on social constructivism to frame the analysis of the data collected. However, there are other concepts that I have found useful in understanding the Teaching Practice Group model. An alternative to social descriptions of learning to teach are theories of learning that take an individual, cognitive approach to the description of learning. Cognitive approaches to learning view learning as an internal psychological process, focusing on the individual. Within cognitive psychology there is an assumption that behaviour occurs as a result of information processing within the mind. Implicit within this view is a comparison between the human mind, as it processes information, and computers. Accordingly, cognitive psychologists, like computer scientists, talk about such things as inputs, outputs, and capacity. They also share with computer scientists an understanding that there are structural limits to how much the computer/mind can process at any one time. In terms of teacher learning, cognitive theorists propose a model of teacher learning in which knowledge is acquired and activated in stages.

Socio-cultural understandings of learning are often used in opposition to cognitive theories, rejecting what are seen as positivistic theories which view learning as ‘...an

internal psychological process isolated in the mind of the learner and largely free from the social and physical contexts within which it occurs' (Johnson, 2006, p. 238).

However, while the social and cognitive perspectives are often set in opposition, it is hard to see how we can come to an understanding of teacher learning without considering them both and, indeed, exploring their interaction.

Within cognitive psychology there is an assumption that the human mind processes information in a similar way to computers and that there are structural limits to how much the mind can process at any one time. In terms of teacher learning, cognitive theorists have proposed a model of teacher learning in which knowledge is acquired and activated in stages.

An overriding concern of such work is to formulate internal information processing mechanisms that account for observed relations between the external stimulus environment and response behaviours (Cobb and Bowers, 1999: 5).

That is, in trying to understand the internal processes that take place in the brain in processing information, we should look for evidence of teachers' cognition in their response to classroom situations.

In this review I will focus on Kagan's stages of learning. Kagan describes teacher learning as happening in three linear stages which he describes as cognitive, associative and autonomous. He shares with other cognitive theorists a conceptualization of learning as a progression in understanding, with the understanding that courses of initial teacher training should explicitly address the need to progress trainees' understanding by focusing their attention on specific aspects of the teaching and learning process at specific points in the course. In this study I will explore with trainers and trainees whether they feel that teacher learning is a staged process and if so, how this impacts on the design and implementation of their use of Teaching Practice Groups.

3.3.3 Kagan's stages of learning to teach

Kagan (1992) saw learning as a staged process, involving increasing automation of thought processes and decision-making, '... from an initial stage where performance

is laboriously self-conscious to more automated, unconscious performance'(Kagan, 1992: 155) referred to three stages of teacher learning as dealing with rote knowledge, routine knowledge and comprehensive knowledge of classroom strategy.

The cognitive stage

Kagan suggests that in the initial stage of learning to teach, a trainee teacher may be able to describe the rules for a particular strategy, such as giving effective instructions, but be unable to carry them out in the classroom situation or do so poorly or with superficial understanding. The staged approach to teacher learning would suggest that this is because, as the trainee teacher has only rote knowledge of classroom strategy, she needs to think about most of the actions which have to be taken in the lesson. Her working memory is used to monitor her own actions as she attempts to recall or create workable procedures (Kagan, 1992:145). Accordingly, she needs to concentrate on the short term, step by step progress of the lesson and is less able to stand back and consider the lesson as a whole. At this early stage of learning to teach she is less likely to focus on what her learners are gaining from the classroom activities she is attempting to orchestrate.

New trainees often report that the classroom feels a chaotic place as they consciously frame responses to the situations they meet. In this environment it is natural for them to feel the need to consciously apply any rules that they are told or perceive from their learning in the course. This is compounded as a consequence of their often not knowing how to react to situations or being so intent on seeing through their lesson plan that they do not have time to consider the wider issues involved or focus on anything other than their own actions: 'In planning as well as in practice, novices are more constrained by the need to follow rules that are devoid of context' (Tsui, 2003: 29).

Where a trainee is confronted with an unfamiliar situation in the classroom, one for which she does not have a set routine or automated response, or for which the routine is still under conscious control, framing a response to the situation will occupy all of her spare processing capacity. Where trainee teachers are able to explicitly plan even simple routines for the class, such as scripting their introduction

or following a set order for giving instructions their ability to manage a whole lesson is greatly enhanced. This suggests that part of the process of learning to teach may include the internalisation of routines for common classroom actions. Tsui (2003: 19) refers to Bereiter and Sardamalia's (1987) theory of expertise to describe how, as teachers learn to teach and gain more classroom experience, 'conscious efforts to solve problems are replaced by well-developed routines'. Once such routines, or scripts, are mastered they can be deployed without acting as a drain on resources, allowing the trainee to pay attention to others in the class.

The associative stage

In the second stage of skill acquisition the trainee is more likely to have routines and set procedures in his or her repertoire and to be better able to see ways in which the different things that she has learnt to carry out impact on and interact with each other. Through this understanding she is able to begin to organize the different individual procedures into larger units and use these more widely. He or she is also able to automate certain procedures allowing her to make generalizations rather than beginning anew each time a situation arises. Where previously it would have been necessary to verbalise the problem in order to solve it, now she has a number of automated procedures to draw on. This means that she is more able to focus on strategic aspects of classroom activity by looking beyond the immediate situation. The trainee teacher's knowledge at this stage can be described as routine; she can describe why she has chosen a specific strategy and can apply it in certain specific contexts. However, it still takes a lot of effort and is far from automatic.

The autonomous phase

Finally, the progression in understanding is complete and the teacher has comprehensive knowledge of classroom strategy. She can carry out procedures and follow strategies in the classroom without conscious control. She is able to talk about classroom strategies and apply them across contexts automatically, without the need to consciously control the required sub-skills. This frees up processing capacity for the teacher to focus on wider strategic issues to do with the learners and their needs; the type of behaviour which is associated with expert teachers.

This description of a progression in learning is recognisable in many examples of skill-learning, such as tying shoe laces, learning to ride a bike or language learning in which at the beginning each element of the necessary process (left hand under the right hand holding the laces, forming two loops etc.) has to be consciously learnt before the whole action can be carried out without thought.

3.3.4 Progression in attention

Kagan (1992:144) refers to the expansion, or broadening, of what trainees are able to focus on in the classroom – from their own actions to the learning of their students, as a progression in understanding. Here I will use the term progression in attention to more explicitly link the concept to the ways in which forms of teacher training, in this case the Teaching Practice Group model, are able to guide trainees to shift their attention from themselves, to the learners, and eventually to their learning.

In a study of trainees on a course using the Teaching Practice Group model in Hong Kong, Richards, Ho and Giblin (1996) found evidence of such a progression in attention. They observed that the focus of trainees' during the Teaching Practice Group moved from a concern early in the course with looking like a teacher, with comments relating to their voice and confidence, to a later concern with the teaching itself, with comments relating to elements such as the role of the teacher. This shift in their perspective on what was important in teaching followed a progression from a 'teacher-centred focus', to a 'curriculum-centred' focus and to a 'learner-centred focus' (Richards et al., 1996, p. 253).

In their early Teaching Practice Group sessions comments from the trainees and trainers were predominantly concerned with the image of a teacher that they and their colleagues were presenting to the students.

In early sessions... observers commented on whether the trainee looked like a teacher, looked in control, communicated effectively, had good voice projection, could get students' attention, and looked confident and relaxed.'
(Richards et al., 1996, p. 245)

As the course progressed and they gained more experience in teaching they were able to take what Richards et al (1996) term a more holistic view of teaching:

...one in which the trainees were focusing less on the 'mechanics' of the lesson, and more on such dimensions as structuring and cohesion and student participation in lessons (1996: 250)

We can see here that as they gained experience in the classroom, trainees appeared to focus less on themselves and their success or otherwise in acting like a teacher and more on teaching itself and subsequently on the learners and their learning.

Cognitive theories of learning to teach provide an explanation of some of the difficulties displayed by trainees in their first experiences in the classroom. For trainees to move beyond a focus on their performance it may be that they first need confidence in their ability to manage the logistics of the classroom and this requires the acquisition of certain basic teaching skills in areas such as classroom management and error correction among many others. By skill here I mean the ability to do something repeatedly with the same precision and without applying conscious thought to the process: 'skill is a way of acting and seeing which has settled in our own lived body as knowledge' (Bengtsson, 1993: 207).

Bengtsson's use of the verb 'settle' is suggestive of Kagan's associative stage of teacher learning. For Bengtsson such knowledge has been stored and is accessible with little effort. Once such basic teaching skills have been mastered, they can be utilized with minimal cognitive effort, freeing capacity to, for example, notice and process the reactions of students to the learning activities.

3.3.5 Routines

As noted above, the literature on teacher learning suggests that trainees' progression in attention may be supported through the use of teaching scripts or routines, set procedures for certain classroom activities, enabling the teacher to manage the learning process with confidence and minimal cognitive load. From the data collected as part of this study it is clear that trainers encourage the use of routines by trainees. There were frequent comments in feedback on trainees' successful (or otherwise) use of these. Trainees also appeared to be aware of their use and keen to incorporate them into their practice. In this section I will look in detail at the use of routines in learning to teach.

Yinger (1979) describes a routine as an ‘... established procedure whose main function is to control and coordinate specific sequences of behaviour’ (Yinger, 1979: 165).

In learning to teach there are a great number of routine procedures that can be deployed to deal with given situations. Such instructional routines are strategies that teachers have developed over time and use at regular points in the course of a lesson in certain configurations and sequences. They are usually employed by teachers together with specific activities.

Routines are not concerned with teaching content, instead they deal with logistics. A simple example is the use of pair checking followed by whole class feedback on completion of individual exercises. An experienced teacher doesn’t have to plan what will happen when students have completed an exercise, thinking through the desired interactions or how to word instructions; instead a routine is deployed.

One difficulty for student teachers in learning from more experienced practitioners, and for teacher education researchers in describing what experienced teachers know, is that experienced practitioners often find it hard to describe why they do what they do. Such knowledge, often referred to as tacit, is part of the mystery of the expertise of the experienced practitioner. In their description of Anderson’s ACT model of learning, Winitzky and Kauhak (1997:71) suggest a possible reason why the knowledge of experienced professionals often appears to be inaccessible:

...the ability to verbalise procedural knowledge decreases with increasing skill...as knowledge becomes proceduralised it becomes less accessible to conscious awareness. (Winitzky & Kauhak, 1997:71)

Thus, the more experience a teacher gains, the more unconscious his or her actions and decisions become as the processing of these moves from short term to procedural memory, the less able she is to describe them to others. However, observation can reveal patterns of activity in experienced teachers’ practice in the form of routines that can be usefully adopted and adapted by trainee teachers.

Yinger, in his observations of the planning of an inexperienced teacher, notes that most of her attention was given to the task rather than how it was to be taught. This

drain on her available attention limited how many decisions she could make without reference to the lesson plan. Without access to a store of routines, teaching was a more laborious process and impromptu or reactive teaching is less likely to occur. The use of routines increases teacher flexibility as well as freeing up planning time and cognitive resources to better enable the teacher to manage the complex and unpredictable environment of the classroom (Yinger, 1979: 167).

In discussing routines and their use with trainee teachers, it should be stressed that providing trainees with such routines will be of limited value if they are not also helped to understand the principles which underpin them and have led to their development and use by more experienced teachers. Such an approach to the training of teachers, limiting itself to the provision of a set of routines to be replicated by the trainee in set classroom situations, has been described by Widdowson (1997) as solution-oriented, with the ‘...implication that teachers are to be given specific instruction in practical techniques to cope with predictable events’. He contrasts this with a problem-oriented approach with the implication of ‘...a broader intellectual awareness of theoretical principles underlying particular practices’ (1997: 121).

This is not to suggest that the introduction of routines need be detrimental to the development of trainee teachers, just that trainees should be made aware of the why of such routines as well as the how.

Routines can certainly be helpful to trainees as they learn about teaching; by freeing cognitive capacity, trainees are better able to focus on learners and their learning. However, just offering trainees routines without underpinning theoretical knowledge is not enough. Trainees also need to develop the diagnostic skills to analyse situations and decide upon strategies that are appropriate to the particular context (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005:360). If trainees are simply equipped with routines without the requisite understanding of the principles that underpin them, these learned behaviours, while of immediate use, may act as an impediment to deeper understanding.

3.3.6 Learned ignorance and reification

Bourdieu's (1977) notion of learned ignorance provides a useful concept to help us to understand the distinction between solution and problem-oriented approaches to learning to teach. Bourdieu coined the term learned ignorance to refer to the imitation of a practical activity without knowledge of underpinning theory. He suggested that where the acquisition of knowledge takes place through practice it may become a 'native theory' "a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles" (Bourdieu, 1977:19). The native theories that are developed can also lead to the establishment of 'social practices or norms' (Bourdieu 1997:19), which are detrimental to understanding, encouraging the following of certain forms of practice without understanding of the theory behind it.

Bourdieu saw such learning as taking place particularly within a master / apprentice relationship in which the master, in trying to transmit knowledge, which is in fact tacit or unconscious, resorts to the description of 'artificially isolated elements of behaviour' (Bourdieu, 1977:19). In teaching terms, we could describe these 'artificially isolated elements of behaviour' as routines or 'moves'.

For the apprentice, these moves, the actions of the master, represent his or her expertise and so the apprentice will attempt to replicate them. However, this means that the focus of the apprentice is on replication, not understanding of the principles that are used to generate the moves and of course, other similar moves. The generative nature of theory, its applicability across contexts, and its use in generating new moves, is what makes it so relevant for teaching. In this study of teacher learning, the notion of learned ignorance will be helpful in emphasising the importance of teachers' understanding of the principles behind the routines and moves of teaching.

Wenger (1999) provides another useful concept to help understand the process of learning to teach. Reification involves taking something which is abstract and turning it into a "congealed" or concrete form, which may be represented in documents and symbols, or described in fixed language. For Wenger reification is '...the process of giving form to our experiences by producing objects that congeal this experience into thingness' (Wenger, 1998: 58).

This congealing of experience can be understood as the movement from tacit knowledge to conscious knowledge as abstract ideas are transformed into tangible strategies that can be shared. Reification makes concrete knowledge or practices that often remain tacit and / or are not acknowledged as shared. Once such knowledge is made concrete and formal, through a process of reification, it can be considered by the group, facilitating negotiation of meaning of their shared professional practice. By giving an observed practice an objective label, we make it our identified reality, thus reifying a practice.

In terms of learning to teach, trainees encounter many reified practices, practices that have been described in procedural terms and which they are expected to replicate in the classroom. By giving the practices that trainees observe an objective label, that practice is reified. Giving practices a name, reifying them, is part of the process through which trainees make sense of the classroom that they observe and participate in and learn to apply and develop their own practices.

We can use eliciting as an example of a reified practice. For a trainee new to the classroom it may not be clear where the eliciting starts and ends. He or she will likely be able to identify that the teacher is helping the students to come up with certain words or concepts, but is unlikely to be searching for a word to describe the process as a whole. He or she may not even view this phase of the lesson as distinct, a particular practice to be understood and adopted. However, as soon as the trainer, perhaps in a feedback session, names the practice as eliciting and describes its procedure and purpose, the practice becomes reified and is then available for trainees to consciously appropriate for their own practice.

Wenger also pointed out that reification can take place through the use, or imposition, of a physical object such as a form or template. Such an object, while facilitating the participation of an individual in the practice that it reifies, dictates standard practice by drawing explicit attention to certain elements, in the case of a form, those that are recorded.

However, Bourdieu expressed concern that a focus on learning isolated elements of behaviour as routines or 'moves' could lead to superficial understanding of the principles that underpinned such moves. As discussed above, he termed this *learned*

ignorance and awareness of this danger is echoed in Wenger's concept of reification. Wenger warns that reification can also lead to an illusion of understanding

Procedures can hide broader meanings in blind sequences of operations. And the knowledge of a formula can lead to the illusion that one fully understands the processes it describes (Wenger, 1998: 61).

Learned ignorance and reification are helpful in characterizing teacher learning that is overly focused on practical experience at the expense of theoretical depth. This is a charge that has frequently been placed at the door of the CELTA course, in which teaching practice groups were first developed. CELTA is a short, practical course in which the acquisition and use of routines by trainees plays an important part in enabling them to begin teaching with little theoretical understanding of the classroom. In the Teaching Practice Group context within CELTA there is great pressure on trainees to perform in front of their peers and their trainer, with pressure to replicate what has been identified as 'good practice'. Thus, the danger of learned ignorance is real and can be identified in the over-reliance on, or misapplication of, teaching routines or moves.

However, this may be to underestimate the ability of trainee teachers to look beyond the routine itself and connect it to theoretical ideas. Reeves (2010) carried out a study of trainee teachers' use of routines in the form of scripted instructions. She found that the participants in her study "were not passive consumers" instead they "began to assert control over the script" (Reeves, 2010:252). Rather than simply reproducing the scripts as part of their own teaching, participants began to adapt them to their own contexts and needs. This adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005:362) allows teachers to make judgments on a current teaching situation and adapt their script or routine or move appropriately. Reeves' findings suggest that where trainee teachers have agency and support, learned ignorance is less of a danger, particularly when the advantages of adopting certain moves or routines is taken into account.

I will explore with the trainers interviewed for this study, their introduction and modelling of routines, and with trainees their adoption of these and the impact this

had on their learning. I will also draw on the concept of learned ignorance to understand the ways in which such routines were approached.

3.3.7 Conclusion

The psychological models of teacher learning presented above suggest a staged approach to learning to teach. To be able to implement theories of learning in the practical context of the classroom, teachers need first to be able to understand the classroom in order to be able to assess any given situation and make decisions about what is required for optimal learning conditions to be established. For that to happen the teacher needs to be aware of and monitor the learning of the students in the class. However, a staged understanding of learning to teach would suggest that this is often of great difficulty for trainee teachers, who are likely to be self-conscious when they begin to learn to teach, placing excessive focus on their own actions and behaviours. Accordingly, an important goal of structured language teacher education should be to create the conditions in which trainees are able to see beyond their own actions.

It should be remembered that cognitive models of learning, are based on observation of subjects carrying out limited, closed, problem-solving tasks far removed from the complexity of teaching. However, such theories provide us with insights into the learning process that I believe are of use in analysing the process of learning to teach. They suggest that learning to teach is a staged process with movement through the stages dependent upon a progression in the focus of attention of the trainee, with the mastery of a simple set of basic teaching skills being the first of many iterative stages in the process of learning to teach.

In this study I will explore with trainers whether they feel that teacher learning is a staged process and if so, how this impacts on the design and implementation of their use of Teaching Practice Groups. I will also address the ways in which trainers feel that the Teaching Practice Group model facilitates a focus beyond the teacher, supporting trainees in moving beyond their own actions in their understanding of the teaching and learning process.

3.4 The role of feedback in learning to teach

3.4.1 Introduction

Feedback plays a central role in learning to teach within the Teaching Practice Group model. In most teacher training programmes feedback sessions are dyadic with one observer (who may be a trainer, mentor or peer) and one trainee (or teacher). This is in contrast to feedback within the teaching practice group model, which is multi-party with peers observing and giving feedback as well as the trainer.

Feedback can be seen as a process with change as its main outcome. The role of the trainer is to encourage the trainee to reflect on, and possibly modify, specify behaviours. The trainee should become aware of issues around teaching and learning and be able to change their own practices in a way that is conducive to the context and so better supports learning. Senge (2002), an expert in organisational behaviour, discusses change as taking place within two distinct realms

...we use the term profound change' to describe organisational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviours with outer' shifts in processes strategies, practices and systems (Senge, 2002: 15),

Kurtoglu-Hooton (2008: 29) also applies the idea of inner and outer realms of change to learning to teach, associating the outer realm with observable teaching behaviours (teaching methods, classroom skills, timing, pace, use of materials) and the inner realm with the beliefs that trainee teachers hold about teaching and learning.

Kurtoglu-Hooton (2008: 30) suggests that

Feedback is received and/or discussed during a post-observation feedback session is matched against the inner realm concepts. This process may sow the seeds for profound change which becomes visible in the outer realm.

The distinction between change occurring in the outer and inner realms can be related to Aristotle's concepts of knowledge as *technē* and *phronēsis*. The former concerns demonstration of the ability to carry out certain actions or use certain scripts in the classroom and the latter with the deployment of these at appropriate moments and with understanding of why the technique and the timing are appropriate. In feedback, the trainer should ensure that trainees reflect on both the

techniques that they deployed and reasons why they decided to deploy those techniques at a particular point in the lesson.

In analysing the feedback event in group teaching practice, it is necessary to consider both the content of the discussion, what is said, as well as the process followed, how it is said and by whom.

3.4.2 Models of feedback

Copland (2008: 16) identifies five distinct phases within multi-party feedback sessions:

- Self-evaluation – trainees comment on their own lesson;
- Questioning – the trainer asks the trainee to expand on or reflect on certain aspects of the observed lesson and his or her self-evaluation;
- Trainer feedback – the trainer gives his or her own opinion on what worked and what didn't within the observed lesson
- Peer feedback – the trainer encourages other trainees in the group to comment on the lesson and also on the feedback they have heard to this point'
- Summary – the trainer sums up the lesson and provides development points for the trainee, identifying for them what they need to work on for the next lesson.

Copland (2008: 16) suggests that self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and then trainer evaluation is the most common order of phases.

Copland (2008: 10) makes a useful distinction between to get trainees to evaluate. In the former the intention is to encourage and support trainees to learn how to reflect on their teaching, while the latter focuses on evaluating the success of a lesson, providing affirmation or guidance on what needs to be improved and how. Copland reported that the trainers she interviewed believed that the main purpose of feedback was to get trainees to reflect on their teaching. In order for this to be successful Copland suggests that it is important that trainees are given time, space and the linguistic and analytical tools to analyse their own teaching and that of others. However, when Copland spoke to trainees, they were far more focused on

performance, taking a product view of feedback, with the expectation that its purpose should be to direct their development as teachers. They wanted to know what they needed to improve upon, with a focus on trainer, rather than peer or self, evaluation of their teaching.

Research suggests that trainers do tend to dominate feedback with trainees, perhaps in recognition of the expectations held by trainees, that they as 'experts' should play the major role. Hyland and Lo (2006: 172) studied interaction between trainers and trainees in feedback sessions and found that not only did trainers speak far more than trainees, the average number of words they used per turn was also more than double that of trainees and they were much more likely to introduce a new topic. As Hyland and Lo note, this demonstrates that the power within the feedback sessions they observed was very firmly in the hands of the trainers.

Copland (2012:16) uses the concept of 'legitimate talk' in her analysis of the discourse of teacher training feedback. For talk to be legitimate it should be acceptable within a particular context, with both topics discussed and turn-taking used to assess the legitimacy of participants' practices. She shows how trainers take control in feedback, establishing, and creating legitimate talk. In her data trainers' talk is seen as more legitimate than that of trainees in terms of both content and process. Trainers tended to give clear statements about what they saw as best practice, but they also ensured that their views were heard clearly '*through self-selections, interruptions and long turns*'. The trainees in contrast took a far more passive roles in the process.

...despite the seemingly informal context in which feedback takes place, there are clear expectations about who is allowed to speak, to whom, about what, and whose knowledge counts. In other words, the standards of legitimate talk are firmly established and maintained. (Copland, 2012:16)

Roles in feedback

Feedback in the group teaching practice model can be provided by the trainee who has taught (self-evaluation); by other trainees (peer feedback) and by the trainer (trainer feedback (Copland 2008:10). Trainees, in particular, are expected to take on

different roles during the feedback, from the role of 'reflective practitioner', to the role of 'assessor' (of peers) and that of 'supportive colleague' (Copland 2008:12). Each of these roles is carried out publicly with clear potential for disagreements between trainees as they attempt to navigate a path between pleasing the trainer by engaging in critiques of the observed lesson and not upsetting their peers. This is compounded by the fact that trainees are unlikely to feel confident of their ability to provide such critique of a practice that they themselves are in the process of learning. For many trainees this presents real challenges.

If students are just beginning their studies in an area, their experience of being a student, much less of having a basic command of the subject, can be so limited that it's both brutal and confusing to tell them that they must immediately start thinking critically about it. (Brookfield, 2012:223)

Tsui, Lopez-Real, Law, Tang and Shum (2001) report on feedback sessions held between trainers, mentor teachers and student teachers on a second language teacher training context. They analysed the power relationships between participants and found them to be asymmetrical, with the trainer playing the dominant role and the student teacher the passive role.

Demonstrating an ability to reflect is difficult for novice teachers (Korthagen, 2004) without the added pressure of an audience: assessing peers requires an understanding of what is required in teaching practice, an ability to observe and record the teaching of others, and, most importantly perhaps, an ability to provide feedback which is both appropriate in content and appropriately delivered. The trainer is prepared for and experienced in this, but trainees are required to learn this role very quickly. Brookfield terms this 'impostership' and suggests that his students are likely to be amazed that the expert, is not providing this critique as he has both the knowledge and experience. Instead of that he is asking them to do it.

The discussion about feedback above calls into question some assumptions about the extent of trainee learning from feedback, with suggestions that the power relationships between participants may weaken any change taking place.

Delaney (2015) also calls into question the efficiency of joint feedback in the Teaching Practice Group model. In her study of a CELTA course she notes that participants began with the belief that working together as a group in teaching practice and giving each other feedback would be beneficial to learning

Participants felt they would learn from each other because of their perceived equality in inexperience. As they were bonded by a lack of thorough knowledge, they would be able to notice different features of lessons and feedback in a way that would be helpful to learning. (Delaney, 2015: 235)

However, as the course progressed it became clear that the comments on others' teaching made by most participants tended to be positive and largely confirmatory of anything suggested by the trainer. Delaney suggests that this positivity was generally intended to contribute to the continued supportive environment of the group, with a desire to be positive for their fellow participants meaning that the trainees in her study were reticent to be critical as they felt that they lacked the necessary expertise and experience in comparison to the trainer. In Copland's terms they lacked confidence that their contributions were legitimate. Accordingly, they rarely said what they really thought, enabling them to maintain a comfortable and supportive group environment, but at the same time making little impact on the learning of their fellow trainees. It is also likely that this understanding of their peers as less expert than the trainer, compounded by the trainer's assessment role, diminished the significance that they gave to feedback from their peers as opposed to that of the trainer:

The distance in experience and expertise between the trainers and the trainees, as perceived by the participants, undermines the value they assign to the feedback they get from their peers (Delaney, 2015: 239).

If, as Delaney suggests, trainees do not feel that the talk of their peers is legitimate, they are unlikely to pay much attention to the feedback that they provide. It could be argued that this presents a problem for social constructivist conceptions of learning to teach, which rely heavily on social co-construction of knowledge. However, this implies a transmission view of learning, with trainees' understandings only being impacted upon directly. In Chapter 7 I will present data which suggests

that this is not the case and that, even if trainees give less weight to the feedback that they receive from their peers in formal feedback sessions, they do learn from their peers in more informal and indirect ways, particularly through joint planning and observation.

3.4.3 Assessment

The trainer must navigate a position between two contrasting roles. Firstly, that of assessor, as the person who will decide if the trainee has met the assessment criteria laid down by awarding bodies. This is likely to be the role that trainees most closely associate with the trainer. This will require the trainer to explicitly criticize aspects of the performance of the trainee. However, the trainer must also attempt to encourage the trainee to become reflective, analysing their own performance and noticing the impact of this on the learning of the students. This role is likely to be given less value by trainees

Copland, Mar, and Mann (2009) quote one trainer as saying:

The main objective is to identify points of strength on which the trainee can build as well as points of weakness which need to be corrected. It is essential that this is constructive in providing concrete guidelines which the trainee can use to correct any problems with his / her teaching. (Copland et. al, 2009: 18)

While the trainer's comments here acknowledge the need to help trainees see the positive aspects of an observation, they also focus on correcting what is wrong about the trainee's teaching. As the feedback session in the group teaching practice model is reasonably short (not usually more than an hour) and the trainer needs to provide feedback on the teaching of up to four trainees as well as involving the other trainees in the discussion, it is perhaps unsurprising that encouraging reflection is often not the main priority.

Kurtoglu-Hooton (2008) suggests that feedback can be classified in binary terms as either confirmatory or corrective, giving either a positive or a negative critique of the lesson. She suggests that corrective feedback is dominant in most feedback sessions,

with detailed discussion of what went wrong in stark contrast to what she terms 'perfunctory' confirmatory feedback.

The trainers interviewed here suggested that confirmatory feedback is often employed in order to name behaviours that trainees may otherwise not be conscious of, thus focusing their attention on specific aspects of teaching and learning. This may be seen as a reification of certain processes and procedures with the naming of the process making it tangible and available for discussion among the group. Naming practices in feedback is an important element of the role of the trainer. By describing the procedure and purpose of the practice, it becomes reified and is then available for trainees to consciously appropriate for their own practice.

In any feedback situation there is potential for trainees to 'lose face' in front of the trainer and/or for them to take offence at what is said about their teaching.

The tutor–student teacher relationship is often viewed as an expert–novice relationship and consequently there is often a power differential which can affect the discourse (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In such a situation, the threat to face is an important consideration. (Hyland & Lo, 2006:165)

This is exacerbated in group feedback in which the critique is carried out publicly. Copland identified a number of tactics used by trainers in order to save trainee face, while still ensuring that they are able to address concerns about elements of the observed lesson under discussion. These include eliciting ideas from the observed trainee or other trainees and hedging comments through extensive use of modal verbs and other linguistic devices.

Trainees interviewed as part of Copland's study were divided on the need for such devices with some generally positive, noting the way in which a critique is delivered can make it easier to accept – '...you want the negative delivered in a gentle, smiley, nice kind of 'we're with you' kind of way.' While others favoured a more direct approach: 'I think a lot of time is wasted just by people not wanting to tread on so many toes.' (Copland, 2008:21)

3.5 Conclusion]

Theories that take a social approach to the learning process describe learning as taking place through participation in social activity. Social learning theory suggests that the cognitive development that takes place through learning is an interactive process (Johnson, 2009) by which we learn through engaging with others in social processes. Teaching Practice Groups, are highly social, centred around group learning, with trainee teachers working together rather than in isolation. In the teaching practice group model trainees are frequently required to collaborate with peers and their trainers. I believe that the social conceptions of learning discussed in this chapter, in which the creation of knowledge is situated within a social context and is dependent on social relationships which learners build with their peers and teacher, provide a useful theoretical framework through which to examine the data collected as part of this study.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will describe the methodology that I employed in this study. A methodology is a strategy or plan of action leading to the decision to make use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998. p. 3). It is the why, what, from where, when, and how I collected and analysed the data that forms the basis of this thesis.

This study draws on empirical data in order to better understand the ways in which Teaching Practice Groups facilitate teacher learning. The data collected is qualitative in nature and comes from three different sources: observations of the three-stage cycle of the Teaching Practice Group model; documents used as part of the Teaching Practice Group model; and interviews with teacher trainers and trainee teachers about their experiences of using Teaching Practice Groups and their reflections on this experience.

The decision to collect and analyse qualitative data in order to address the research question is based on an epistemological perspective. The aim of this study is to increase understanding of the process of learning to teach, situated in the particular context of Teaching Practice Groups used with prospective English language teachers. My intention is not to prove that this particular model is effective. Instead, my interest is in better understanding what study of the model can tell us about the process of learning to teach.

I will take an interpretivist stance (Willis, 2007) to addressing the research questions that lie at the centre of this study. The underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a phenomenon. Within interpretivism a relative ontology is proposed with the assumption that the world is experienced differently by individuals, that there are subjective realities (Willis, 2007) and that research needs to take into account how human situations, behaviours and experiences construct such subjective realities.

Within the interpretivist paradigm there is no expectation that reality can be objectively captured by scientific research (Willis, 2007). This study sought to

understand (rather than explain, generalize or critique). In order to gain greater understanding of a phenomenon we need to access the '...complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it' (Schwandt, 1988). Interpretivist research is thus concerned with process (the why and the how) as well as outcome or facts (the where, the what, the who, and the when). It focuses on descriptions and interpretations of social contexts in order to gain a deep understanding of human opinion and behaviour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

Interpretivists seek to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it. The interpretivist philosophical stance has at its heart the idea that what we observe does not have intrinsic meaning, rather that the meaning of the objects we study "lies in the actions that human beings take toward them" (Denzin, 1978:7). Thus, as all meaning is socially constructed, it makes no sense to attempt to isolate the observed facts from our own interpretation of them.

The importance of studying the phenomena of Teaching Practice Groups in the social context in which they take place, and through the lived experience of participants, has informed my selection of data. I have collected data from three sources – interviews, observation and documentary analysis. In combination, these data have allowed me to explore the personal interpretations of trainees and trainers, contextualized within the particular social environment of the teaching practice group.

The use of three sources of data has allowed for methodological triangulation (Cohen and Manion, 2000) in the research to increase the validity of the findings.

Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Cohen and Manion (2000) define triangulation as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (2000: 254). In this case collecting data from the perspective of the trainee teachers, studying the documentation associated with the teaching practice session, and recording my own observations has provided a detailed picture of the situation in which the particular phenomenon, Teaching Practice Groups, takes place, and the social relationships that the trainees and trainer engage in (Kusenbach, 2003).

When analysing the data, this cross-checking from multiple sources has helped to develop a more-rounded account of the teacher learning taking place.

The data collection was carried out in two distinct stages. Initially I made exploratory visits to sites in which Teaching Practice Groups were being used as part of teacher training programmes. In these I observed the three stages of the Teaching Practice Group cycle; spoke informally to participants; and carried out two pilot interviews with trainees. Also, as part of this stage I carried out a short online survey of another group of trainees who had recently completed their teaching practice on a course using the Teaching Practice Group model. In the main data collection stage I interviewed trainers and trainees using questions frames developed through the exploratory stage and informed by themes identified in literature review. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. As well as interview data, I collected documentary and observational data of the three stages of the Teaching Practice Group model during site visits to an initial teacher training course in a private language school.

4.1 Case study

This study has been designed as a case study. Case studies can illuminate a particular situation giving an in-depth understanding of the actors within it and their actions. In some instances, the case study is a starting point, intended to draw attention to a new or unfamiliar phenomenon but it can also be used as a critical or telling case of something about which much may already be known.

Case studies do not impose an objective external explanation of the observed events. Instead they are an approach to research that acknowledges “the capacity of individuals to interpret social events and to attribute personal meanings to the world in which they function” (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984). As such they can’t claim to represent objective truth in that they take into account multiple realities. These multiple realities, reflecting the different definitions of the situation of the individual research participants themselves, enable the researcher to consider not just the actions and perspectives of individual actors but also the interactions between them. A case study should “... start from the premise that any unit of investigation in which

persons were involved could only be understood if the perspectives of those involved (and the interaction of those perspectives) were taken into account. Indeed, these would be central to the research” (Pring, 2010: 44)

Case studies allow us to go beyond the actions of individuals to analyse what Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg refer to as ‘cultural systems of action’ (1990:152), sets of interrelated activities engaged in by the actors in a social situation. In this case study the Teaching Practice Group is the social situation; the activities are the planning and delivery of teaching, as well as feedback and assessment of the trainees. The actors are the trainees, the trainers, and the students in the Teaching Practice class.

Bassey talks about the “...the holistic nature of cases and the need for the study of them to investigate the relationships between their component parts.”

(Bassey:1999). A case study is made up of an understanding of the ways in which the perspectives - personal, theoretical, contextual, time-related – make the whole.

The literature outlines several examples of types of case study. Yin (1993:5) lists exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive case studies; each of which can be either single or multiple-case studies. An exploratory case study aims to define the questions and hypotheses to be used in a subsequent study. An explanatory case study presents data bearing on cause effect relationships - explaining which causes produced which effects. This study can best be described as a descriptive case study, in that it attempts to provide a complete description of a phenomenon within a particular context.

The case

A case study method should examine a ‘case’ in detail and within its “real-life” context. As such it is important to define carefully what constitutes a ‘case’. Stake argues that case studies must always have boundaries (Stake, 1995) and take into account the context. A case can be individual, looking at one person’s experiences and the factors that contribute to a certain observed outcome. It can be at the level of a community with a particular focus on community life and the relationships that sustain it. It can also look at social groups and analyse their activities and the relationships within them. Case studies of organisations, often focussing on routines

and effective practices or on policy implementation and change are also common examples of 'cases'. In all of these the boundaries of the 'case' as understood by the researcher should be carefully drawn and adhered to.

Cohen and Manion (1994) talk about case studies being a single instance of a bounded system and argue that the bounded nature of the case is what distinguishes cases study methodology from other qualitative methodologies such as ethnography. Similarly, Stake (1988) argues that a case study is 'a study of a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the same time' (258).

However, some researchers, such as Brown and Dowling (1998) contest the idea of a bounded system. They argue that it is not possible to select certain elements of a case and study these and at the same time claim that these make up a self-contained or bounded system. This attempt to understand the world in terms of systems that are independent of one another, clear and obvious to all and indeed mutually exclusive is unrealistic.

However, even if one accepts that it is not possible to carve the world up into discrete, bounded units that doesn't mean that one should discard the idea of bounded units as an analytical device within a case study. Bounded units enable us to impose some form on the system so that some conclusions can be drawn.

A case study can contain single or multiple cases. Furthermore, one can maintain one holistic case or embed sub-cases. In the case of this study I will be attempting to define my 'case' as the Teaching Practice Group experience, rather than one particular occurrence. However, while there is great consistency in the way that Teaching Practice Groups are organised, experiences of and reactions to the experience will differ. Central to the case study will be the data collected from site visits to a particular teaching centre, but these will also be supplemented by interview data from trainers and trainees with experience of other Teaching Practice Groups.

Within the case it is necessary to identify the unit of analysis, the main focus of analysis in the study. The unit of analysis could be an individual, a group or an organisation. In my case, the unit of analysis will be the that Teaching Practice Group. By this I mean that I will study the organisation of the Teaching Practice Group process, and the individuals who work within that process. However, to understand the whole, I will need to take account of the broader context of the understandings shared and not shared by the participants by examining their individual perspectives. To this end I will interview individuals who have worked in the Teaching Practice Group process as well as observing the process in action.

Generalisation

Cohen and Manion (2000) argue that the advantages of a case study approach is that it allows the researcher look in detail at the diverse phenomena that define the workings of a particular case to enable generalisations about other similar cases. However, a common criticism of case studies is that they are indeed individual and unique cases and as such can have very little to say about other individual and unique cases. In effect that they are neither typical, in that they don't share all their features with other cases, nor telling in that the findings from one case are not generalisable to another. To counter this Stenhouse (1980) distinguished between predictive generalisation and retrospective generalisation. Predictive generalisation, or what Yin (1993) called 'statistical generalisation', is common in scientific research and attempts to generalize from the sample to the general population. Clearly, case studies are not able to support this type of generalisation. However, it may be possible to use retrospective, or in Yin's terms 'analytic', generalization. In this the empirical results of the case study are compared to existing theory to see how closely the results are able to support the theory. Yin argues that if they do support the theory then there is an argument that, in a limited way, they are generalisable beyond the limits of the particular case being studied (Yin:1984).

It is clear then that it isn't possible to make simple, direct generalizations from case studies but the graphic, detailed descriptions in a case study may point the reader to similar possibilities in other situations. This is an important quality of a case study, its

ability to ‘ring bells’ in the reader’s mind and remind one of other similar situations or phenomena

4.2 Exploratory stage

4.2.1 Introduction

In order to understand better the type of data that I might be able to collect, and to develop methods to collect it, I visited two ESOL teacher training courses at London Further Education (FE) colleges in March 2012. I contacted the course leaders by email to arrange the visits. I was known to them professionally and also knew the other trainers working on the courses, either as ex-colleagues or through my role on the Institute of Education PGCE which partnered with these colleges. I explained the nature of the research, what requirements I had in terms of access to taught sessions, observations of teaching and the approximate time needed for interviews with trainees and trainers. I informed the trainers of the general subject and content of the study, but did not go into any detail. When I visited the courses, I was introduced to trainees as a researcher and spoke to them to explain what I was there to do. I emphasised that I was there to look at the organisation of the course rather than their performance within it. I felt this was important as trainees already feel under a great deal of pressure to perform while being observed on such courses and I did not want my presence to add to this.

4.2.2 Pilot site 1

FE College 1 is a large, multi-site, inner city further education college. The site that I visited focuses on lifelong learning, with many courses for young people and older adults who need help with basic skills, as well as provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The building is modern, and purpose built. There is a very busy atmosphere in the large, open common areas and the classrooms are well-equipped and reasonably spacious.

The trainees that I observed at FE College 1 were in year one of a City and Guilds ESOL DTLLS⁴ course validated by my university.

⁴ The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector ([ref](#))

Their course ran one day a week and consisted of taught input sessions on language awareness and language teaching methodology in the morning and teaching practice in the afternoons. The teaching practice was structured according to the three-stage model described above, with the teaching followed by group feedback and planning for the following teaching sessions.

4.2.3 Pilot site 2

Pilot site 2 is another large, inner-city further education college. I worked at this college for three years and so know the building and some of the staff well. The college also has a large adult basic education cohort as well as groups of 16-19-year-olds on vocational education courses. The classrooms are well-equipped, spacious and bright. As with pilot site 1, pilot site 2 is a busy place with thousands of learners passing through every day. The trainees that I observed there were on an intensive CELTA course⁵. My observations took place towards the end of the second week of the course.

In both settings, I spent two days observing the trainees as they engaged with their course activities. I sat in on input, teaching and feedback sessions, taking extensive field notes at each. I carried out pilot interviews with two trainees, one at each site, and also collected a sample of documents: lesson plans, feedback sheets and self-evaluations.

4.2.4 Pilot interviews

In this study the interview has provided a major source of data. Heron (2018) notes that an interview can often be conceptualised as a neutral data collection instrument that researchers can use to mine the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of interviewees. In designing and carrying out interviews with trainers and trainees I have been conscious of the need to take a critical view of the interview process, understanding the interview not as a context-free process of data extraction, but instead as a social practice, with knowledge emerging through dynamic processes of co-construction (Mann, 2011). Within this approach the interview should be seen

⁵ Intensive CELTA courses are run full-time (Mon-Fri, 9.00 to 17.00) over four weeks.

‘...as a socially situated speech event’ (Mishler, 1986), in which interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) make meaning, co-construct knowledge, and participate in social practices (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). If the interview is understood in this way, as a dynamic, social interaction in which the interviewer and the interviewee jointly co-construct the data, then, as Mann (2011) suggests, we should approach that data as ‘reports rather than accounts’ (Richards, 2009), and ensure that we account for how the data was produced as well as what it contains.

...an interview necessarily involves co-construction and ... this leads to a greater emphasis on the interviewer and how he or she shapes and influences cognition and knowledge. (Mann, 2016: 59)

Where the intention is to generate an exchange, a dialogue, between the two parties, and through that to co-construct knowledge, the relationships between the interlocutors is of relevance. Mann (2011:16) suggests that interviewers should be aware of membership categorisation, whether they share membership of a group with the interviewees. In my case, my identification as a fellow trainer in the interviews with trainees can be identified as what Roulston (2001) terms ‘cocategorical incumbency’. As members of a professional group we were able to draw on experience and shared concepts, as well as a shared perspective of the trainer in discussing the use of Teaching Practice Groups. Hayes (2009) provides an account of the impact that this ‘insider’ role can have on the data generated through interviews. In his study, set in the Thai educational system, Hayes (2009) describes the advantages and disadvantages of his familiarity with the context, and with his interviewees:

...advantages in that I, as researcher, shared a great deal of contextual knowledge and could be seen as an empathetic rather than a detached outsider; disadvantages in that the prior relationship might have influenced what informants chose to reveal, what Goodson and Sikes (2001: 25) have termed a danger of ‘working in one’s own backyard. (Hayes, 2009: 4)

In my interviews with the trainers in this study, I was very much ‘working in my own backyard’ and have attempted to take account of this in my analysis of the data generated.

With the trainees, my established relationship was as a member of the team on the course which they had completed, as a trainee. Our relationship, in the context of the interview, can be described as asymmetrical. Patti and Ellis (2017) suggest that awareness of such power relationships is important in order to engage in co-constructed interviews. They say that interviewers should consider any ethical consequences of existing relationships between interviewer and interviewee. They also note while a co-constructed interview can be guided by the interviewer through questions and prompts, interviewees should also feel empowered to share in the '...dialogic/discursive authority and expertise on the subjects at hand and in the trajectories, flows, and topics of the conversation is desired' Patti and Ellis (2017). The desire to have '...a constructive conversation that is open to the worldviews of interviewees' Patti and Ellis (2017) may lead to blurring of the roles between interviewer and interviewee.

The interviews carried out for this study were semi-structured. Hatch (2002) suggests that these:

...allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Hatch, 2002).

I developed an interview frame (see Appendix 3) to guide me through these interviews. The questions in the frame focused on the interviewee's experience of the Teaching Practice Group in terms of the three-stage cycle of planning, teaching/observing, and feedback. I also included a series of secondary prompt questions to help me probe for in-depth information and to ensure that I explored more fully interviewees' answers. The probes were also designed to ensure that interviewees' answers covered topics that were of interest to the study. For example, the opening questions was: '*What is your teaching background?*' If within their answers interviewees did not speak about their teaching qualifications, or in particular, their previous experience of Teaching Practice Groups, I would prompt them to do so by asking a follow-up question.

While I was clear about the topics that I wanted to discuss with interviewees, I was also aware of the importance of retaining the flexibility to explore other areas of interest as they arose, what Bernard (2006) describes as:

...following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during interview interactions.

Hatch (2002) suggests that this provides '...room for negotiation, discussion, and expansion of the interviewee's responses' leading to the generation of richer data.

As noted above, I carried out an interview with one trainee at each of the two pilot visit sites. Both interviews were carried out with trainees who knew me only as a colleague of their course team and as a researcher interested in Teaching Practice Groups. We spoke over coffee in the college canteen areas and I recorded the interview on my iPhone.

The pilot interviews were exploratory experiences, which informed the development of the interview schedules for both trainees and trainers that were used in the main data collection for the study. They were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Both interviewees were comfortable discussing the Teaching Practice Group experience in terms of the three-stage cycle of planning, teaching/observing, and feedback. They were able to discuss the elements of the cycle as discrete, but related, parts of their learning experience.

However, I also felt that the interviews had failed to provide an opportunity for interviewees to discuss some important topics. For example, the only question about planning related to their personal development goals, there was nothing on their planning process, in particular, how they worked with others to develop their lesson plans. Accordingly, I continued to use the three-stages of the Teaching Practice Group cycle to structure the trainee interviews in the main data collection phase, while adding a number of more detailed questions. This I hoped would encourage interviewees to reflect in more depth on their experience with Teaching Practice Groups and ensure that I was able to collect data that would enable me to address the research question with more focus and clarity.

4.2.5 Trainee survey

Following the pilot visits, I developed a short exploratory survey of trainees to build on the understanding gained from the two pilot interviews. The survey asked respondents to draw on their experience of Teaching Practice Groups as trainees.

The sample consisted of 21 trainee teachers taking a PGCE ESOL course which used the Teaching Practice Groups model. I approached them by email with a link to the survey and received 10 completed responses.

The survey included a mixture of closed and open questions. Section 1 asked respondents to rank the importance of specific elements of the Teaching Practice Group model for their development as a teacher. Section 2 asked them what they liked most about the teaching practice class, and what they liked least. It also asked them to name five things they had learnt from the teaching practice class. Analysis of the data, both quantitative and qualitative, informed the development of the question frames for the trainer and trainee interviews. I also produced a short summary of the findings of the survey (see Appendix 1).

4.3 Main data collection stage

4.3.1 Introduction

In the main data collection stage I collected data from three sources: interviews with teacher educators with extensive experience of Teaching Practice Group; interviews with trainees who had completed a teacher training course using Teaching Practice Groups; and a visit to a teacher training centre to observe the three-stages of the Teaching Practice Group cycle. The source and format of the data collected is shown in the table below

Data source	Date	Type of data
Seven trainer interviews / ave 60 mins	Jan – April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio-recordings • Transcriptions
Seven trainee interviews / ave 40 mins	August – September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio-recordings • Transcriptions

Field visit: observation of one cycle of TP (planning, teaching, and feedback stages).	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwritten field notes • Audio-recordings (selective transcription) • Documents produced as part of the TP cycle by four trainees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lesson plan ○ Materials ○ Self-evaluation ○ Trainer written feedback
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4.3.2 Trainer interviews

Sampling

I have worked on CELTA courses off and on for the last fifteen years and in that time, I have worked with many different trainers. I also helped introduce Teaching Practice Groups to a PGCE course at my own institution and through that made contact with trainers working outside the CELTA. Accordingly, gaining access to interviewees was a fairly straightforward process.

I used purposive sampling to select the interviewees in order to maximize the validity of the data collected. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of interviewees who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced in the particular phenomenon being investigated. This knowledge and experience is of particular importance in a qualitative study in which depth of understanding is the goal.

The interviewees were selected on the basis that they met certain key criteria. The first, and most important criterion was that they had extensive experience of the use of Teaching Practice Groups. All of the interviewees had used the model while working on CELTA courses. However, I also wanted to ensure that they had used Teaching Practice Groups in a context other than CELTA. This decision was informed by informal discussions with one of the trainers at FE College 1 in the pilot stage. She had only used Teaching Practice Groups in the CELTA and, in contrast to the others with whom I spoke in this stage, she appeared to find it difficult to separate the Teaching Practice Group cycle from the other elements of the course (input,

assignments etc.). As this is a study of the Teaching Practice Group model, rather than the courses in which it is used, and in recognition of the fact that the Teaching Practice Group model is closely associated with the CELTA, I felt that it was important to talk to people who had experienced the model in contexts other than the CELTA.

Availability and willingness to participate were also key criteria as was their ability to communicate articulately and to reflect on their professional experience.

In total, I carried out seven semi-structured interviews with experienced teacher educators. These were audio-recorded and transcribed. Three of the six trainers interviewed were colleagues from various teacher training courses that I had worked on, while the others were known to me professionally and so I was able to contact them directly by email to request their participation in the study.

In Table 4.1 I have listed the interviewed trainers with information on their age, gender and professional background in relation to Teaching Practice Groups. As can be seen from the table, there was a fairly even split in terms of gender with three male and four female interviewees. The interviewees ages ranged from late thirties to early sixties. I did not expect to interview any trainers in their twenties or early thirties as it takes considerable experience as a teacher before anyone is able to become a teacher trainer, meaning that people with extensive experience of the use of Teaching Practice Groups are likely to be older.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Background
Trainer 1	55-65	M	Internationally renowned writer on teaching methodology currently head of teacher training for a large EFL organization. Very experienced CELTA trainer and has also used Teaching Practice Groups within bespoke training courses around the world.
Trainer 2	45-55	M	An experienced CELTA and DELTA trainer with experience of Teaching Practice Groups within Adult ESOL PGCE courses.

Trainer 3	55-65	F	A CELTA trainer and assessor who has also developed bespoke teacher training programmes using Teaching Practice Groups.
Trainer 4	35-45	F	A CELTA trainer currently working on an Adult ESOL PGCE course that uses Teaching Practice Groups.
Trainer 5	45-55	F	A university lecturer who has previously taught on CELTA and PGCE courses using Teaching Practice Groups. Currently using Teaching Practice Groups as part of a University introductory TEFL course.
Trainer 6	45-55	M	A CELTA trainer currently working on an Adult ESOL PGCE course that uses Teaching Practice Groups.
Trainer 7	35-45	F	Lead trainer on the CELTA course that I visited to collect observation and documentary data.

Table 4.1: Interviewed trainers

Development of the trainer Interview frame

I developed an initial interview frame for the trainer interviews and used this in a pilot interview with a colleague with whom I have previously worked on Teaching Practice Groups. I did not intend to carry out a formal interview with this colleague. Firstly, we had discussed the focus of my study a number of times and I felt that her answers were likely to have been influenced by those discussions. Secondly, the colleague had limited experience of Teaching Practice Groups, and had only used them in one context – the CELTA. Below I have described the process by which I arrived at the initial and final Interview Frame for the trainer interviews (See Appendix 5).

A) Interviewee background

All of the interviewed trainers were experienced in working with Teaching Practice Groups. They had also used the model in more than one context. I began the interview by exploring their background as teacher educators, firstly to establish this and secondly to allow me to ask them to focus in their answers on the Teaching Practice Group cycle of planning, teaching/observing, and feedback rather than on

their experience of the courses within which the three-stage cycle had been used. Having established this I then wanted to explore the two overall questions (What do teachers need to know? / How do teachers learn?) with interviewees basing their answers on their experience of Teaching Practice Groups.

B) What do teachers need to know?

To avoid asking a question about an abstract concept such as teacher knowledge, with the danger that the interviewee would not have considered the question in this way before, I framed the question in terms that were more directly related to the interviewee's practical experience of working with trainee teachers, so I asked them about what teachers should know in the context of assessment of trainees' classroom performance.

I also wanted to explore whether they saw teacher knowledge as objective and describable and so developed a question using the following statement to prompt the interviewee to address this: there are instances of teaching and teacher behaviour which are representative of what good teachers do.

This worked well as a device and led to useful reflection on what model of teaching was being proposed and how explicitly this was done.

The content of language teaching is highly interpretivist, based on individual or cultural meanings of concepts and ideas, and so is less bounded than perhaps other areas of teaching, such as mathematics. I wanted to ask trainers how they managed to present a clear model of teaching when trainees were very likely to see experienced teachers doing things that the trainer had suggested to them were not efficient or useful in terms of learning. Accordingly, in the pilot interview frame I had included a separate question about the bounded nature of the knowledge base. However, during the pilot interview, discussion of this issue followed naturally as a reaction to the quote about teacher behaviour, and so in the final question frame I added this question as a follow-up prompt, rather than as a separate question.

I asked the pilot interviewee to agree or disagree with two other 'prompt quotes' in this part of the interview that were not as successful. I asked them about the role of

theory in the Teaching Practice Group model and its relationship with practical knowledge using the following statements:

- “...the teacher should recognise him or herself in the theoretical knowledge about teaching that they are presented with.”
- “...the teacher should be given the opportunity to implement (or practise) the theoretical knowledge.”

I asked the interviewee to agree or disagree with the statements and to explain why she felt this way. However, to achieve this I was forced into rather long explanations of the statements, and what I meant by theory in this context, before the interviewee was able to give any sort of response, and when this was forthcoming, it was vague and of little use to the study. I concluded from this that while the statements referred to conceptual ideas that I wanted to explore, they were too abstract for the interviewee to relate them directly to their experience. Instead, I changed this question in order to ask directly what they saw as the role of theory in the Teaching Practice Group model, defining theory within the question as ‘the principles that underpin practice’. In this I hoped that interviewees would reflect on their view of the relationship between theory and practice and how this is manifested in their use of Teaching Practice Groups.

I also asked them to talk about the relationship between the Teaching Practice and other elements of the courses they have worked on, such as input, reading, assignments etc. This was aimed at addressing questions of technical rationality and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. My assumption was that trainers using Teaching Practice Groups would be aware of the importance of ensuring that there is consistency of message across the different elements of the course and that I would be able to collect some examples of ways in which they do this.

C) How do teachers learn?

In the third section of the trainer interview frame I wanted to explore five main concepts identified in the literature review: stages of teacher learning; prior

knowledge; the use of routines in teacher learning; constructivist learning; and the development of communities of practice.

To encourage interviewees to reflect on the stages of teacher learning I asked them about ways in which they tailored their approach, particularly in feedback, in order to address different trainee needs. I prompted them to give me some examples of ways in which they would change their feedback to take individual progress into account.

I then asked them to think about what external sources may inform trainee's teaching, with a prompt to ensure that prior knowledge was addressed

I included a specific question on routines with prompts to uncover whether trainers introduced routines as procedural or principled knowledge. That is, were they aware of the 'why' of the routine as well as the 'how'.

In the literature review, I included detailed focus on constructivist views of teacher learning. Constructivists argue that teacher learning occurs as a result of the congruence, or discrepancy, between one's personal constructs and the constructs of others. This can come about through a process of cognitive dissonance in which existing understandings are challenged, leading to the reorganisation of relevant concepts. In the pilot interview frame, I included a number of questions on this. However, these were not successful as questions as, similar to the experience with questions of theory, I had to spend a considerable amount of time explaining the questions before the interviewee was able to respond. I also felt that this discussion was too 'directed' in that the questions were designed to give me the answers that I wanted, rather than helping me to understand the interviewees' experience of the phenomenon.

Instead of these questions I included prompts in other questions to explore the extent to which preconceived beliefs were challenged (What do you think informs how trainees approach their teaching aside from the content of the course? Probe: preconceived beliefs about teaching? Made explicit? Challenged?)

Finally, I wanted to ask interviewees about the extent to which they felt that trainees developed a sense of themselves as members of a community of practice through their experience of Teaching Practice Groups.

The interviews were carried out in a small meeting room at my university. We sat across the corner of a small square table. I used my iPhone to record the conversation and also took notes as I listened to my interviewees. The average length of the recorded interviews was 60 minutes.

4.3.3 Site visit

In order to carry out detailed observation of the three-stage Teaching Practice Group cycle I contacted a number of CELTA centres to request access. I did not imagine that this would be a difficult process. I have many personal contacts with colleagues running and working on such courses and so began to contact those working in London. However, it was soon apparent that gaining access to a course would be difficult. The first three colleagues that I contacted declined my request. They were working in intensive four-week CELTAs and each argued that such was the intensity of the course experience for the trainees that they did not want an outsider there for fear of that being a distraction. They also justified their refusal on practical grounds. In the Teaching Practice Group model, the whole group of trainees observe each other teaching. With the trainer also in the room, there is often little space left for another person.

However, I persisted, and began to explore courses outside London. Eventually I made contact, through an ex-colleague, with a trainer working for a large chain of private language schools which offer the CELTA. She worked in one of their schools on the South Coast and was willing to allow me access to the course. I visited the school six times: an initial visit to meet the trainer, discuss course procedures, and agree a schedule. I then observed two full cycles of the Teaching Practice Group model, with four trainees (M, C, D, & J) planning, teaching and engaging in group feedback. I audio-recorded each of the sessions, as well as taking field notes and speaking informally to the trainees and the trainer. These informal conversations provided useful background information which has contributed to my overall understanding of the processes that I observed and discussed with interviewees.

I also collected the following documentary evidence for each of the four trainees: their lesson plan, reflective evaluation of their own teaching, and trainer feedback form. I also collected some examples of observation tasks that were used in the sessions I observed. The documents served an important role in my understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Both trainers and trainees commented on the use of these documents in the Teaching Practice Group process and so I felt that it was important to collect and analyse them.

4.3.4 Field notes

While visiting courses as part of the fieldwork for this study I took extensive field notes. Field notes are produced by the researcher during the fieldwork to 'remember and record the behaviours, activities, events, and other features of an observation' (Schwandt, 2015). Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) highlight that field notes are of value in qualitative research "...in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, focus group, and document valuable contextual data.

They can be analysed to produce meaning and an understanding of the particular phenomenon being studied. Hornberger (1995: 238) describes fieldnotes as describing 'the units, criteria, and patterning of a community' (Hornberger, 1995: 238). In producing field notes, observers should select and describe that which appears to be significant for participants (Creese, Takhi and Blackledge, 2017).

Alongside field notes I made audio recordings in the environments in which I observed. I listened to these recordings after each observation, going through my field notes clarifying my notes and adding details such as accurate transcriptions of relevant exchanges between participants.

Within my field notes it is possible to identify two distinct categories of notes. Much of the writing is descriptive in that it attempts to paint a picture of the phenomenon as I experienced it. It documents the facts of time and setting, as well as the actions, behaviours, and conversations of the participants under observation. However, the field notes are also reflective and record the thoughts and questions that occupied me as I observed the activities of the Teaching Practice Group process.

During the pilot observation sessions, I began by trying to focus on the identification of points of decisions within each teaching slot. I felt that I should describe those moments in the class in which the trainee made choices about how to proceed: whether to correct or not; how long to go on with an activity etc. These decision moments, I hoped, would allow me to explore in subsequent interviews with the trainees why they had made certain choices, and what were the sources of information that they had drawn on in making these choices: trainer feedback, course input sessions, reading? However, in the initial pilot interviews it became apparent that the trainees were not able to identify the reasons behind their decisions; much of what they did appeared to be unconscious, perhaps because at that stage they were not seeing the classroom very clearly – their attention was focused on getting through the lesson and they found it difficult to reflect on particular incidents.

I felt that it was important to use the fieldwork to enable me to look at the phenomenon I was observing through a different lens to that which I would normally use as a trainer. I have sat in on plenty of feedback sessions, though again not as a non-participant observer, but as a colleague providing peer support to a fellow trainer or in an inspection or assessment role. As a researcher observing Teaching Practice Group sessions being run by other trainers, I was in a non-participant role with very different expectations on the outcomes of my analysis. Whereas in my role as a trainer, the notes that I take are for the purpose of analysing the teaching of individual trainees, here I was more interested in the analysis of the processes that were being played out as trainees went about learning to teach.

Accordingly, I needed to rethink the processes that I normally use for note taking in Teaching Practice Group sessions, to be able to shift my focus from the development of the individual's practice to an understanding of what underpinned it.

This was most important in the teaching practice sessions in which I am accustomed to taking extensive notes in my role as a teacher trainer. I felt that I needed to make explicit my normal purpose in taking these notes and the process that I go through in order to adjust these to my current purpose. In carrying out fieldwork I was aware that I was not observing in order to work with trainees on their development as

teachers, nor would I be required to write up reports on the events in particular classes. More importantly, the development of the trainees as teachers was not my responsibility nor was it my area of interest. My purpose in carrying out fieldwork was to gather data that would help me to understand how the Teaching Practice Groups model facilitates teacher learning.

In my role as a trainer on teacher training courses using Teaching Practice Groups, when I observed trainees, I split the paper into two vertical halves and take descriptive notes on the left half of the paper and reflective notes on the other side. The descriptive notes include timings, references to teaching materials and teacher actions. On the right half of the papers I write a critical commentary and flag up points that I want to focus on in feedback, both positive and negative.

I was aware of the need to move from observing in this role of teacher educator, to observing as a researcher. This required me to consider the purpose of the data captured in my observation notes. When I had observed as a teacher educator my notes were designed to inform oral and written developmental, and perhaps evaluative, feedback for the trainee. As a researcher, my notes on the observation of trainees in the classroom were intended to provide a picture of this particular phenomenon. A picture that, alongside other data, would inform my understanding of trainees' experience of this part of the Teaching Practice Group cycle. My notes were also reflective, with the inclusion of questions, connections and other thoughts that occurred to me as I observed. In each session, I ensured that I included description of the physical setting, the participants and their roles in the context and also the social environment and the ways in which participants interacted, with each other, with the trainer and with their students. Where possible I recorded exact quotes or at least very close approximations of what the participants said to each other.

In each session, I ensured that I included description of the physical setting, the participants and their roles in the context and also the social environment and the ways in which participants interacted, with each other, with the trainer and with their students. Where possible I recorded exact quotes or at least very close approximations of what the participants said to each other.

As noted above, I found that it was important to read and also flesh out my field notes as soon after an observation as possible, adding additional detail, but also adding to my reflection on the significance of the described events. I included unanswered questions or concerns that arose from my initial analysis of the observation data; I clarified some points and corrected mistakes and misunderstandings in other parts of the field notes. At this early stage I was also able to make the notes more legible as my writing is not very clear at the best of times and I tend to use an inconsistent form of short hand, which subsequently I often find difficult to decipher. I have included a sample of my field notes in Appendix 2.

The field notes taken during the exploratory visits informed the development of the research instruments used in the main data collection stage; those collected during the site visits in the main data collection stage form part of the evidence base for this study.

4.3.5 Observation data

During the fieldwork I was a non-participant observer. Non-participant observation is different from participant observation in terms of the nature of the observer's involvement in the research setting. The non-participant observer takes a more distant and separate role with little or no contact with the research participants. I did not take part in any of the activities of the Teaching Practice Group that I was studying; when observing the classroom I sat at the back just watching without participating or engaging with the trainees or the trainer, all of whom had official roles to carry out within the teaching/observation/feedback process.

A frequent criticism of the use of observation data from field research is that such data may be invalidated by 'observer effects' (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982; Spano, 2005). It is argued that by being present in the setting the researcher may influence the behaviour of those being studied. This influence may contaminate the data collected making it impossible to produce an accurate or objective description. Implicit within this negative view of observation as a research technique is the assumption that quantitative methods are more objective or less prone to bias (Agar, 1980).

The observer effect describes the ways in which people under observation may change their behaviour due to the presence of someone from outside the group. For example, in a classroom observation if students are not aware that the person at the back of the room is observing the teacher, they may assume that she is there to observe them. This may cause an individual to become more nervous and less likely to participate in the activities of the class. It could also cause a more confident individual to try to impress the observer – showing off to get attention and recognition.

While any observer can have an impact on the phenomenon being observed, even when in a non-participant role, it is possible to minimise such interference. In order to mitigate any observer effect, I ensured that I was introduced to the trainees and that my role and the focus of my observations was made clear to them. I explained that I wanted to study the way in which their teacher training programme was being organised, rather than their success, or otherwise, in learning from their programme.

Another challenge to the validity of observation data is the tendency of observers to allow their predispositions, their hopes and expectations, to become apparent in the data that they record. Observer bias is of particular concern for data collection in qualitative studies such as this one. In order to understand and describe the phenomena being studied requires some form of subjective judgment. That is certainly the case with the training of language teachers, as definitions of good practice are often disputed. Observer bias can be best addressed by the researcher making explicit their assumptions and understandings about the empirical context. In my case this came within an extensive period of assessing and describing relevant literature and through reflection on my previous role as a trainer and contrasting that with my new role as a researcher. Through this process I was able to recognise that my bias, learned as a trainer in Teaching Practice Groups was likely to be that I would place excessive attention on the actions of the teacher – analysing their teaching rather than attempting to describe the wider interactions taking place within the Teaching Practice Group.

4.3.6 Trainee interviews

To complete the data collection, I interviewed newly qualified teachers who had just completed an initial teacher training course in which Teaching Practice Groups were employed. Below I have outlined the process by which I developed the interview frame and how I selected the sample of trainee interviewees.

Sampling

In selecting interviewees, I again used purposive sampling with a number of factors taken into account. Firstly, I wanted to interview people who had been on the same course in order to remove possible variation in the way the Teaching Practice Group had been run. I also felt that in order to ensure the validity of the research process it was important that interviewees had recently finished their course so that the experience was still fresh in their minds and they were able to reflect on it in the interview. The final factor was that I wanted the interviewees to have had as little teaching experience as possible prior to beginning their course.

Initially, I attempted to secure agreement to interview trainees on a number of CELTA courses with which I had contact. However, this was not successful, despite a number of visits to training centres talk to groups of trainees. One group appeared enthusiastic about talking to me about their experience following the course, but when I tried to contact them to arrange the interviews, I received only one reply and I was not able to arrange a suitable time for that interview to take place.

Following this experience, I approached trainees on a PGCE course at my institute. This group had experienced Teaching Practice Groups as part of their course, with their practical experience taking place at Pilot centre 2. Accordingly, I knew that standard Teaching Practice Group processes had been followed and that the experience of the trainees would be of relevance to the study. Of the twelve trainees contacted seven agreed to be interviewed. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. All of the interviews were transcribed.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender
Trainee 1	26 -35	M

Trainee 2	46 -55	F
Trainee 3	46 -55	F
Trainee 4	36-45	M
Trainee 5	36-45	F
Trainee 6	46-55	F
Trainee 7	36-45	M

Table 4.2: Interviewed trainees

Development of the trainee Interview frame

As discussed above, I developed an initial interview frame for use in pilot interviews with two trainees. The basic structure of the frame remained. I began with a general introduction focussed on the interviewees' professional experience and their general impression of the Teaching Practice Group and followed this with questions on the three stages of the Teaching Practice Group cycle: planning, teaching/observing, and feedback. As with the trainer frame, I included a number of probes that I used to try to extend and deepen interviewees' answers.

As with the trainer interviews, these were carried out in a small meeting room at my university. We sat across the corner of a small square table. I used my iPhone to record the conversation and also took notes as I listened to my interviewees. The average length of the recorded interviews was 40 minutes.

4.3.7 Research protocol and ethics

The main ethical issues to be addressed in this study were informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity. The trainers and trainees were all adults, none of whom could be described as potentially vulnerable. The issues discussed in the interviews were of a non-sensitive, professional nature. The trainees were also interviewed after they had received their preliminary grades in order to allay any concerns they may have had that their comments would influence their final assessment on their course.

I made initial contact with all of the interviewees by email. In this introductory email I explained that I was carrying out research into Teaching Practice Groups and would like to interview them about their experience. I also explained the approximate time needed for the interviews.

On meeting interviewees I gave them an information sheet about the study and asked them to read it and then sign the accompanying consent form⁶. As well as giving information about the study, the information sheet assured them of anonymity and that their data would be kept securely. It also explained that they could withdraw at any time, including after the interview had been completed.

I sought and gained permission in each case to record the interview using a digital recorder. I reiterated that interviewees were free to terminate the interview at any time if they so wished, that their data would be anonymised and that their comments kept confidential. I explained that while the data would be anonymized, I may use some anonymous word for word quotes in the final paper. Each interviewee was given the opportunity after their interview to ask questions about the research. Anonymity was particularly important for the trainees as the interviews touched on a number of issues that required them to speak frankly about their experiences on the course and about their relationship with their trainers.

During the interviews, I collected names and limited demographic details. This data was transferred to a spreadsheet in which the names were removed and replaced with an identifier.

Each interviewee was given the opportunity after their interview to ask questions about the research. On completion of the transcripts of each interview these were sent to the individual interviewees for comment to ensure that they felt it was a fair representation of what they had said. Rapley (2004: 17) suggests that this is '...an essential factor in allowing the reader to evaluate reliability' of research based on interview data. I received no substantive comments, or requests for changes.

4.4 Data analysis

⁶ See Appendix 5

4.4.1 Introduction

For both sets of interview data I followed similar process of analysis. Firstly, I listened carefully to the recordings of the interviews without making any notes. I felt that it was important to do this in order to move from the interviewer role, participating and engaging with the interviewee, to a more detached, analytical role. Following this I transcribed the interviews. Once completed I began the process of analysis of each interview.

4.4.2 Transcription

I transcribed all of the interview data as soon as possible following the interviews.. Hammersley (2010: 562) describes transcription as a process of slowing down, affording the researcher the opportunity to see more clearly the phenomenon being studied, and the social interactions that underpin it.

According to Rush (2009) transcription is often taken for granted in qualitative research with researchers failing to clarify aspects of the transcription process. Rush suggests that researchers should reflect carefully on the transcription process and ensure that they are explicit about the process followed, and the reasons behind the decisions taken, when they write up their research.

For this study a purposeful approach to transcription has been taken. I personally transcribed all of the trainer and trainee interviews carried. I used the sound payer on my laptop to play the recordings, pausing and playing using the one screen controls. This was a time-consuming, but valuable process. I had intended to just listen to the recordings and make notes summarising the most relevant points and only writing out verbatim extracts of particular interest. However, I found that fully transcribing the data forced me to 'listen' to the data in a far more intensive and productive manner. I am not a quick typist and so I had to 'rewind 'each section a number of times and listen again to ensure that I had accurately represented what was said.

While time-consuming, this intensive listening allowed me to me to get to know the data much better than if I had just taken notes or if I had paid for a third party to do the transcription for me. As I listened I was also able to construct categories and

analyse what was being said, testing and generating hypotheses as well as comparing data from different interviews. By the time I had completed the transcription I had a database totalling over 100,000 words (35,212 for the trainee interviews and 68,587 for the trainer interviews).

Bucholtz (2000: 1461) argues that transcription should be seen as a continuum between naturalised and denaturalised. With naturalized transcription giving written features of discourse such as punctuation, priority over oral features, such as fillers like 'um' and 'err' meaning that the final transcription includes '...many features of written language that do not actually occur in spoken talk'. Denaturalized transcription, in contrast, attempts to represent accurately features of oral language, which are not part of the normal written form.

The approach I took to transcribing the interview data in this study can be described as naturalised. However, it is not on the extreme end of the continuum. No attempt was made to impose grammatical accuracy on the data, and so I left in dead-ends, reformulations and other natural features of spoken language. However, as the object of the interviews was to understand interviewees' experience of Teaching Practice Groups, I was confident that fully accurate, or naturalised, representation of the data recorded was unnecessary, as I did not intend to carry out any intensive discourse or linguistic analysis and so little meaning would be revealed by taking the more laborious route to fully naturalised representations. Accordingly, the final texts are written records of what was said, rather than representations of natural speech.

4.4.3 Thematic Analysis

Once I had completed the transcriptions I attempted to analyse the data using the software programme NVivo. I took a training course in order to understand how to use the software and following this, began to work on the interview data. However, I did not find the programme particularly intuitive and struggled to make much progress. I soon decided to return to manual coding, working with a combination of Word files on screen and print-outs I was able to complete the coding more efficiently than I would have with NVivo.

I used thematic analysis with the interview data. Thematic analysis allows for the exploration of textual information to determine trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication. It employs systematic coding and categorization as a method for ‘... identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). The coded categories I used were drawn directly from the data, rather than being pre-prepared and applied to the data. This can be termed inductive thematic analysis in that the creation of the ‘codes’ to organize the data involved ‘open coding’, developing themes and working out how they might relate to each other within the data.

The interviews were then read a number of times and gradually coded. Some initial categories were employed to do this, but others emerged during the process. As analysis proceeded, it became clear that the superordinate categories of Teacher knowledge and Teacher learning would be of great use. A further superordinate category of Description of the TP process also emerged. Below these superordinate categories, a series of sub-themes were identified and coded.

The process was iterative, with new categories identified and others adjusted as more data was analysed. For example, under the category of Teacher Learning, the code ‘Basics’ was used to refer to discussions of basic teaching techniques. Initially, I also categorized discussions of the use of ‘Routines’ under this code. However, as I had worked through more interviews it became clear that ‘Routines’ went beyond reference to the basic teaching techniques and required a code of its own. The full list of codes is in Appendix X.

Once I had completed the coding I compiled a table with quotes relevant to each of the existing codes for each particular interviewee. I have included a sample of the trainer analysis table in Appendix 6. These tables were then combined into one overarching set of quotations under the identified codes.

4.4.4 Analysis of observation and documentary data

As well as informing the development of the interview frames for the trainers and trainees, the main use of the observation data within the analytical phase was to

contextualize understandings gained through the interviews. The observation data was used to construct a robust and consistent model of the three-stage Teaching Practice Groups cycle. This allowed for the anecdotes gathered from the interviewees to be contextualized in a consistent manner and for links to be made between these.

Analysis of the documentary evidence also informed the development of the interview frames. I analysed the documents to identify ways in which they guided trainees in thinking about or focusing on particular elements of the teaching and learning process. This related strongly to the theme of *Teacher Learning*, specifically *progression in attention*. With the trainer interviews I was keen to discover how they made use of the documents and to what extent, and how explicitly, they were aware of the possibilities presented by them. From the perspective of the trainees, I was also interested in how the documents were experienced, how they framed teaching and learning for the trainees, and how the trainees responded to them.

5. Findings: Teacher knowledge

5.1 Trainer conceptualization of knowledge

The review of literature on teacher knowledge in Chapter 2 suggested that a key area of focus for analysis, should be the representation of the knowledge base of the courses from which the data for this study were collected. In particular, the ways in which knowledge about teaching is represented by the trainers on the courses, in their guidance to trainees as part of the cycle of planning, observing and feedback, and through the artefacts and practices of the course - its infrastructure. Analysis of trainers' written feedback on the teaching practice of the four trainees whose teaching and feedback I observed has been helpful in understanding how teacher knowledge is conceptualise for trainees through the Teaching Practice Group model.

In the feedback example below, V has commented on M's lesson. In it V signals a positive comment with a tick and areas to think about with an asterisk.

CELTA Teaching Practice Feedback					
Name:	Martin	Date:	10.2.14	Week:	2
Day:	Mon	Time:	4.0	Lesson No:	3
Level:	PI	Source of Materials:	NE	Room:	29
Lesson Type:	SB	Context/Topic:	Shopping	No. of ss:	10
Personal Aims: guide metalinguage / connect at own stage / negotiate					
Aim/Teaching Point:					Observer:
					Vivienne
Time	Stages	Comments			
2.01	Lead in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ checked students * try to close the gap - move the students ✓ nice to have a visual. You built this up well ✓ friendly confident manner. Try to frame your voice more and reduce your metalinguage. 			
2.05	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ sat down ✓ calm manner ✓ responded to str. comments 			
2.07	Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ visual 			
2.08	REV department store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * try to focus them more ✓ elicited ✓ drilled ✓ choral ✓ individual * avoid saying their names in between WB ✓ stress ✓ word class - good you elicited the information for them. 			

Figure 5.1 V written feedback – M (2.01 – 2.08)

The immediate visual impression on seeing V's feedback on M's lesson is that it is positive, with ticks outnumbering asterisks substantially. The subjects chosen, the elements of the class that the trainers has decided to draw the trainee's attention to, are mostly demonstrations by trainees of simple behaviours. In Figure 5.2 V notes C's clear voice (twice), confident manner and good use of questions. She also refers positively to his management of this stage of the lesson (*built the concept*)

Time	Stages	Comments
2.38	Lead in	✓ good - you followed on from Martin's lesson smoothly
		✓ calm, confident presence
		✓ sts engaged
2.41	Context	✓ clear voice
		✓ built the concept ✓ clear voice ✓ clear questions

Figure 5.2 V written feedback – C (02.38-02.41)

Where these are associated by V with successful teaching, they are accompanied with a tick, whereas asterisks point to ways in which those behaviours could be more successfully deployed. V's feedback on the initial stage of the class refers positively to M's actions (*chatted to students*), while also suggesting ways in which the action could be improved (*try to close the gap - move the students*).

Time	Stages	Comments
		✓ Chatted to students
		* try to close the gap - move the students

Figure 5.3 V written feedback – M (pre-lead in)

Other positive comments for this stage are followed by an asterisk containing pointers. It is clear that V feels that it is important to provide plenty of positive reinforcement. The positive comment about sitting down came in response to a previous class led by M in which he stood for a whole class discussion, rather than sitting, as he did here. This comment is thus purposefully reinforcing a positive association between successful teacher and learner exchanges and the simple action

of sitting down with the learners rather than standing above them at the front of class. This is a pattern followed throughout, with individual teacher behaviours, actions associated with successful teaching and learning, named and assessed by the trainer, with suggestions for things for the trainee to reflect on in order to improve their performance for the next class.

In Figure 5.4 below, we see that V has highlighted specific teacher actions: eliciting, drilling, modelling. She first commends the trainee for using these actions, before going on to suggest areas for reflection.

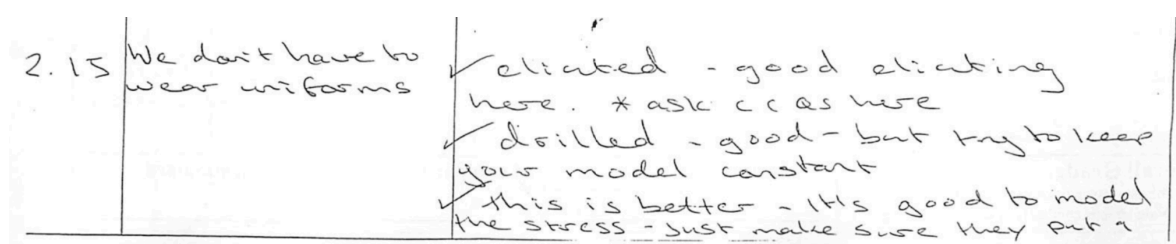


Figure 5.4 V written feedback – D (2.15)

The items selected focus the trainee on their own behaviour. We can see that the trainer is keen for the trainee to be able to recognize the actions that they had performed; to be conscious of them as individual stages within their teaching and to reflect on how they could be improved. The way in which trainees are encouraged to focus on examples of individual teacher behaviours suggests the influence of objectivist views of teacher knowledge on the framing of learning to teach within the CELTA.

5.2 Competences and assessment of teaching

In Chapter 2 I discussed the use of a competences approach to defining and assessing teacher knowledge. Competences can be understood as verifiable performance indicators that act as indicators that a particular skill has been performed. Within teacher education competences are usually presented as a checklist of discrete, observable and measurable, behaviours that trainee teachers should demonstrate through their observed teaching. The use of such checklists implies an objectivist view of teacher knowledge with an assumption that it is possible to describe in detail what a good teacher does so that this can be learnt and replicated by beginning teachers.

The trainers interviewed were sceptical of the value of checklists within the teaching practice group process. Some were concerned with practical issues, suggesting that the number and specificity of items on a checklist renders it unwieldy and difficult to use. Another highlighted a separate issue with checklists of competences – that they assign equal weight to things that are important and things that are less so:

... there are some things that are really- things like have they organised the furniture, say for example, stuff like that. It's just really not that important. And there are some things that are really important, you know, like did you understand what you were teaching (Trainer 2)

Others reflected concerns discussed in Chapter 2 that breaking teaching down into ever more fine-grained lists of observable behaviours can distract from appreciation of teaching as a holistic endeavour, focusing attention on the performance of these individual behaviours rather than their impact on learning.

For me very often they are something of a nuisance. Because I think- I think the problem with all of that kind of thing is they actually- they actually pull you away from the attention that you're giving to the thing as a whole, and I think that probably I'm more interested in the thing as a whole than in ... individual things. (Trainer 3)

Here, the tension between holistic assessment of teaching and a competence-based approach is clear. For this trainer, a focus on discrete behaviours of the trainee in a particular class makes it more difficult to assess the effectiveness of the whole class.

For others too, rejection of, or reluctance to use, checklists of competences appeared to derive from an understanding of teaching as too complex to break down into a series of discrete behaviours.

This trainer used a musical metaphor to explain why he was reluctant to assess trainees' teaching against a checklist of competences. He drew on Hyland's (2002) comparison of teachers and musicians, noting that both do need to learn certain techniques as a baseline:

In music for example, it's obviously important that musicians know their scales, know which bits of an instrument do what and can make those

sounds. But when you are actually watching a musician perform the last thing you want to be doing is assessing ...- you know, their techniques. (Trainer 3)

He suggested that, while particular techniques were of value for trainee teachers, it was more important to assess the trainee on whether the decisions they make while teaching are appropriate to the particular circumstances and whether they are supportive of learners.

The real essence of good teaching, for me, is how well somebody responds to what's happening in the classroom, to the learners, and goes- and is able to go with the moment. And you need to learn some techniques in order to be able to do that (Trainer 3)

In another interview, trainer 4 had spent some time talking about a colleague, Anthony (not his real name), whose teaching he particularly valued. He referred to Anthony a number of times as someone who he viewed as a model for others (including himself) to learn from. Later in the interview I asked him whether he felt that one could break Anthony's teaching down into a set of ingredients for others to emulate.

Could you? I don't know if you could. I don't know if you could. You- because even if you write it all down on a checklist you can't codify the quality of the doing of it. You know, checklists tend to come- criteria tend to come down to "above average", "at standard" or "below standard" or something like that, and that doesn't qualify- you know, for example one thing with Anthony is the quality of his attention, and you could say, you know, "He pays attention very well," but what exactly does that mean? You'd have to write a paragraph or two to even start describing the quality of his attention. And that doesn't fit on a checklist. (Trainer 4)

Here it is particularly interesting to note the use of the expression 'you can't codify the quality of the doing of it'. In describing the process this way, he highlights the difficulty of producing checklists of competences without them becoming ever-more detailed in an attempt to describe the complexity of teaching. What's more he also draws our attention to another issue with competences noted in Chapter 2, that of

their interpretation. As he notes, there is great scope for variation in the value judgments made by different trainers assessing the same teachers against such criteria.

In an earlier section I noted that Shulman's concept of pedagogical content knowledge is helpful in understanding the need for teachers to be able to draw on different types of knowledge and make informed decisions as to how to act. I also drew on the ideas of Aristotle to suggest that it is helpful to view practical knowledge as formed of two distinct parts – one the technical skill to carry out an action or intervention (*technē*); and the other a judgment of if, when and how to carry out that action or intervention (*phronēsis*).

Aristotle's distinction is helpful here. *Technē* is concerned with the knowledge of how to do something, and *Phronēsis* with the need to make the right decision about how to act in a particular situation, how to do what is right at the right time. The situational decision-making, or teacher-judgment that *Phronēsis* describes is central to good teaching and is difficult, if not impossible, to capture within a checklist of competences.

Other trainers explained that, depending on the particular course they were working on, they may use a checklist of competences as a background document, making trainees aware of it as part of general guidance on expectations of the course, but not referring to it explicitly as part of feedback on teaching.

We tend to just refer to it when there's- when they say, 'I don't really understand why you're getting at that or what' you know, as a backup reference, but we don't directly use that checklist for every lesson. (Trainer 2)

In my observations of the Teaching Practice Group cycle the assessment criteria were not referred to directly in the planning or feedback sessions. However, in the CELTA course trainees record their progress in a document that includes the assessment criteria for their teaching practice in the form of a checklist of competences. Trainees are required to 'demonstrate their learning' by ticking those that they think they have met in preparation for their two tutorials with their trainer. In the observed course, this checklist was in the background. However, analysis of

the CELTA assessment criteria (see Appendix 9.10) suggests that they may frame the discourse of the trainer in her feedback to trainees. This trainer suggests that the presence of the checklist helps to provide clarity for trainees on how they are being assessed

I've used them to- in terms of showing students what kinds of things are normally expected or wanted. ...I say, "These are the kind of things we're looking at." (Trainer 3)

Where the checklist is used in this way it can be understood as a form of designed-in scaffolding, aimed at supporting trainees in understanding and responding to trainers' judgments of trainees' teaching. However, where it is not used explicitly in the communication between trainer and trainee its value as a scaffold is limited.

It may also be that knowledge of the checklist and general agreement with the contents (or at least lack of explicit disagreement with them) mean that they inform trainers' judgments in any case. A number of the trainers' interviewed as part of this study appeared to view teacher knowledge as holistic. They recognised that checklists of the type used in the CELTA, can be useful as a description of teaching and that they provide a way to structure the course materials and also to provide trainees with clear guidance on what they need to do in order to pass the course:

if something's gone horribly wrong then I will refer explicitly to the criteria and say, you know, "You are required to demonstrate this, and how could you go about doing that?" and I will refer back to the criteria. If things haven't gone wrong then I don't tend to refer explicitly to the criteria. However, it was unclear how far they use checklists to measure a particular trainee's performance. (Trainer 5)

As noted, the trainers I interviewed were generally sceptical about the value of checklists. However, they also demonstrated awareness of the contradiction in this position in that they were assessing trainees' teaching and yet they were unable to give a clear answer when asked about the criteria they used for that assessment.

I once overheard a discussion between teacher trainers ... discussing that very question and the consensus was that they did it on gut instinct, and I

think more and more that's probably, if I'm honest, what I'd own up to.

(Trainer 3)

This also raises the issue of consistency of judgments across, or even within, courses. If there are no explicit external criteria for the judgments that are made by individual trainers, and if trainers take a different approach to the assessment of particular elements of teaching, it can be confusing for trainees. This particular trainee noted that the message she received from the two trainers who contributed to her course were often poorly aligned:

... it often felt disjointed and didn't actually connect with what the other trainer was saying, it didn't always feel seamless. (Trainee 4)

Another of the interviewed trainees complained that a trainer had been inconsistent in her judgments, another that the judgments of two trainers on a course had been inconsistent. Not only did these issues cause concern, and add to the pressure on trainees, it also made it more difficult for them to develop their understanding of the classroom.

Competence documents may have a role to play in standardisation of trainer assessment, but the sample of trainers interviewed for this study were more likely to mention joint observations and discussion between trainers as key to their confidence in the consistency and clarity of their assessment.

...in all these assessments there is going to be an element of subjectivity in it, and the only thing you can do to try to increase the level of reliability is all the kind of things like standardisation, if possible two people sitting in a lesson occasionally (Trainer 4)

Another trainer, talking about feedback within a CELTA course in which the trainees were organized in two groups with the groups swapping trainers halfway through, was conscious of the danger of trainers giving mixed messages to trainees. She explained that she and her fellow trainer would always meet directly after observed teaching sessions during the break before feedback. In this time, they would talk about the teaching that they had observed and explain what points they were planning to make in feedback.

... often we'll say, "I think this is what I think about their lesson, what do you think? Have a look at the lesson plan or have a look at what I've written."

Hmm. I guess that's the way we do it. (Trainer 1)

Through these discussions the trainer felt that she was able to better understand the approach taken by her colleague and use this awareness in her own feedback to maximise the consistency of the knowledge offer on the course.

None of the interviewed trainees was aware of the specific criteria against which they were being assessed during their observations, or how any such criteria might have influenced the feedback that they received.

... no I'm not aware of any guidelines – I thought that perhaps the only criteria was to turn up. (Trainee 3)

There appears to be a tension between the assessment structure of the Teaching Practice Group model within both the CELTA course and the PGCE, which both use objectivist checklists of competences as both syllabus and assessment criteria, and trainers' rejection of such understandings in favour of subjective views of teaching knowledge.

This trainer acknowledges that it is necessary to refer to the assessment criteria in order to give trainees with clear and consistent feedback on their teaching.

However, he appears to chafe at the constraint he feels that such an approach provides:

For me very often they are something of a nuisance. Because I think- I think they problem with all of that kind of thing is they actually- they actually pull you away from the attention that you're giving to the thing as a whole, and I think that probably I'm more interested in the thing as a whole than in- than in individual things. (Trainer 1)

This conflict may influence their consequent willingness, or reluctance, to use the specified checklists to directly inform their judgements on trainees. In Chapter 7 I will consider how objective and subjective forms of knowledge manifest themselves within the Teaching Practice Group model and how they are used to shape trainees' experience of learning to teach.

5.3 Integration of theory and practice

One of the lessons drawn from the review of literature is that for theory and practice to be effectively integrated in teacher education, beginning teachers need to be made aware of the relevance of that theory to their practice. The simple presentation of theoretical ideas in isolation from practice does not appear to be enough to effectively influence their development as teachers, and their understanding of teaching and learning. This can lead to a situation in which theory is studied as part of a course, and knowledge of it is assessed through assignments, but it has minimal impact on the decisions made by trainees as they gain experience in the classroom and is less likely to be used as a source of reflection to help them understand that experience and build upon it as they begin their careers as teachers.

In discussing the difficulty teachers can have in understanding the relevance of theory to their practice. Bengtsson (1993) explains that trainee teachers often lack self-knowledge because their attention is taken up with what they are seeing and doing rather than with themselves. He describes this as a ‘...property of the human subject, to be directed towards something different than itself’ (1993: 206). This lack of distance makes it challenging to see the relevance of theory to practice because the activity, in this case teaching practice, is seen not as an object, but as the active subject.

Practice is lived through and is not an object of study in the natural attitude.
(1993: 207)

Bengtsson goes on to give two conditions for the integration of theory and practice. Firstly, the teacher should recognise him or herself in the theoretical knowledge about teaching that they are presented with. Secondly, the teacher should be given the opportunity to implement (or in Bengtsson’s words to practise) the theoretical knowledge. Both of these conditions pose real challenges for teacher training courses. How can abstract theories of learning be made relevant to trainees and how can trainees be encouraged to actively use the theoretical knowledge in their practice?

The Teaching Practice Group class is a shared resource and therefore the trainer can refer to particular students within it, but also to their shared experience of observing each other teach. This also means that in feedback the trainer (and trainees) are able to refer back to incidents and episodes in previous classes, or to feedback discussions following those classes, in order to more effectively and efficiently get across points.

In one of the observed feedback sessions, the trainee M expresses confusion about how much time he should plan for a pre-taught vocabulary stage with the words, 'headphones' and 'tape recorder'. This was in response to the trainer, V, who suggested that he had allowed this stage to drag on unnecessarily. V then referred back to a lesson taught in the previous week by another trainee:

Remember G's class last week? He had 'dead-end job' and 'make ends meet' – that's going to take a while to elicit that and concept check and drill it, but with your words, you shouldn't need so long. (Feedback session 1: 06.33)

This shared history of teaching the group can be drawn on to generate powerful contextualization or exemplification for what might otherwise be abstract concepts.

The idea that teacher training programmes should provide knowledge of theory first and then subsequently apply it to the practical task of teaching in the classroom, is known as 'technical rationality'. By placing practical teaching at the centre of the trainee experience, the Teaching Practice Groups model explicitly works against a separation between theory and practice. As the trainee below notes, understanding of ideas discussed in input sessions or the focus of reading is greatly enhanced through practical teaching experience:

I think in the lessons and also reading you can be sitting there and saying, 'yeah I know that, I've taken the notes, I know that', whereas the practical actually being there with real students, I think you just gain so much more from that. (Trainee 1)

In the observed feedback sessions the trainers made frequent reference to forthcoming input sessions in which there would be time to more carefully consider concepts under discussion. However, in teacher training courses that use Teaching

Practice Groups there can be a tension in the alignment of the content of the input sessions with the reality of the teaching practice group classroom. Trainee expectation is often that they will be taught how to teach, for example, a reading lesson in an input session before they are required to teach reading in with a 'live' group of students in the teaching practice class. However, this is not always, or even often, possible in a course that does not take a 'technical rationality' approach. The consequence of this is that trainees often find that they only learn about a particular technique or approach after they have had to try it with the teaching practice group. As one trainee commented:

Sometimes we'd learn something, and it was only weeks later you'd do a class, and you'd think 'oh, I get that now'. (Trainee 1)

This does however emphasise the value to teacher learning of being able to experience, or experiment with, theoretical ideas in the practical setting of an actual classroom. For trainee 1 the theoretical idea from the input session only made sense when she was able to experience it, in action, in the classroom.

In the Teaching Practice Groups model, integration is enhanced by the fact that the trainer who gives the input sessions is usually also the one who observes and gives feedback on the teaching, allowing them to explicitly make the link between input and the teaching practice class. However, this is not always the case. Trainee 6 reported that the lack of alignment between the input sessions and her practical experience caused her frustration. She expected there to be more coherence,, and though that the practical experience should have been designed to support exploration of the approaches to learning that were the focus of the input sessions.

it often felt disjointed by the time you got into the classroom, and that it didn't actually connect with what the trainers are saying and what the lecturers are saying, it didn't always feel seamless (Trainee 6)

A lack of coherence between the theoretical input sessions and the practical teaching experience can be detrimental to the trainee experience. Trainee 4 had a very negative experience in her teaching practice group which she put down to the disconnect she found between what was taught in the input sessions and what she

found with the learners in that teaching practice group. She explained that she felt that the theoretical sessions did not prepare her for what she faced in the classroom and so she found it difficult to translate the ideas discussed and that she had read about in her planning or teaching.

Examples such as those above, in which the elements of the teaching practice group process are not aligned, or part of the process is not followed, or carried out effectively, and consequently the trainee experiences is negative, are also helpful in understanding the way in which the Teaching Practice Groups process supports teacher learning. Here, we can see the importance of theory and practice being aligned in order for the trainee to make sense of their classroom experience and of the theoretical input they receive. The Teaching Practice classroom provides a practical setting in which trainees can make sense of the theoretical ideas that they encounter. For the Teaching Practice Group model to be effective, care needs to be given to enhancing and emphasising those links. When this does not happen, the model appears to be less effective in supporting teacher learning.

The data from this study suggests that the Teaching Practice Group classes provide rich contextualization for theoretical discussions. In feedback sessions trainers have the opportunity to refer back to aspects of the course content that have been covered in input sessions; in feedback on trainees' teaching sessions reference can be made to earlier theoretical input; and in the input sessions themselves reference can be made to the class that the trainees are teaching.

Trainers suggested that this shared experience lends greater focus to the group feedback discussions and can be drawn on in the input sessions, thus emphasising the link between theory and practice. They also suggested that the link works in both directions, with reference made in feedback to theoretical knowledge introduced in course input sessions to illustrate or elicit a point the trainer wants to make about what happened in the teaching session.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reported on data in which trainees consider the ways in which they experienced the theoretical and practical elements of the Teaching Practice

Group model. I have also drawn on data collected from trainers who have worked with the teaching practice group model, in which they reflect on the ways in which they attempt to make theory relevant to trainees' practice.

The data collected provides insights into the structural and procedural elements of the teaching practice group model that support the integration of theory and practice, suggesting that through the designed-in scaffolds of the teaching practice group model, particularly the documentation that trainees are required to complete, but also the planning, teaching/observing, feedback cycle itself, trainees are forced to confront theory with practice and vice versa.

The teaching practice group model is an approach that facilitates the incorporation of teachers' practical knowledge alongside theoretical knowledge. The teaching practice classroom provides a practical setting in which trainees can make sense of the theoretical ideas that they encounter. In interviews with trainees it was clear that they were encouraged to consider theoretical ideas gained through input sessions and readings in the context of their teaching practice class and in turn, to use theory to understand the classroom and their role within it. This interchange between theory and practice is designed-in through the cycle of planning, teaching and feedback.

6. Findings: Teacher Learning

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will draw on concepts of teacher learning discussed in Chapter 3 in order to present and discuss data collected as part of this study related to trainees' experience of learning to teach on courses using the Teaching Practice Group model. I will begin by addressing the suggestion made in the literature that learning to teach is a staged process, with trainees' foci of attention expanding as they learn. I will go on to consider the Teaching Practice Group classroom as a constructivist learning environment, drawing on interview and observation data to demonstrate ways in which the Teaching Practice Group engages trainees actively with the content of the classroom. I will also present analysis of the documentation used as part of the Teaching Practice Group process to show ways in which this, and other elements of the infrastructure of the courses in which the model is used, mediate trainees' learning to teach.

6.2 Progression in attention

...the rabbit in multiple headlights (Trainer 4)

For beginner teachers, just standing up in front of a group of learners and working through a simple lesson plan can be a daunting, and difficult task. In Chapter 4 when discussing teacher learning I introduced the concept of a progression in attention (Kagan 1992:144) as key to understanding teacher learning. Progression in attention suggests that learning to teach involves a movement from a focus on self, the teacher's actions, to the learners and finally their learning. This suggests that in the initial stages of learning to teach trainees will be mainly concerned with their own actions and that their self-consciousness will limit their ability to notice the impact of these actions on the learners.

The trainers interviewed were clear that many of the trainee teachers they had worked with were initially self-conscious, beginning with a preoccupation with themselves and their performance. There is a lot for trainees to think about – the plan, the target language, the names of the students, the timing, working the

technology, and spelling correctly on the board, all in front of observers sitting at the back ready to comment on every decision in the subsequent feedback session. In this situation it is very easy for the trainee to become self-conscious and to think that they are the centre of attention.

Even when they were given guidance on observing the learners, rather than just focusing on the teacher, trainees appeared to find it difficult to see beyond the behaviour of the teacher.

Well I knew that I should be focusing on the learners, but I couldn't help but focus on the other teachers and how they'd structured it and what resources they'd made. (Trainee 6)

Another trainee admitted to being completely oblivious of the learners in her initial observations, so intent was she in watching and learning from her peers' teaching.

I was looking at the learners, but mainly in the context of 'is what the teacher is doing working'. (Trainee 5)

For this trainee there had yet to be a progression in her attention from the teacher to the learner, from the teaching to the learning. Other trainees were able to notice the learners, but still through the lens of the teacher and the teacher's actions. This is, of course, understandable. As one trainer put it:

However often you say to them, 'It's not about you, it's about the students', it kind of is about them, because I'm watching them! (Trainer 3)

Until the trainee is comfortable in the role and secure in the decisions that they have to take, it may be unrealistic to expect them to begin to think about the content of the lessons and the individual students. Indeed, as this comment by one of the interviewed trainers suggests, trainees' main concern in the initial stages of the course often appear to be simply to survive the lesson unscathed, without much concern about anything, or anyone, else.

...they're terribly worried about themselves when they get up, and they're worried about their bits of paper, and they're worried about the board, and

they're worried about the tape recorder if they have to use that, or the CD player, or the video. And they're not worried about the students. (Trainer 4)

This implies that an essential task for teacher trainers working with trainees on initial teacher training programmes is to support them in seeing beyond themselves and their own performance to notice other aspects of the teaching and learning process. In particular the reactions of learners.

Some trainees never get past how they feel about themselves enough to realise that it's about how the students are responding to them. (Trainer 4)

A number of trainees mentioned that observation of their peers helped them to look beyond the teacher and their behaviour and to notice the impact of this on the learners. This movement from a concern with looking, sounding and acting like a teacher, to a concern with the teaching itself, is an important aspect of learning to teach and requires a shift in perspective from a focus on the teacher, to the learners and their learning. In the early stages of teaching practice trainees can be overly concerned with the image of a teacher that they present to the learners (and the observers).

One interviewee, commenting on what she felt that she had learnt from observing her peers teaching, noted how she was better able to focus on the learners when observing than when teaching.

I could see ...that some students needed the same kind of help, but the rest could be pushed a little bit more. (I would watch) the students learning something, how do you know that they are learning something if they are. You could actually very clearly see if learning was taking place or not as a third-person observer, and you could kind of pinpoint what kind of things you need to do to check for learning. (Trainee 7)

Through observation of their peers teaching the group, trainees have the opportunity to learn about the learners in order to better teach them. This suggests that observation of peers can help trainees see beyond the teacher and her success (or otherwise) in acting like a teacher and more on the learners and their learning.

A number of interviewees referred to what they were able to learn about by observing the learners in the class. One of the advantages of the shared class in that the interviewed trainees mentioned simple things such as learning particular learner's names, and seeing how they interacted in the classroom:

More sort of their personalities, and I think, as well, to see who was interacting with who, and as well as that, looking at their levels of ability, so I think those are the things we were looking for, but also to try and remember names as well, I think that was important. (Trainee 1)

Trainees also discussed noticing more complex aspects of the learners' behaviour in the classroom such as the ease, or not, with which they were able to complete certain tasks, their proficiency in the four skills, or their confidence in speaking in front of their peers.

I tried to keep a record of all their names, and I did observe who was quieter and needed pulling out a bit more, and I noticed there was one student who tended to dominate the class, and I needed to make sure she didn't dominate too much, but also trying to handle it sensitively, because she had a learning disability. (Trainee 2)

Focussing trainees' attention on the learners rather than the teacher also appeared to help them to prepare for their own teaching slot with the group, informing the decisions that they subsequently make in their planning.

One interviewed trainer spoke of the need for trainees to gain confidence in their ability to manage the classroom before they were able to relax enough to shift their attention away from their own actions onto those of their learners.

... you need to feel comfortable in the class before you can begin to think about the content of the lessons and the individual students. (Trainer 3)

As this trainer noted, once a trainee has mastered such basic techniques they can then begin to adapt and personalise the way that they use them:

Well I think when you begin anything new you need- you know, like if you're learning to play the piano you need somebody to say, "Here is a way of doing

it,” because you don't know how to do it at all. And then as you get more experienced and more comfortable you can improvise because you've got that basic structure (Trainer 3)

A major part of that ‘being comfortable’, according to this trainer, was being able to carry out what I will call here the basics of classroom management:

Really basic things like how you start and finish activities, how you get attention, things like that giving instructions ... standing in front of the class, making eye contact, speaking clearly and so on. (Trainer 3)

Cognitive theories of learning suggest that for experienced teachers, the basics are ingrained and do not require conscious attention. However, for the novice much of what they do in class is conscious, sometimes painfully so, and takes a great deal of their available attention, making it more difficult for them to pay adequate attention to the learners and their learning.

6.2.1 Routines

In Chapter 4 I discussed the use of routines within teaching, defining these as strategies of teaching developed over time and used at regular points in the course of a lesson in regular configurations and sequences with specific activities. Routines are not concerned with teaching content, instead they deal with the logistics of the classroom. One trainer recalled the way in which they were introduced to one such routine:

The first time I saw somebody go around a room going, “John, Paul, George, Ringo,” and then making four groups out of that, you know, I thought, “God, that's brilliant,” you know, “I don't have to now sort of panic about getting equal groups of four.” (Trainer 3)

A routine should free the teacher to focus on the students’ performance, by making elements of his or her own performance automatic. In the example below Trainer 4 describes how she works with trainees on a routine for drilling pronunciation.

...so working on pronunciation, so you- they kind of memorise the idea that you should say something at least three times and then the learners say it

together, choral drilling, to give the learners confidence, etcetera, then you get individual learners to say it. What you're trying to instil in them is the behaviour about the number of times you say it and the way learners say it. But the only way that will lead to learning is if they understand that the nature of pronunciation, the nature of utterances, and the formulation of sounds. But probably they can start with just say it three times and get them to say it X number of times and then get individuals to say it. (Trainer 4)

A pronunciation drill has a series of set phases and within each phase there are a series of actions that the teachers has to carry out to elicit certain behaviours from the students. However, as Trainer 4 points out, there is little value in the trainee being able to carry out the drill without noticing the production of the students. A perfectly executed drill is of little use if the students' production of the target sounds is inaccurate and the teacher does not notice. It is also counter-productive for the teacher to go through a full drill routine when the students are able to accurately produce the sounds correctly first time. Again, here we see trainers linking the learning or mastery of basic teaching techniques with improved ability to see and understand the language class.

The evidence suggests that routines can be of great benefit to trainees, freeing up cognitive, and emotional capacity, to deal with more important issues. However, trainees need to be made aware of the underpinning principles behind such routines so that they are able to adapt them to the changing circumstances of the classroom. If not, they can become limiting, suggesting to trainees that the classroom is fixed and predictable and that teachers' responses to events in the classroom can also be fixed and predictable. Widdowson (1997: 121) describes the use of routines in this way as a part of teacher education as solution-oriented, in contrast to a problem-oriented approach in which trainees are given greater awareness of the theoretical principles underlying the particular routine. Where the focus of the trainee is on replication, not understanding of the principles that are used to generate the moves of the routine, there is a danger of what Bourdieu termed learned ignorance, as trainees imitate the teaching activities that they observe, but without knowledge of the underpinning theory.

The trainers interviewed reported that they introduced a number of routines in the initial stages of training and were aware of their potential benefits in freeing up trainee attention. Here Aristotle's distinction between *Techne*, the knowledge of how to do something, and *Phronēsis*, the wisdom of knowing when and how to act, is of great relevance. As with any teaching technique it is not just the ability to carry out a routine, to order instructions of activities in the correct order, that leads to effective teaching, it is also the knowledge of when to carry it out.

Trainers were also aware of the dangers of trainees not understanding the 'why' as well as the 'how' of routines.

...one of my beliefs is that it's important to theorise practice, so that you start with some of the practical things, out of which you draw the theory. But I would never like to say that all they would come out is knowing, "I have to say it three times and they have to say it five times," unless they have some understanding of why that is. (Trainer 3)

This trainer went on to explain that he felt that without an understanding of 'why' trainees would be unable to adapt the routines to other contexts. As a result, the routine would be less effective, or even counter-productive, leading, among other things, to the teacher abandoning it. When teachers understand the underpinning principles of a routine, they are more likely to be able to then adapt it in response to another teaching context.

6.3 Teaching Practice Groups as a constructivist learning environment

6.3.1 Introduction

In this section I will present interview and observation data relevant to each of the three distinct stages of the cycle: planning, observing, and feedback. The focus of the analysis is the nature of the engagement of trainees with the content of learning to teach, and the ways in which their learning is mediated by the environment created as part of the model.

The social context in the Teaching Practice Group model is the shared group of learners and the classroom in which the teaching takes place. Indeed, a distinctive feature of teaching practice groups is the shared nature of much of the activity. One

of the interviewed trainers described teaching practice groups as a ‘...social, collaborative experience’ (trainer 2), relating the type of learning in the Teaching Practice Group model to a social view of language learning:

It (TP) mirrors what we kind of- or what we might believe- certainly what I probably believe now about learning, that learning is a social process, as is communication, and a TP group kind of mirrors that. (Trainer 3)

Data from this study suggests that in the Teaching Practice Group model the classroom is both the focus and the place of learning about how to teach. Planning is carried out jointly, all teaching is observed by multiple observers, and feedback is also a shared, group activity.

The Teaching Practice Groups included in this study were organized in three distinct stages following the model outlined in the introduction: planning, teaching/observing, and feedback. In each of the stages social constructivist constructions of learning play an important role, as trainees build on their existing knowledge and understanding largely through their interactions with each other around the teaching and learning of the shared group of learners.

As well as learning from the advice and feedback of their trainers, trainees also have the opportunity to learn from each other through the teaching practice group. The trainees interviewed as part of this study felt that they were able to learn from the experience and knowledge of others, particularly through joint planning with their peers. The trainees appear to have ‘borrowed’ ideas, techniques and approaches from each other in these planning sessions and also when observing their peers. One trainee noted the specific elements of a fellow trainee’s teaching practice that she drew on in developing her own teaching:

Emma, who is an experienced teacher, her drilling and eliciting was just exemplary, I think that was very interesting to watch, to see the sort of elements that I myself needed to learn and practice. (Trainee 3)

The experience of observing her peer acts as a reflective trigger for this trainee, helping her to think about and improve her own performance. It was clear in the interviews with trainees that they felt that they had knowledge that was of use to

each other. Trainees reported that they benefited from working with their fellow trainees in order to make sense of the shared classroom and complete the tasks that were expected of them.

As part of the Teaching Practice Group process, trainees watch each other teach the shared group. These observations often include a specific task for the trainee to complete, ensuring focus on a particular element of the class, such as interaction patterns, teacher voice, or questioning techniques. Trainees also have access to copies of the lesson plan for them to better understand the intentions of the observed teacher. The lesson plans, as with the observation tasks, guide trainees attention to specific elements of the lesson, such as transitions between stages, and the aims of those stages. The lesson plans also include descriptions of any grammar or lexis included in the lesson, again providing a scaffold for the learning of the observing trainee. Through this structured, and scaffolded, approach to observation trainees are explicitly encouraged to learn from each other and subsequently to experiment, incorporating elements of this observed practice into their own practice. As one trainer noted:

It's not just you the tutor, you the tutor. You know there's just no end to the things that they can learn from each other, as long as they are focusing, as long as they notice things. (Trainer 3)

Evidence from this study suggests that there is intentionality in the way in which trainers use Teaching Practice Groups in order to encourage trainees to learn from each other through peer observation. However, it also suggests that trainees may struggle to benefit fully from such opportunities.

6.3.2 Planning

Joint planning is an important aspect of the teaching practice process. In the groups observed as part of this study, trainees shared the group of learners, with trainees each teaching a part of the lesson. This required them to coordinate their planning to ensure that each whole lesson was cohesive in terms of theme, activities, balance of skills and language content.

I would work with the other trainees to sort things out... if we were both doing different parts of the lesson, I would try to liaise with my colleagues to see that things flowed on logically, so that we weren't doing the same things, so things made sense to the students, really. (Trainee 2)

From this starting point, with a specific language or skills focus identified and also possibly a topic within which to contextualize the work, trainees sat together and discussed possible ways to approach the lesson. Interviewees reported that this involved a great deal of fruitful negotiation, with ideas for activities, resources and also language analysis being discussed.

...we'd meet and brainstorm all sorts of ideas, and the most popular one, or most clear one, would be picked and based on that we'd come up with activities together, and divide who does what. (Trainee 7)

This collaborative process was highly valued by the trainees interviewed who saw it as an opportunity to try out ideas and learn from others in a safe environment. A number of trainees talked about it in terms of brainstorming, suggesting that it was rich in ideas:

...it was a useful brainstorming session, it was sort of more useful than doing it on one's own, and much better ideas. (Trainee 5)

We'd have a discussion between us of how we were going to do it was a useful brainstorming session, and we'd also 'oh we can do that!' and "yeah!" (Trainee 4)

Trainees were positive about the opportunities that joint planning with their peers offered them to learn from the experience and knowledge of others, with those with experience of teaching, whether it was in a similar context or not, seen as particularly valuable.

I think the secondary school teacher was very good at planning lessons, I mean obviously she'd done quite a lot of it, she could see through the flim flam and see what it was that needed to be done, and obviously the sort of thread that needed to run through the lesson, 'we can do that, then we can do that and that', and I'd tend to be 'oh yeah'. (Trainee 2)

The expression 'see through the flim flam' is an interesting one here. 'Flim flam' is generally defined as 'deceptive nonsense'. The trainee's use of this expression suggests that for her the process of planning a lesson was far from straightforward, perhaps the 'flim flam' here was jargon used in planning (stages, aims etc.), or analysis of the language, or just the wide array of possible resources to be selected from published materials. In contrast to this, her colleague's experience provided clarity and structure demystifying the process and highlighting to her what she needed to focus on in planning a lesson with a coherent thread through it.

A number of trainees mentioned that working jointly with others took some of the pressure off them to come up with ideas for the structure and content of the teaching that they had to do. It also allowed them to work to their strengths in supporting the planning of others, by contributing ideas and critiquing plans.

I'd tend to do more the language stuff, 'oh we could concentrate more on this tense by taking that out, extracting it out of this bit of writing and then they could do their own writing', so the language-focused stuff I always tended to be better at. (Trainee 2)

Trainees also reported that the interventions made by the trainer around the lesson plan of one of the trainees often involved the other trainees. In one of the planning sessions that I observed four trainees (C, M, J & D) were working together to plan for their next teaching slot. They worked in pairs - two who were teaching that day and two who were teaching the following day. The discussion centred on the trainees' plans, which were in different stages of development.

The course trainer (V) was also at the same table providing support and advice. She sometimes addressed her comments to the whole group, making general points about planning or the specific group of learners. However, more often, her comments were directed towards an individual. When this was the case the others were able to listen due to the fact that they were all working on a single table. For example, while looking at M's lesson plan, V clarified that the context and the language that the trainees were planning to teach should be recorded within the learning aim section of the lesson plan. This was a general message, addressed to all, but also a pointer for M who had failed to do this.

While planning together trainees were also able to learn from each other as well as the trainer. In the same session V questioned the timing of one of M's activities: "You've got nine minutes. Is one question enough?". She described the plan as "not meaty enough". J was not formally part of this conversation, but was listening as she worked on her own lesson plan for the following day. She drew on the group's shared knowledge of the learners to remind the others that, in a discussion in class the previous lesson, the learners had shown interest in food and that perhaps he could include a few questions to link back to that in order to fill the nine minutes more comfortably. Her interjection was incorporated as natural and welcome and M enthusiastically adopted it into his planning.

In the same observed planning session, the conversation between the group of four trainees moved from the activities and materials that they were preparing for the next day's teaching to the group of learners, in particular one, Arturo. The trainees felt that Arturo had a tendency to dominate and that he had been difficult for some of them to control. V recounted an episode from a previous lesson in which Arturo had been difficult to keep quiet, but in which G (a trainee in the other teaching practice group) had managed him very well. Subsequently, "to do a G" became advice to bear in mind when confronted with Arturo in full flow. This exchange sparked J to reflect that she would like to see the other group teach as she felt that they were learning so much from seeing each other teach and she would like to extend that by also observing others on the course.

While trainees were generally positive about the support that they received in planning and the opportunity to learn from each, as well as the trainer, as part of this process, they also noted a number of negative aspects of the process.

The time that the interviewed trainees were able to use for joint planning varied depending largely on their individual circumstance, but also on the way their particular course was structured. In some cases planning followed the feedback session, meaning that it came at the end of the day with the consequence that any over-run in the teaching and / or feedback would reduce the time that trainees had to work together.

The success or otherwise of the joint planning process also appeared to depend on the willingness of all of the trainees to be open and collaborate. When this was not the case, trainees reported that they found the process less helpful.

Trainee 1 did not benefit from joint planning of lessons largely due to interpersonal issues between trainees that the trainer was unable to resolve. She contrasted this with successful collaboration with another group of trainees earlier in the course and concluded that the second experience of Teaching Practice Groups had been significantly impacted by this lack of collaboration. Even where trainees were committed to working together, individual trainees' circumstances could disrupt the process and lead to less satisfactory outcomes.

It was difficult because I think each of the people missed a class, and we all lived quite far away from each other, so there wasn't quite so much communication, so that was a bit more difficult. (Trainee 1)

Where the joint planning was disrupted by individual circumstances or by the lack of commitment of individuals, or of course by clashes of personality, not only was the potential for learning from the process reduced, but the experience was significantly less positive for the trainees.

... in terms of communicating and planning together with the other trainees, it was known that we didn't have to rely on each other because it was a disaster ... I think that's what I hated most (Trainee 3)

Interviewees noted that when the collaboration with their peers broke down there was great potential for problems with overlap and repetition of certain activities or language items in their lessons and lack of adequate preparation of the learners in one part of the lesson for the following section.

...we chose what we wanted to do, which, to me, wasn't quite as good, I preferred having some guidance, and also from the student's point of view, having continuity, which I didn't think they were getting. (Trainee 1)

This lack of coherence in planning could have serious consequences for the success of a trainee's individual teaching slot and for their learning experience on the course. It can be argued that this provides evidence for the importance of each element of

the teaching practice cycle being fully realized. Where that is not the case, with trainees planning their lessons without reference to each other instead of collaborating to produce a coherent student experience, the positive impact on teacher learning of the structure of the course appeared to be weakened.

Following the joint planning sessions trainees continued their planning alone as they developed their own detailed plans for the particular session that they were scheduled to teach. This involved researching any language points and deciding how to present these to the learners as well as preparing for any questions that might come up.

Being fully prepared in terms of the language items appears to have been a particular concern for the trainees: being asked 'difficult' questions by learners and not being able to respond was a particular fear.

... I would go and read research, make sure that I fully understood. ... so that if someone asks a question I can try and answer, and not just figure out.

(Trainee 1)

The courses that I observed, and those that the interviewed trainees had completed, require trainees to complete a specific language analysis sheet identifying what they understand about the language points that are included in their lessons. The language analysis sheets used structured trainees' engagement with the language that they needed to work with in their lesson. It guided them in discovering relevant information about the language item, raising their awareness of what it means to diagnose a piece of language for teaching, as well as supporting them in more effectively preparing for their lesson.

Language analysis is an area that trainers mentioned as providing particular challenges for trainees and one in which they were frequently able to assist through one to one support in the planning sessions.

I mean a recent intensive course I did, the- one of the trainees really struggled with some of the grammatical terminology, particularly around tenses and so I remember the first lesson she did with me was- it must have been an upper intermediate group so something like conditionals, something

a bit complex, and I spent a little bit more time with her in the planning because I thought from the input that she was really confused by the terminology and the concepts. (Trainer 4)

It is interesting to note here the use that the trainer has made of her own observation of the trainee in input sessions within the course on language analysis – identifying that this particular trainee is weak in that area and so offering targeted support during a subsequent planning session.

A number of the trainees spoke about sharing their lesson plans with their teaching partners by email before the day of the class to ensure that they were taking a consistent approach to the topic and to the language being presented. This is of particular importance when one trainee is required to introduce language or concepts that the following trainee will use in her lesson and again underlines the intended collaborative nature of the planning process.

... we had to, the plan had to flow, even though we were doing four different things, or two, as weeks went by, we were taking one hour each turn, so but even then all four of us had to plan to make sure that it made sense. (Trainee 2)

Some also mentioned sending the completed lesson plan to the trainer for comment, though pressure of time often worked against this with trainees only completing their plan the night before they were teaching.

6.3.3 Observation

It was nice to see other techniques and methods and see that 'you know what, that works, and you should try it'. (Trainee 7)

The Teaching Practice Group process is built around a cycle of planning, teaching and feedback, much as any other form of practical teacher training. However, it differs from other forms of teacher training in the central role played by peers in observing each other teaching the same group of learners.

... because we were a group, it was a different perspective, and we got to look at it not just from the trainer's view, but also from other peers, so it was good. (Trainee 7)

The trainers interviewed were very aware of the value of peer observation. By observing their fellow trainees and then joining in the feedback sessions on their teaching, they felt that trainees were able to take a more objective view of the classroom, free of some of the pressure that comes from standing up in front of the group and performing.

I've found it incredibly valuable - in terms of them observing each other and coming to realisations about what other people are doing as well as themselves. (Trainer 4)

The trainees interviewed agreed that for trainees observing their peers teaching and in turn being observed by their peers teaching was influential in their learning to teach. However, there are of course also negative aspects to learning to teach in front of your peers. In each teaching practice session there may be as many as five other trainees observing as well as the trainer and of course the learners themselves, who are fully aware that the 'teacher' in front of them is actually a learner. Such a level of scrutiny can be daunting for trainees.

...it was like being multiply watched all the time, it's like you're being assessed and observed by the students themselves, or rather learners, by your fellow trainee students, and by your teacher, so it was like hundreds of eyes, so it tended to feel like a little performance, each one was a performance, very nerve-wracking, never really got less nerve-wracking. (Trainee 5)

In such high stakes circumstances the role of the trainer in managing the process, focusing observers on specific elements of the lesson and fostering a non-judgmental and collegiate atmosphere is of great importance.

As discussed above, some trainees talked about explicitly 'borrowing' ideas, activities, and resources that they had observed their peers using:

I had an amazing bunch of people with me. One, an experienced teacher, and oh gosh I learnt perhaps more than from anyone else, because she had all these tricks and resources. (Trainee 3)

There were a number of similar comments from the trainees I interviewed in which they referred to what they perceived to be advantages that some of their peers had. As in the above quotation references were often made to peers who had prior teaching experience, but comments were also made about peers who were very good at making attractive resources or who had excellent language awareness, or, as in the case described below, made good use of certain activities that the observer felt they could learn from and replicate.

For example, there was a game – I never incorporate games in my thing just because the giving instructions is too much, especially when you're working with low levels, but one of the trainees on the course, my peer, did a very simple game without talking, and actually presented the rules, which was fantastic, and I thought 'oh my god that's really cool' (Trainee 7)

In each case the trainee observing felt that they gained understanding and were able to improve their own performance by observing and reflecting on the teaching of their peers.

I'm an improviser, but I saw the light in actually having something prepared because it takes the stress off of you, and all these kinds of things, and how to prepare so that you can use them for future use as well. (Trainee 7)

This particular trainee was open about her own tendency to 'wing it' in most things and was resentful about the need to produce detailed lesson plans, and especially the need to engage in language analysis as part of the planning process. This can be a particular issue with language teaching trainees who are preparing to teach their own language. As noted in Chapter 2, often native speakers of English are recruited to teach English despite their lack of explicit knowledge of how the language works. However, their confidence in using the target language, and their status as a native speaker, can lead to a false sense of security. In effect they can feel that their linguistic knowledge is such that they will be able to come up with good examples and clear explanations of the target language without prior consideration. The reality is that without this understanding of the mechanisms of the target language they will be less able to support their students in developing their own knowledge of the language.

Trainee 7 commented on the influence of her peers on her own learning about planning. She explained that she came to see the value of detailed planning while observing her peers discussing how to explain and exemplify the target language from their lesson in student-centred ways.

It helped me see that planning carefully meant I was able to just enjoy the lesson more. I didn't need to think constantly about what to do next, or how to explain new vocabulary, and so I began to spend less time talking and more time focusing on the reactions of the learners. (Trainee 7)

While a number of interviewees spoke about picking up ideas for specific activities and resources while observing, this appeared to be more likely to happen in discussions during the planning stage, in which they often had the opportunity to produce lesson resources collaboratively and so learn from those with more experience in, or flair for, resource development. It should be noted here that while there was evidence of peer learning, none of the trainees interviewed spoke about their peers as substitute trainers. Instead, as we will see in the following section, they often saw them as models of particular aspects of teaching.

Some trainees noted the possibility of observing and copying the teaching styles of other trainees. Trainee 5 described quite specific things that she observed and learnt from:

There was one girl, who ... had very good classroom management techniques, students were always very engaged in her lessons, and she did all these techniques that I'd never seen before. (Trainee 5)

However, in other cases the lessons learnt from the observation were more general and impressionistic, reflecting concerns that trainees often have when they begin to teach that they do not 'look like' teachers. This focus on 'looking like a teacher' came up in a number of the interviews:

... there are two trainees that I can think of, who seemed to switch it on, who'd opened the door and speak more loudly, more confidently, and communicating with the students much more effectively, I think, with that 'air of tutor'. (Trainee 1)

In the above quote the trainee portrays teaching in part as an act, with the implication that the teacher needs to develop and learn to 'switch on' a teacher persona to successfully manage and engage the learners.

For many people, standing in front of a group of adults can lead to self-consciousness, particularly in the context of a teacher training course with standards to meet and learning to demonstrate to the trainer and to peers. This trainee expresses the pressure of being watched, pressure that is increased by lack of experience and confidence in their ability to stand up and be the teacher'.

... just to be in front of a class ... everyone is looking at me and they're expecting something from that it's like 'oh no now I have to deliver' and you know, 'I have to be pitch perfect in every way' and I always worry that 'oh they will notice' that I'm nervous or that I've done something wrong about something which happens or which I just don't know the answer to something (Trainee 3)

In these circumstances, it is unsurprising that the trainee felt self-conscious, and was concerned about looking like a teacher. The exposure of trainees to scrutiny is greater in the Teaching Practice Group model than in other forms of teacher training because of the presence of other trainees in the classroom taking notes and preparing to discuss the trainee's performance in feedback. In all forms of teaching practice trainees are observed by multiple eyes, with a trainer and of course students all sitting watching the person standing at the front. However, in the Teaching Practice Group model this is certainly amplified by the presence of the other trainees, particularly as they are likely to be writing notes as they observe for use in the subsequent feedback session.

A number of the interviewees commented admiringly on the confident manner in which their peers approached their teaching, noting this as something that they had learnt from and tried to emulate.

...just watching them having this sort of 'act' as teachers ... the way they talk, and they go there, and they present themselves in a much more confident,

teacher-like way they project their voice, the way they talk, a sort of classroom talk. (Trainee 3)

In this quote, we can see that the trainee is not focussing on the activities that her peer carried out with the group. Instead her focus is on the perceived 'teacherly' behaviour of her peer, as evidenced particularly in her communication with the learners.

It was not just those who had prior teaching or other relevant experience that made them comfortable in front of a group whom trainees felt that they could learn from.

It was good watching other people, sort of seeing what each individual person, the strengths they had to bring to the class. (Trainee 5)

Interviewees noted other things, such as energy, careful listening, even kindness, as strengths that they could learn from.

However, it could also be argued that observing their more confident peers appearing to teach effortlessly could have a negative impact on their confidence in their own ability to learn to teach, fuelling their insecurity rather than inspiring them to develop their own style. This could be compounded because trainees knew that to a certain extent they were being compared to their peers by the trainer. As participants on an accredited teacher training course they are all trying to reach the same standards and achieve the badge of course completion and the status that confers, - this can lead to competition: '...there was always a slight air of, not competition but slightly comparing yourselves to each other' (Trainee 5). However, there were few negative comments in this sense. Instead trainees were positive about the opportunity to observe and learn from the teaching styles of their peers.

The focus on acting, or looking, like a teacher, evidenced here, betrays trainees' sense that they are imposters in front of the group of learners, and their fear of being found out by the learners, and negatively assessed by the trainer. For the trainees interviewed as part of this study, observation and mimicry of the behaviours of their more outwardly confident peers appeared to have a role to play in helping them overcome this insecurity.

While learning from the strengths of their peers was a common theme in the interviews, just as prevalent was learning from what trainees perceived as others' mistakes. As the trainee below noted it was often the negative aspects of the teaching of their peers which they found most useful to them in increasing their understanding of the teaching and learning process and in addressing their own development needs.

Sometimes you'd learn from people doing something not so well, actually, in the same way as you learn as a person. I learned quite a lot from where things didn't work so well. (Trainee 6)

One interviewee described a lesson she had observed in which her fellow trainee consistently failed to use the students' names.

Yeah, there was one person who wasn't using the students' names, and it was really clear, and I think you know, by observing him doing that, we all became aware ourselves and we were making more effort to include all the students, so the next time he was teaching, we were so aware that he wasn't doing it, and that never seemed to change (Trainee 1)

Nomination is an important tool for teachers to use, not only does it aid general classroom management by clarifying who the teacher is addressing with a question or comment, it also puts the learners at ease, signalling that the teacher thinks of them as individuals rather than as generic learners. By observing her peer failing to use nomination, this trainee was able to see the consequence of not using learners' names and to plan to adjust her own behaviour when in front of the group accordingly.

Another common example of learning from negative aspects of observed practice was giving instructions. This is something that many trainees find difficult when they begin teaching and something that can have a disproportionately negative impact on the perceived success or otherwise of a class. One interviewee spoke about observing another trainee having trouble explaining a task to the learners as helping her to realize that her own instructions lacked simplicity and clarity.

Yeah, like instruction tasks, you realised that some people did it and were much too wordy, giving instructions that were much too advanced for that particular level, it made you drill down to the things more precisely, instead of thinking 'they didn't understand that instruction' you'd think 'why didn't they understand that instruction. (Trainee 2)

We can see from this quote that the trainee has reflected on the incident she observed. She has isolated and named the incident, classifying it as 'teacher instructions' and she has asked why it did not work as expected. Through reflection on this question she has been able to identify factors that impact on the success, or not, of her instructions, and to adjust her plans accordingly. Observing and recognizing poor practice in her peer's class provides her with a chance to see the consequences in terms of learner understanding and engagement.

Also seeing what people did wrong, and you think "oh no they're not going to - the learners aren't going to understand that because... whatever' and that sort of helped me formulate what I was going to do next. (Trainee 5)

For beginner teachers, teaching, particularly teaching an observed lesson, is a stressful experience and it can be difficult to clearly recall sequences of events and so to relate cause and effect. In the role of observer this is less the case. The interviewees reported that they were able to identify issues such as wordy or unclear instructions, and see the impact of such behaviour on the learners, allowing them to reflect and work to guard against similar problems in their own teaching.

6.3.4 Feedback

Feedback in the Teaching Practice Group models observed as part of this study took place immediately after the taught session. The trainer, the trainees who have taught and those who observed all sat together round the table. The feedback was led by the trainer, but everyone was expected to contribute actively to collaborative formative feedback discussions, those who had taught in the session as well as those who had just observed. In this section I will draw on interviews with trainers and trainees to highlight a series of themes concerning the feedback process.

The data from this study suggests that trainees were required to describe and feedback on their peers' teaching and to respond to their peers' feedback on their own teaching, thus reflecting on action. For this to work, trainees need to develop reflective skills and deploy these in a very public manner by engaging in reflective talk in front of the trainer and their peers. As noted in Chapter 2 engagement in such a complex participation structure is challenging as it requires trainees to understand and take on roles that may not be familiar to them, such as 'reflective practitioner', or 'peer assessor' as well as mastering the discourse practices associated with them (Copland 2008:10). They also have to be aware of interpersonal differences and tensions within the group of trainees while carrying out these roles.

Trainees were also encouraged, through the use of personal development objectives to anticipate feedback and consider the impact of their teaching and the learning activities they had devised while in front of the learners. In so doing they were forced to think about and make sense of issues related to their own practice and to respond immediately in the classroom, reflecting-in-action. They were then given the opportunity to explore and develop their reflection-on-action through the collaborative feedback session.

Feedback on their peers' teaching also provided an opportunity for reflection-on-action. As trainees evaluated their peers' teaching and articulated their thoughts on this, they were given the opportunity to consider issues in their own practice.

While the observed feedback sessions were structured around discussion of each individual teaching slot, with one particular trainee the 'subject' of the discussion at any one time, they were also a group practice. The class as a shared resource emphasizes that any learning from the feedback session should be understood as directed at each of the trainees, not just the individual who was teaching at the time.

In the first feedback session that I observed the trainees began by chatting about the attendance of the students that day. They appeared to be pleased that it was so high, taking it as a sign that the students were enjoying the class. The trainer noted that attendance was indeed unusually good, providing a sideways complement to the trainees. In this short discussion to which all of the trainees contributed, those who had taught that day and those who had just observed, were able to

demonstrate their growing knowledge of the group by commenting on, and naming, particular students who were there or not. The session thus began with an acknowledgement and confirmation both that the group was shared and that those who had not taught that particular session had an equal stake in and knowledge of the student group.

A number of interviewees noted how they were encouraged to focus on the learners within the feedback session, with discussion of the contribution of particular students, or of their engagement with the class.

... we'd talk about them quite a lot and their progression, you know, strengths and weaknesses, stuff like that. We talked about the learners quite a lot, 'how did you think so and so was today' and so on, Trainee 5

Interviewed trainers also mentioned this, noting that it was aimed at ensuring that trainees' growing understanding of the language classroom was student-centred, rather than being focussed solely on the actions of the teacher. They also felt that it supported trainees in better understanding the students in the group, making it easier for them to both plan effectively and to subsequently manage the group when they come to teach them.

Models of feedback

Within each observed feedback session there were a variety of phases and different interaction patterns. The exact pattern of these varied depending on the trainer, but all involved self and peer evaluation of the observed teaching slots.

Interviewees reported a number of different ways in which the trainers organised the group feedback process. This trainee noted the structure used by her trainer.

... she would initially ask us how we felt that it went, so our strengths and weaknesses, and then she'd give her own feedback, and then ask the other students if there was anything they wanted to contribute. So, we all needed to comment on each other constructively. We were given written feedback, which was helpful. (Trainee 2)

Each model shared the same four elements as those outlined in the quote above: reflection from the person who had been teaching (*she would initially ask us how we felt that it went*), comments from their peers (*ask the other students if there was anything they wanted to contribute*), comments from the trainer (*she'd give her own feedback*), and written feedback from the trainer (*We were given written feedback*). The order and their emphasis did differ, but we can see that the elements here mirror the phases of feedback identified by Copland (2008): trainee self-evaluation, questioning by the trainer, trainer feedback, peer feedback, and a summary from the trainer. Some of the feedback was provided in pairs, but the majority involved the whole group. Similarly to the data collected by Copland, in this study self-evaluation preceding peer evaluation followed by trainer evaluation was reported as the most common order of the phases

Much of the consistency in the organisation of group feedback reported by the interviewed trainers and observed in the site visits, appears to derive from the fact that the trainers first used teaching practice groups within a CELTA course. As noted previously, the CELTA model is very effectively moderated and through external assessors, joint tutoring, and perhaps the mobility of CELTA trainers, a consistent model has emerged.

The trainer below notes that her role as an external assessor has meant that she has observed lots of feedback sessions on different courses and that she has internalised and replicated the models she has seen in her own training courses.

I'm an assessor for the CELTA and so as part of every assessment I do I watch a feedback session. I think I've had ideas for the operational side of that- of that TP feedback- you know, putting people into pairs, getting somebody to lead the group. (Trainer 4)

All of the interviewees commented on the fact that at times group feedback was a painful process, with one trainee describing being the subject of public critique by the trainer and her peers as '*intimidating*'. However, in order to support the development of the trainees it is important for feedback to be meaningful and for that to happen it is necessary that it involves constructive criticism. Another trainee alluded to the potential for this to be challenging for some participants.

Some cried. Not because of me, but because of the tutor. (Trainee 7)

A common pattern of feedback was for the trainer to 'sandwich' negative comments with positive ones, or to begin with the positive and then move on to the areas for improvement. A number of trainees also noted that a similar pattern was expected of them when providing their feedback. As one interviewee commented:

...you said two good things, two bad things, well not bad things, things that could be improved on. (Trainee 4)

It is interesting to note how sensitive this trainee is about the language that she uses and the potential impact of negative feedback. It appears that she is aware of the needs to be sensitive and constructive in her criticism and so corrects herself to use more positive language.

The trainers that I spoke to all ensured that trainees had clear roles in the feedback process: critiquing other trainees; reporting on data collected through observation tasks; or commenting on the feedback of others. In Chapter 2, I suggested that trainees may find it difficult to carry out some of these roles and may even be uncomfortable critiquing the teaching of their peers as they may feel that they lack the necessary expertise as beginner teachers themselves. Brookfield (2012) calls this a sense of 'impostership' – the trainees do not feel that they have the necessary expertise to provide useful feedback, leading to peer feedback that is bland and unhelpful.

... they were just so unused to giving feedback about each other that it was like- I mean blood from a stone doesn't even describe it. And there was a very, you know, the- it was, "Oh, everything was wonderful," and maybe the only critique was, "The colour of the pen wasn't so clear on the board."
(Trainer 4)

However, it was also clear from the interviewed trainers that, while the roles in feedback may be unfamiliar to trainees, through engaging with the process in a supportive environment, most were able to contribute.

...it's through doing these- this feedback that we build up their ability to give- to give feedback to each other (Trainer 4)

Managing feedback

Interviewed trainers were clear that joint feedback sessions require careful management. In any feedback on observed teaching it can be difficult for the observed teacher to recognise the description and analysis given by the observer and to accept any suggestions for improvement. In the teaching practice group model, this is exacerbated by the very public nature of the comment.

A number of trainees commented on this. Here one notes her awareness of the potentially sensitive nature of the discussion.

The tutor was very careful about upsetting people because I think she noticed as well, ... it kind of became touchy after a while, so she would be very careful what to say. (Trainee 7)

How the critique is received by the observed teacher depends on the skill of the trainer in giving feedback, but also on the openness of the observed trainee.

...if you were good with taking feedback, then you heard what she wanted to say, but if you were sensitive, it came across as negative, even the positive side. (Trainee 7)

The interviewed trainers felt that trainees need to be supported in engaging with the feedback process with expectations of their level of engagement increasing as they become more used to, and comfortable within the process. The trainer has a key role to play in drawing all participants into the discussion and facilitating their contribution through skilled questioning and explicit structuring of the feedback session. A number of trainers also demonstrated awareness that they needed to give trainees time to learn how to give (and take) feedback.

... it's through doing these- this feedback that we build up their ability to give- to give feedback to each other. (Trainer 4)

As discussed above, trainees may find the requirement placed on them to actively engage and to take a critical role difficult. It can seem unnatural for a trainee with little experience of teaching, or one who is insecure in the knowledge that their experience has given them, to critique the performance of peers, not least because

they know that they will be critiqued in turn by those same peers. This can lead to bland affirmative contributions from trainees.

And there was a very, you know, the- it was, "Oh, everything was wonderful," and maybe the only critique was, "The colour of the pen wasn't so clear on the board" (Trainer 4)

A number of trainees also commented on tensions that could arise between peers in the group feedback sessions when comments were made that were perceived as excessively negative or feedback was seen as unfair to a particular trainee. Interviewees appeared to have been aware of this potential for tension between peers and to have attempted to be careful not to say anything that could be interpreted as excessively negative.

... there was an example where someone had printed something off, and there was a spelling error, there was a grammatical error, you know, and I thought, you know, you want to say, "how could you do that, that's terrible", but you have to say "perhaps more proof-reading might be helpful in future".
(Trainee 1)

That she decided to water down her comments in the feedback session may have been influenced by the fact that she knew that she too would be observed and receive feedback from her peers; she may have been reluctant to be negative for fear of reprisals.

One interviewee explained that she would moderate her comments in the group feedback sessions depending on the feedback that her peer had already received. If the trainer or other trainees had been negative, she would try to find something more positive to say and would not comment on problems that she had identified:

I didn't like to then pile on, and say 'yeah I didn't think that was very good either' ... if someone was feeling a bit put upon, I didn't want to add to it, by saying 'yeah actually, I think she's right', it's quite, there's a balance between constructive criticism and people feeling a bit criticised ... (Trainee 3)

This potential for tensions resulting from comments made in feedback needs to be carefully managed by the trainer as it can negatively impact on the effectiveness of the process. Trainee 3 described the tensions among one of her groups:

in the first group I felt a bit more relaxed about it, whereas in the second one, I found it more difficult, you know, there was definitely some tension there of how to communicate so that people were getting something useful out of it.
(Trainee 3)

Trainee 5 also described tensions within her group, and suggested that these could lead her peers to offer only superficial feedback so as to avoid causing offence.

Everyone was very keen to be positive, so I don't think they were always totally honest about bad things you did, but it was nice having the positive comments. (Trainee 5)

Another trainee, commenting on her own approach to giving feedback to her peers, alluded to the fact that she focused entirely on positive feedback in order to avoid potential conflict, but also because that was the easiest path:

... there was really one person who I could have given a lot of negative feedback, but I just thought 'whatever' (Trainee 3)

In such a situation feedback from peers can become bland, with little insight and has little real purpose other than to maintain a fragile peace between the trainees. This type of positive feedback can be understood as serving the social purpose of softening any negative feedback that follows, but is likely to be given little weight by the trainee whose class is under discussion, as it is expected.

Social constructivist approaches suggest that learning takes place through engagement with others. However, this is weakened when trainees do not engage fully with the process, whether to protect themselves, or to avoid social awkwardness.

One trainer suggested that when a trainee has observed a class but is afraid of upsetting their peers and so does not provide constructive criticism, not only does the trainee who is under discussion not benefit from the feedback of their peers, but

the observers are also unable to demonstrate to the trainer their growing understanding of the teaching and learning process.

Another source of tension identified by the interviewees lay in the balance of time given to feedback for each trainee. As mentioned above, it can often be the case that discussion of a particular issue that has come up in one trainee's teaching slot may have value to others in the group. When this is the case the trainer is likely to dedicate more time to talking through the issue and identifying possible solutions or alternative approaches. One interviewee commented on the fact that she found it difficult to share the trainer's time with the other trainees, perhaps betraying frustration that she had been given less time than others, or perhaps aware that others felt that she was receiving excessive attention.

I was also conscious that the teacher had other people to see to as well. ...it was harder to ask questions, because there were other people around, and I felt that there wasn't so much time, and I'd take up too much of the teacher's time. (Trainee 2)

However, this was not the experience of the majority of the interviewees. They were aware of the potential for upset, but also understood the need to provide, and to take, honest feedback even when that involved criticism.

One interviewee commented on the way in which she would filter out and disregard any personal criticism, but take on board all of her peers' comments on her teaching. She felt that on the occasions that this positive approach prevailed, open, frank discussion of the shared observation could take place.

... I really feel I grew, personally, as well as professionally through this time, because I took it on the chin, I thought "you know, learn from this", know what I mean? "see this as something that is going to make you a better teacher, ultimately" (Trainee 4)

Trainees' willingness and confidence to engage in feedback discussions, both as an observer and as the focus of the discussion as the person whose teaching is being critiqued, appears to play an important role within the teaching practice group process.

Learning from the feedback of others

As well as providing targeted feedback to the individual trainee who has just taught, the trainer can also use the feedback session to direct more general comments towards the whole group, even if they originated in analysis of the teaching of a particular trainee.

In this way trainees can learn from feedback given on a fellow trainee's class. If trainees only pay attention to the feedback on their own teaching and not that on the teaching of others, their opportunities for learning are greatly reduced.

Accordingly, it is important that they are made aware of this and are encouraged to engage with the feedback process for their fellow trainees.

A number of the interviewed trainers noted that in feedback they were not only able to provide feedback to those who had taught, but also to hear the observations of the other trainees in order to assess their understanding of classroom processes.

Where a trainee was able to identify relevant issues while observing, and articulate these in feedback, this gave the trainer important information about the development of their understanding.

This trainer also notes how she was able to build on peer feedback:

it can also be easier to raise points with trainees if other trainees bring them up before you do, or as well as you do and that's kind of easier to manage the feedback. (Trainer 4)

When a trainee's constructive criticism is accepted and built upon by the trainer, it also provides a boost in confidence and validates the observation and feedback process in the eyes of the trainee. A number of trainees mentioned this, and as the quote below shows, it was also recognised by trainers:

... trainees get a real buzz .. when they (say) - "Well you know, I thought that thing you did-" and the trainer says, "Yeah, yeah- yeah, that's exactly what I thought," and they think, "Oh yeah, wow, I'm seeing the same things as the big guy." (Trainer 3)

Here the trainer has 'legitimised' the contribution of the trainee by supporting her point. This has a positive impact on the morale and confidence of the trainee in their own growing understanding of classroom interactions.

Implicit within the discussion of feedback above is the idea that the purpose of the feedback is to engender change in the trainee's understanding of their teaching. Indeed, within the Teaching Practice Group model, the joint feedback sessions appear to make a distinct and significant contribution to teacher learning.

However, as discussed in section 3.4, there are a number of difficulties with this assumption, particularly due to the complexity of the relationships between different players in feedback (Copland, 2012:16), which may call into question the effectiveness of group feedback. Data collected as part of this study suggests that trainers should be aware, particularly when considering the constructivist nature of the learning through teaching practice groups, that trainees may not be able to participate in a meaningful way within the feedback process. They may find it difficult to carry out the roles expected of them, leading to them playing along with the process without actually engaging fully. In this case they may provide feedback that is shallow and lacks insight, because they do not feel that they are experts and so do not have anything useful to add. Equally, they may avoid commenting in order to avoid upsetting their peers, for reasons of solidarity or for fear of reprisals when it is their turn to be critiqued. As noted above Social constructivist approaches suggest that learning takes place through engagement with others. If trainees do not engage fully in feedback, then its effectiveness may be weakened.

However, it may be that trainers' expectation that trainees should play a critical and evaluative role in feedback is itself flawed. It may be that trainees should be encouraged to contribute to feedback sessions through description rather than critical judgment. By asking trainees to describe a lesson, rather than say what they liked and what they didn't like about it, issues of face and of perceptions of expertise, may be more effectively addressed. We can relate this to Copland's (2008) concepts of feedback as process and feedback as product. In the former the person giving feedback aims to encourage and support the observed teacher to learn how to reflect on their teaching, while in the latter the focus is on evaluating the success

of the teaching. By directing trainees to describe rather than evaluate a lesson, trainers are more likely to create an environment which supports trainees in reflecting on their experience, through non-threatening, descriptive feedback from their peers.

It does appear that trainees place less importance on feedback from their peers, than they do on feedback from the trainer. Interviewed trainees acknowledged that they looked to the trainer for evaluative comments on their teaching and for guidance on what they should do to improve. Comments from their peers in feedback appear to have had far less direct influence on their learning to teach. However, this should not lead us to assume that they do not learn from each other in ways suggested by social constructivist views of learning. Such an understanding would imply that learning only takes place through direct transmission of knowledge, that trainees' understanding of teaching can only be influenced directly. As we have seen in this section, the data collected as part of this study suggests that peers play an important, but less direct, and more informal, role in each other's learning to teach. Instead of the trainees just looking to the trainer to provide them with all of the knowledge and understanding that they need to make sense of the classroom, they also learn from their peers through collaborative planning and observation. Trainees reported not only that they 'borrowed' ideas from their peers following observing them teaching, they also learnt from what they perceived as their mistakes.

Talking like a teacher

Interviewees described how in the feedback sessions they were increasingly expected, and able, to speak about teaching and learning using professional language. Examples given included terms used to describe elements of teaching such as teacher talking time, eliciting, drilling, and concept check questions, as well as terminology for description of the language – form, function and meaning; continuous and perfect tenses; transitive and intransitive verbs etc.

When the tutor was giving feedback she used technical terms, and if we were paying attention we'd make notes about TTT and other things like that and soon people were mimicking her and using them too. (Trainee 7)

Interviewees were unaware of most of this teaching jargon before the course and picked it up through the modelling and encouragement of the trainer.

In the extracts below from the tapescript of an observed feedback session, following a few general comments, the trainer, V, drew attention to the beginning of one trainees' (M) lesson in which he had tried to initiate a discussion around shopping, with limited success.

There was a scary minute when you asked them if they liked shopping and no one responded. (V).

J, one of the trainees, adds a further comment on this section of the lesson, questioning whether the students were able to follow some of what M said:

I did wonder, when you started talking about 'vintage' it was a bit, sort of, less obvious, a bit off tack. (M).

At this point V intervened to agree with M.

You were generally, in the beginning talking as though you were talking to us... so it's lovely to have that (natural tone), but you need to talk in a manner that students can understand. (V -feedback)

V then gave a name to the issue that they were exploring – how to talk in a manner that students can understand:

...you need to grade your language to the level of the students and that means choosing your vocabulary in particular extremely carefully. Grading is very important. (V -feedback)

While discussing this V made eye contact with the other trainees as well as M, making it clear that this was a general point that all should learn from, as well as a specific critique of M's lesson.

J appeared to feel validated by the way in which V had picked up on her rather vague point to give specific feedback on grading of language. She then used the technical term graded that she had heard V use, tying her original comment about difficulties with the word 'vintage', to the trainer's expert comment.

Yes, some of your language could have been better graded, but generally you were fine. (J)

M also acknowledged and accepted V's comments

Yes, we have to watch that, sometimes it feels as though they can understand much more than they actually can... (M)

By using 'we' he shared ownership of the feedback with his peers, implying that grading language was not just an issue that should be of concern to him. This appropriation by trainees of the teaching jargon that they are exposed to within their course can be seen as part of a process of enculturation into the community of practice of teachers.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Vygotsky suggested that when we learn how to do something, a method or routine, we store it in our memory associated with a particular sign to help us to fix the learning in our minds. The most famous example of this provided by Vygotsky is that of tying a knot in a handkerchief as a reminder of an important task or date. We can also see here that by naming the issue under discussion, V provided the trainees with such a sign, the term 'grading' and the concept that it underpins it, through which they would be better able to name and understand the classroom interactions that they observe.

Deployment of this sign, the concept of graded language, in their discussions about teaching and in their planning for future teaching sessions, helps them move from the vague sense that something is lacking (*'...a bit off tack'*) to a clearer, more specific, understanding of the classroom interactions that they observe and experience (*'...some of your language could have been better graded'*).

A number of interviewees noted that use of jargon within the discussion of the teaching that they had observed, or of their own teaching, increased their confidence and belief that they had meaningful contributions to make to the feedback.

In the feedback sessions the tutors expected us to talk about teaching in quite a professional way, you know, using the correct jargon and in the end

that really helped me feel more professional, because there's loads of jargon in teaching, (Trainee 5)

The trainee's comment about feeling professional is interesting here. As a professional, one is part of a wider community of professionals, or community of practice, with shared procedures for talking and acting in a particular social context - in this case, the English language classroom. As discussed in Chapter 4, learning to teach can be conceptualized as learning to participate in the discourse and practices of the teaching community. To do so successfully it is necessary to master the semiotic and technological tools of the community, particularly the language used to describe teaching and learning. Thus, as trainees become more confident in using the professional language of English language teaching, they also become more confident in themselves in their new role of English language teacher.

One way that trainees learn about teaching is by watching each other teach and discussing the interactions that they all have with the same group of learners in the same learning context. This shared experience lends greater focus to the group feedback discussions and can be drawn on in the input sessions, thus enhancing the link between theory and practice. What's more, the link works in both directions. In feedback discussions it is likely that reference will be made to a taught session to illustrate or elicit a point and in feedback the trainer will be able to refer to theoretical knowledge to underpin discussions of what happened in the teaching session.

For the trainees that I interviewed group feedback had been a memorable experience, and one that they felt played an important role in their learning to teach. There were positive comments about the collaborative nature of the feedback process:

...generally there was agreement, which was good for us, because you realise that you were understanding what was being said. So we really felt as though we were learning about teaching by watching and analysing. (Trainee 4)

Trainee 4 makes an explicit connection here between observation and analysis, and learning to teach. She observed a class that she had also taught and then joined a

structured discussion based on data collected through observation tasks and previous inputs and discussions on the course – some of them practical, some of them theoretical. Through a collaborative process of analysis of the observed teaching, to which all contribute, her learning to teach was grounded in, and centred on, the observed classroom.

Conclusion

Trainees interviewed were generally positive about their experience of feedback within the teaching practice group process, acknowledging the key role that it played in their experience of learning to teach. As with other elements of the teaching practice group model, there are ample opportunities for trainers to focus trainee attention, through both designed-in and contingent scaffolding. The trainer and peer feedback itself, but also the process through which ideas for the feedback are generated and the models of collaborative feedback that are used, are aimed at engaging trainees with the content of learning to teach - raising trainee awareness of specific elements of the teaching and learning process (and the impact that their own actions could have on learners). Requiring trainees to contribute constructively to the feedback session provides a structure and an impetus, which encourages them to reflect on the teaching that they observe, supporting them in recognising their own successes as well as identifying areas for development.

6.3.5 Reflection

Data collected as part of this study suggests that reflection plays an important role in the teaching practice group model with trainees expected to draw on the various elements of the process in order to discuss, understand and improve their teaching. It should be acknowledged that reflection is an individual, subjective process and so not everyone will be as proficient at it. Furthermore, as McIntyre (1995) suggests, teachers in training may find reflection less effective than experienced teachers:

While reflection on their own experience is likely to be experienced teachers' most important way of learning professionally, it is likely to offer a very limited basis for the learning of beginning teachers. (McIntyre 1995: 366)

Indeed, comments from some trainees confirm that in this initial stage of their

training, reflection may be of less use for teacher development than it is for more experienced teachers. Not only do beginning teachers have less to reflect on, as they have less experience of the classroom as a teacher, they may also have less cognitive capacity to reflect due to the unfamiliar demands placed on them through management of the classroom. Cognitive approaches to the description of teacher learning suggest that trainees need to have conscious control over the skills they are learning, possibly even needing to verbalise routines until they have become automatic and part of procedural memory. Again, drawing on a cognitive model of learning, this conscious control over actions takes up processing space in the working memory of the teacher. Given the fact that working memory has limited capacity, this leaves much less processing space to consider other things, limiting capacity for reflection. Accordingly, in the initial stages of learning to teach, the novice teacher may not have the processing capacity to both act appropriately and to reflect on what is happening or what has happened.

This difficulty for trainees in freeing up the cognitive capacity to enable them to draw on external sources such as readings, feedback and their own observations in order to reflect on their experiences of teaching suggests that reflection needs to be carefully scaffolded.

We have seen from the analysis of the processes used in the Teaching Practice Group model, and the documentation that is attached to those processes, that there are designed-in opportunities for such scaffolding to take place. In particular through the use of course documentation, such as the self-evaluation form that trainees complete as soon as their teaching slot is over. The self-evaluation form requires trainees to reflect at a time when their experience is fresh. This 'reflection-on action' (Schön, 1983) is also effectively structured by the headings in the self-evaluation form, which guide the trainee in reflecting in an organised and consistent way.

Data from the interviews with trainees suggests that the information from the self-evaluation form had informed the subsequent feedback, and vice versa:

Yeah I was trying to think how I'd acted on that previous feedback and whether that lesson had incorporated things she'd picked up on last time, yeah. So yes if I thought 'oh good, I did that thing this time, I'd put that'.

This reflection through the cycle of teaching, individual reflection, group discussion, and planning is thus informed by the learning from the reflection and discussion about the previous teaching slot. We have also seen that the collaborative nature of the course structure itself supports reflection, with trainees working together to plan their lessons, observing each other and taking part in joint feedback sessions. The latter in particular, especially when informed by data gathered by trainees through observation tasks, provides scaffolding for trainees' reflection.

Finally, it should also be noted that Teaching Practice Groups provide a great deal of source material for trainee reflection. Through Teaching Practice Groups, trainees' learning to teach is grounded in, and centred on, the classroom with the observation tasks, feedback session and joint planning / observation all stimulating, and supporting, reflection.

6.4 Designed-in and contingent scaffolding

6.4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 I discussed the use of scaffolding in teacher learning. Scaffolding, closely related to Vygotsky's concept of mediated learning, supports learners in moving through their zone of proximal development, the distance between what the learner can do alone, and with support. Interaction in this zone is supported by scaffolds: 'task-specific support', designed to help the learner independently to complete the same or similar tasks later in new contexts' (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005: 8).

Learning is most commonly scaffolded by the people around us, by someone with greater knowledge who can help us bridge the gap between what we know at the time and the target knowledge. In teacher training, the scaffolds are provided by the trainers and also fellow trainees. However, learning can also be scaffolded by the course structure with its documentation, processes and assessment directing trainees' attention and supporting them in increasing their understanding.

In Chapter 3 I identified two distinct forms of scaffolding – 'designed-in' and 'contingent'. Both have the purpose of supporting the learners through their zone of proximal development, but while the former is pre-planned, the latter is not.

Within the data collected as part of this study elements of both designed-in and contingent scaffolding can be identified. In the next section I will draw on interview and observation data in order to demonstrate how teacher learning in the teaching practice group model is guided by designed-in scaffolding and supported contingently through the advice and guidance of the trainer.

6.4.2 Teaching Practice Points

The planning, particularly in the early stages of the course is guided by the trainer, through the setting of Teaching Practice (TP) points. TP points are a description of what the trainee should teach in their allocated slot. They may cover just the language items / skills to be taught, but may also include more detailed suggestions on process or resources to be used. The TP points are chosen to be coherent with the other slots in the class and with the learning needs of the students. By giving the trainee this starting point, TP points scaffold the trainee's learning.

The use of TP points is an example of designed-in scaffolding and was commented on by a number of the trainees interviewed as of great importance in the initial stages of learning to teach. As would be expected, they felt that without the TP points they would have found it far more daunting to approach planning their first lessons. As the TP points for each of the trainees who were teaching in that particular slot were given at the same time they were able to see and discuss each other's TP points. Thus, they were able to consider the lesson as a whole rather than just seeing their own mini-slot in isolation. Trainee 2 commented on the learning that discussion of the TP points could lead to.

It was fascinating to see the way she (the trainer) broke teaching down into little bits that we could prepare for without it becoming disjointed for the learners – in fact it was the opposite, far more coherent. (Trainee 2)

For this trainee, the TP points allowed her to see more clearly how the learning should be structured, both in terms of the focus of each part and its connection to the other parts.

Trainees reported that the support provided by the trainers through the allocation of TP points was gradually withdrawn as trainees gained in confidence and were better

able to plan coherently within their own slot and in conjunction with those teaching before and after them.

Well sometimes she would send us the lesson plan, and say 'this will be for thirty minutes', initially at the beginning to help us with the teaching, these were the general ideas of the things that you'd need, then gradually, she stopped giving us so much support, she'd say "these are the pages, now try and work it out for yourselves. (Trainee 2)

Perhaps the positive impact of the allocation of TP points can be understood best in the negative. As noted previously, where an aspect of the Teaching Practice Group process is not followed, in this case the allocation to trainees of clear TP points, the trainee experience appears to be less positive. Trainee 1 did not receive TP points to help her plan from one of the trainers on her course (she did from the other trainer), and she was clear that this was a negative aspect of her training experience.

...we chose what we wanted to do, which, to me, wasn't quite as good, I preferred having some guidance, and also from the student's point of view, having continuity, which I didn't think they were getting. (Trainee 1)

Trainers felt that trainees benefited from being able to begin their planning within a coherent overall structure and that without clear TP points trainees would find preparing for their first classes overwhelming, particularly in the early stages of their course.

I think to some extent early on in a course the most useful thing is probably simply saying, "This is what you've got to do.. They only have a certain amount of capability for taking on ... new stuff. And quite often just saying, "Okay, you're going in to teach this...", it takes away all that thinking and sorting out stuff that maybe they're simply not ready to do if they're teaching for the- in the first week of their teaching career (Trainer 1)

The trainer here notes the limited capacity that trainees have to process new information and make decisions due to the unfamiliarity of the teaching situation. Here the designed-in scaffold of the TP points provided by the trainer allows trainees

to concentrate on a narrower set of objectives; they are not required to select appropriate lesson aims and activities, just to plan for those that they are given.

6.4.3 Lesson plan pro-forma

The structural nature of the planning process through TP Points was also apparent in each of the courses observed and in the experience of the interviewed trainers, through the use of a set lesson plan pro-forma. This guides trainees through the planning process by signposting to them what it is necessary to consider when planning a lesson. This is an example of designed-in scaffolding focusing trainees' attention on specific elements of the teaching and learning process. The specific lesson plan pro-formas used in the courses observed were introduced in input sessions in which the individual elements (e.g. aims, target language, stages, timing, interaction patterns, assessment etc.) were presented to and discussed with trainees.

The lesson plan pro-formas used by the interviewed trainees and those in the courses that I observed, required them to specify and analyse the target language for their lesson. In one observed planning session it was through discussion of the language analysis section of the lesson plan (see figure 6.1 below) that the trainer (V) was able to make a particular trainee (C) aware of the breadth of understanding he needed of the language items that he was presenting.

Lesson plan Language Analysis

This page is only for language-based lesson (tenses, structures, functional language).
Analysis of lexical items should go on the appropriate sheet.

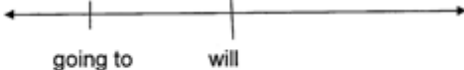
Target language	Will for spontaneous decisions and offers I'll take it.
Form(s)	subject + to be + going to subject + aux will
Timeline(s)	Past Present Future 
Concept	This concept is used to express and immediate decision, something that is done on the spur of the moment. It can also be used to make an offer as in a bartering system. When was the decision made? Now. At the moment of speaking. Who made the decision? The person talking. Was the decision made yesterday? No.
Phonology	 /rɡenə/ /'aɪl/

Figure 6.1 Lesson planning Pro-forma

V questioned his examples for his target language (*'going to'*), drawing him into discussion about the use of *'going to'*, focusing on concept (planned future) and form (to be + going to + verb). C appeared aware of the distinction to be made between decisions that are spontaneous (*I'll get the door*) and those that have been taken in the past (*I'm going to finish that report today*), but was insecure about the examples that he had chosen when he was asked to justify them "*I don't want to confuse them*". V suggested that C consult a student grammar reference book before the lesson, stressing the importance of being clear about the language before presenting it and at the very least knowing more about the grammar point than the students would.

Personal development goals within lesson plans

In the Teaching Practice Groups observed trainees were also required to outline their own personal development goals within each lesson plan. These could be drawn from feedback on previous teaching slots and are intended to identify what the trainee wishes to improve in their teaching. One trainee described how she used these to ensure that she did not repeat past mistakes:

... at the bottom of my lesson plan I have review questions for myself, and that would usually include, I think, there was one point about addressing the whole class rather than individual groups, because that was something that had come up a couple times, so I put that on there, as a reminder to see if I had actually done that. And that, I think, worked, because by the final lesson, I was talking to everyone. (Trainee 1)

Here again we can see that the designed-in scaffold of the personal development goals focused this trainee's attention on specific elements of the teaching and learning process, supporting her in developing her own understanding.

During the planning process the trainers were available as a resource, offering advice on structure and timing of activities and providing suggestions for resources. In engaging with trainees around the lesson plan documentation the trainers may also work contingently to guide trainees in identifying personal development goals that are appropriate for their stage of learning to teach.

The advice and guidance given by the trainer during the trainees' planning process can be seen as contingent scaffolding. It is unplanned and comes in response to the immediate learning needs of the trainee. It is contingent; it depends on the context of the individual trainee and the issue under focus.

Trainers reported that they gradually reduced this contingent scaffolding as the trainees gained more experience and became more confident in their own ability to construct a rational teaching plan.

6.4.4 Classroom observation tasks

In Chapter 3 I discussed the need for initial teacher training to support trainees in seeing beyond their own individual practice. Evidence from this thesis supports the idea that the focus of trainees at an early stage of learning to teach, is

predominantly on their own actions. A number of the trainees interviewed reported that this was a challenge.

Well I knew that I should be focusing on the learners, but I couldn't help but focus on the other teachers and how they'd structured it and what resources they'd made and the how, a bit more than the why. (Trainee 5)

The classroom is a complex place and for trainees it can be difficult to know what to focus on.

I think there were occasions where I was so focused on what the trainee was doing that I didn't really notice the students until we were going round to talk to them. (Trainee 1)

A task for initial teacher training is to shift trainees attention beyond the actions of the teacher, supporting them in moving beyond their own actions in their understanding of the teaching and learning process.

Classroom observation tasks can play an important role in ensuring that trainees are able to observe and learn from more than just the actions of the teacher. As this trainer notes:

... just putting somebody in front of something doesn't mean that they're going to see the same things ... that's when, you know, the observation tasks we give them are really helpful. (Trainer 2)

Classroom observation tasks can be designed to draw trainees' attention beyond the actions of the teacher to see the impact of these actions on the learners and their learning. The use of observation tasks by trainees while observing their peers may also have a role to play in protecting face and avoiding tension between trainees in feedback.

Trainees reported that use of observation tasks allowed them to make contributions to feedback discussion based on objective data gathered in response to the task, rather than relying on their personal judgments, which the observed trainee may feel lack authority and validity. Trainee 1 described an observation task focused on teacher instructions and noted how it had aided her in concentrating on this

particular element of the teaching, and how that supported more meaningful reflection on the subject:

... you realised that some people did it and were much too wordy, giving instructions that were much too advanced for that particular level, it made you drill down to the things more precisely, instead of thinking 'they didn't understand that instruction' you'd think 'why didn't they understand that instruction. (Trainer 1)

Data from this study suggests that observation tasks help trainees to observe, analyse and interpret the actions of the classroom in order to provide more focused and useful feedback, and can thus play a useful role in helping trainees to observe and learn from more than just the actions of the teacher. Such tasks can be designed to draw trainees' attention beyond the actions of the teacher to see the impact of these actions on the learners and their learning. This is not to argue that observers should ignore what the teacher does, that would be counter-productive. There is much that trainees can learn from watching each other teach. However, observation should support beginner teachers in seeing beyond the teacher to take in the learning of the learners.

The language class is a complex place and for trainees with little experience knowing what to focus on in an observation can be difficult. Should they watch the teacher, noting her behaviour, what she says, where she stands and how she interacts with the students, or should they concentrate instead on the learners, gauging their reaction to the classroom activities and engagement in the lesson. Or perhaps the materials should be the focus, or the language content. Without guidance beginner teachers are likely to flit between all of the above without gaining any real understanding of the processes that are playing out in front of them.

This was of particular concern for the trainers interviewed, who had a clear idea of what they wanted trainees to notice at different points in the course and were aware that trainees needed some sort of support or they were unlikely to do so. As this trainer noted:

...it's very easy for somebody to watch hour after hour of people teaching and get something completely different from it to what you intend. (Trainer 4)

A number of the trainers interviewed described specific observation tasks that they used to scaffold trainees' learning to teach, directing their attention to particular aspects of the teaching and learning process that they felt important for trainees' development while they were observing their peers. The tasks used varied, but they had common elements. They all focused trainees' attention on one element of the teaching and learning process, such as the interaction patterns in the class, the language used in instruction, or whether the teacher was able to involve all of the learners in the lesson.

One trainee described some of the things that the observation tasks she used focused her attention on:

... we quite often had to fill in a sheet about what we thought they did well, or there might have been quite a specific thing we were looking at that week, like how were their instructions, or we might be asked to look at learners and see what they're doing, or concentrate on a particular aspect of the trainee's teaching. It concentrated the mind (Trainee 2)

The other important feature of observation tasks is that they involve the collection of empirical data. Trainees are required to watch the lesson and at the same time note down the occurrence of particular phenomena. This may be the number of times something happens, the order in which something happens, or the language used in specific contexts. A structured observation task can be used to focus attention on a specific issue by requiring observers to record the number of times that something happens, or patterns of interaction or the language used in certain contexts.

It forces her to focus on that aspect of the lesson. She might be watching the same lesson but she's paying attention to the parts of the lesson where the teacher's speaking and thinking: 'is that teacher giving- explaining well or defining the language well, or- or speaking clearly' or whatever. (Trainer 4)

This trainer described one such task focused on teacher talking time (TTT):

So for say TTT, you know, it may be about raising awareness of how long somebody's banged on for, often by getting someone else in the TP group to record how long- you know, that sort of thing. (Trainer 3)

One trainee also talked about a task that was focused on TTT, but from the perspective of the balance between the amount of time the teacher was talking and the amount of time the students were talking.

We've got one where we ask them to look at, you know, the proportion of time that the teacher's speaking and the proportion of time that the students are speaking, and the balance of focus, you know, how much pair work and group work there is. Things like that. (Trainer 4)

This trainer explained that she would give this task to trainees who she felt were teacher-centred in their approach and appeared to lack awareness of the needs of the learners. By guiding such a trainee's observation of the class to the balance between teacher and student speaking time and requiring them to collect data on this, the trainer is able to force the trainee to focus on that aspect of the lesson. Without the task the trainee might watch the same lesson but not notice the balance of time between teacher and learner talking time.

The interviewed trainers noted that their focus when observing changes as a course progresses, and is contingent on the progress of individual trainees. However, they did feel that there are certain things that it is common for trainees to struggle with. This trainer noted a couple of these when asked what she used observation tasks for:

I think there are some very general ones that are very easy to- that are sort of very predictable. I mean the typical one is at the start the teacher talk. I can't think of any group... where that doesn't become an issue. Teacher talk and teacher instructions. So they tend to be things that would come up ... and I think now I almost anticipate those by asking- in the observation tasks asking- asking the other trainees to focus on it. (Trainer 4)

However, not all of the trainees interviewed reported that they were given specific guidance on what to observe, other than encouragement to do more than just watch what the teacher was doing. As this trainee noted

...we had to look at whether or not objectives have been met, how they were met, how did the learners respond. So no specific task to look at or question, no. (Trainee 4)

Here the trainer has given trainees a generic observation task with nothing specific to focus on. Another trainee reported being asked to look for specific things such as whether the other trainees' instructions were clear or whether all of the students felt included, but without the formally structured process of data collection and analysis provided by an observation task. Another trainee described a similarly unstructured approach to observation tasks:

I think it was just a sheet with some questions saying, "what did she do right" and "why was it right" "what could have been done better". (Trainee 3)

A number of issues arise when trainees, particularly at the beginning of the process, are asked to just note down what they thought worked and what didn't. Firstly, this type of task requires trainees to make a judgement about the teaching, to assess whether something was done 'correctly'. At an early stage in particular, they are likely to lack the expertise to carry out such a role in a meaningful way and are likely to pass simplistic judgements on each other's teaching. As we have seen, such judgments are also likely to be positive, to maintain group relations but also because they are likely to feel that they lack the necessary expertise and experience in comparison to the trainer. Accordingly, they rarely said what they really thought, making little impact on the learning of their fellow trainees. What's more, trainees reported that due to their understanding of their peers as less expert than the trainer, when they were the subject of feedback, they were less likely to give weight to comments from their peers in comparison to those made by the trainer.

Asking trainees to make judgments on the teaching of their peers allows them to observe in a superficial manner, and one for which they likely lack the confidence and expertise to make meaningful contributions. In contrast, tasks that force them

to focus on specific aspects of the class (teacher talk, interaction patterns, instructions, tasks etc.) can generate objective, descriptive data that can be discussed in feedback and/or used for reflection. Discussing and interpreting the rich data that they have collected through their observation task can then play a role in structuring the subsequent feedback session allowing the trainee to provide useful non-judgmental feedback for the trainee being observed.

Observation of their peers helped trainees to see beyond the teacher and her success (or otherwise) in acting like a teacher, and focus on the learners and their learning. Trainees reported that using observation tasks was a useful mechanism to enable them to see beyond themselves - progressing their attention from the teacher to the learners and their learning. Classroom observation tasks were used by all of the trainers interviewed as part of this study, as a mechanism to shift trainees' attention to specific aspects of teaching and learning. Classroom observation tasks limit the scope of what is to be observed, enabling the trainee to focus on particular aspects. Classroom observation tasks also facilitate the collection of data on those aspects. This data provides material for individual reflection as well as supporting the observer in contributing to feedback with comments that are grounded in reflection on what actually happened in the class, rather than subjective assessment of what worked.

6.4.5 Self-evaluation form

The trainers also spoke about self-evaluation form, a document that was used to guide trainees in reflecting on their own observed teaching in preparation for the feedback session. They were required to complete this immediately following each taught session trainees. As with the observation tasks discussed above, the self-evaluation form was used by trainers to encourage trainees to reflect on particular aspects of their teaching. The self-evaluation form used in one of the centres observed as part of this study asks trainees to note: *their overall feeling about the lesson; their planning; what they were pleased and disappointed about within the lesson activities; whether they felt that they achieved their lesson aims; and what, if anything, they would change for subsequent lessons*. Another self-evaluation form used by some of the trainees interviewed for this study was less detailed, asking

them to note down: *what they felt went well; what needs further consideration; and what they will take forward into their future practice.*

All of the trainees who mentioned the self-evaluation form said that they were required to complete this as soon as possible after they had taught to ensure that what they recorded was accurate and, importantly, included specific details of the class while these were fresh.

I had to do the self-evaluation immediately or it just went completely out of my head. Trainee 5

In this extract from one trainee's self-evaluation form (figure 6.2), his comments focus largely on his surprise that the learners were unable to grasp the language point that was his main aim within the lesson.

Date of lesson: 10/02/2014	Length of lesson: 40 minutes ✓
Level of class: LOWER	Number of students: 10
1. Your feelings: How did you feel before and during the lesson? What elements of your lesson were you nervous/unsure/confident about and why? VERY NERVOUS TO START BUT SETTLED DOWN ONCE I'D BEGUN - I WAS UNSURE ON PHONOLOGY BUT HOPE TO HAVE IT SORTED OUT BY FRIDAY'S CLASS. I WAS A BIT SURPRISED THAT THEY TOOK SO LONG TO GET "GOING TO" BUT WITH PRACTICE I'LL GET THERE ✓	
2. Planning: Was your approach and staging appropriate for the teaching aim and for the students? Were the materials appropriate? YES. I THINK MOST OF IT WAS OK BUT I WAS OVER CONFIDENT ON THEM KNOWING "GOING TO" MAYBE A BETTER SELECTION OF PICTURES WOULD HAVE HELPED ✓	

Figure 6.2 M Self-evaluation form

The lesson had focused on the contrast between the 'going to' and 'will' forms of future. The trainee's lesson plan demonstrates that he had made an effort to understand this grammar point, and was aware of the distinction to be made between decisions that are spontaneous and those that have been taken prior to the point of speaking. However, the learners were confused by his explanations and failed to use the two forms correctly in the freer practice element of the lesson. The trainee commented:

I was a bit surprised that they took so long to get 'going to'" and "I was over-confident of them knowing 'going to'.

His comments suggest that he did not yet understand what it means for a learner to 'know' a language point. His expectation was that the learners would 'know' how to use the two forms because he had heard them use them in previous classes. However, in reality the learners were unaware of the conceptual difference in meaning in the choice of verb construction, the focus of the trainee's lesson. Even though he provided an explanation of the grammar point, much of it was spoken to the board, as he annotated the target sentence he had earlier boarded, and there was little attempt to engage the learners. His explanation was correct, but unfortunately the learners were allowed to listen passively with no check on understanding. Teacher explanation in this context has as its main beneficiary the teacher – it is for the teacher not for the learner. It affirms his or her declarative knowledge and so legitimacy as teacher of the class, but is not in a form that is accessible for a learner. This is useful information for the trainer to take into feedback and will provide useful learning for all in the group.

Throughout this discussion of the grammar that the trainee planned to teach the learners, the trainer involved the other trainees in the group, asking them to come up with and justify suggestions of examples and concept check questions that could be used within C's lesson. This collaborative 'live language planning' is an example of the way in which the Teaching Practice Group model provides problem-solving moments that require trainees to apply knowledge gained elsewhere to the very practical task of planning teaching and learning.

Trainees noted two main benefits from having to complete the self-evaluation form. Firstly, a number of trainees noted that it provided a useful link to the feedback sessions, forcing them to reflect on whether and how they had addressed any concerns expressed by the trainer when discussing their previous teaching slot. The trainee below describes how she used the self-evaluation form to record ways in which she felt that she had acted on prior feedback and whether she had incorporated ideas that had been discussed in feedback or informally as part of the planning process:

If I thought 'oh good, I did that thing this time, I'd put that'. One of my things that every single teacher trainer picked up on was my extraneous chat, like

teacher talk, so I was always really conscious of not just mumbling away about something, so I was always 'ooh bit less of that this week' or 'oh, still doing it' (Trainee 5)

The second benefit derived from the use of a self-evaluation form noted by a number of interviewed trainees was that it encouraged and supported them to reflect on their teaching. The self-evaluation form requires trainees to reflect at a time when their experience is fresh. This 'reflection-on action' (Schön 1983) is also effectively structured by the self-evaluation form. This structure comes from the headings within the form which guide the trainee in reflecting in an organised and consistent way, but also in the way in which the information from the self-evaluation form informs subsequent feedback, setting up a cycle of teaching, individual reflection, group discussion, and planning informed by the learning from the reflection and discussion about the previous teaching slot.

I came to appreciate the value of reflective practice, I really do. And actually, even when I was whinging about it, I appreciated it as a process, it's really useful. (Trainee 4)

The collaborative nature of the course structure itself also supports reflection, with trainees working together to plan their lessons, observing each other and taking part in joint feedback sessions. The latter in particular, especially when informed by data gathered by trainees through observation task, provides scaffolding for trainees' reflection.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study has sought to address ways in which the use of Teaching Practice Groups supports the development of trainees on initial teacher education programmes for adult ESOL teachers. It also asks what the main factors are in the organisation and implementation of Teaching Practice Groups on initial teacher education programmes for ESOL teachers that impact on how effectively teachers are prepared.

Drawing on interview data collected from trainee teachers and trainers with direct experience of the model, as well as analysis of the documentation and processes that are used within it, and observation of the model in practice, I have described the ways in which teacher learning is supported by Teaching Practice Groups. In this concluding chapter I will discuss what the study has to say about both teacher knowledge and teacher learning within Teaching Practice Groups by addressing the two research questions:

1. What are the main factors in the organisation and implementation of Teaching Practice Groups on initial teacher education programmes for ESOL teachers that impact on how effectively teachers are prepared?
2. How does the use of Teaching Practice Groups support the development of trainees on initial teacher education programmes for adult ESOL teachers?

7.2 Teacher knowledge in the Teaching Practice Group model

I began my review of literature on teacher knowledge by stating that in order to understand the Teaching Practice Group model it is first necessary to explore what knowledge teachers may need and how that knowledge has been described. In Chapter 2 I discussed conceptions of theoretical and practical knowledge, and their interaction, in the context of teacher education. The data presented in Chapter 5 suggests that both objectivist and subjectivist views of teacher knowledge shape the trainee experience of learning to teach within the Teaching Practice Group model.

Here I will now consider how such forms of knowledge manifest themselves within the Teaching Practice Group model.

7.2.2 Constructing teacher knowledge

In Chapter 2 I considered ways in which objectivist and subjectivist views of knowledge have influenced teacher education programmes. Objectivists believe that there is a correct way to do things which can be discovered by studying and analysing actors in any field and describing in detail what they do so that this can be learnt and replicated by others. An objectivist view of teacher knowledge aims to produce such a definitive list of teacher knowledge. Subjective approaches to teacher knowledge suggest that such knowledge is dependent on individual experience, and is, accordingly, infinitely ambiguous and dependent upon each individual's experience of learning in their own particular classroom. In this section I will consider the place of subjective and objective forms of knowledge description within the Teaching Practice Group model.

Attempts to define teacher knowledge using an objectivist view of knowledge may be of limited use when we take into consideration the complexity of the environment in which the teacher is required to operate. Objectivist knowledge is finite, unchanging, and context-free. Education is individually experienced, infinite in scope and context and socially determined. And yet objectivist views of teacher knowledge have had a powerful influence on teacher education, often represented in the form of competence statements. Much teacher education is predicated on the understanding that the course team know what good teaching is and can describe its component parts. While all teacher educators may profess to be able to recognize good teaching when they see it, the task of precisely defining what they mean by good teaching has so far proved too challenging for anyone to accomplish.

The trainers interviewed as part of this study were no exception. They appeared to make little explicit use of competence-based checklists describing the behaviours that trainees should demonstrate during their teaching.

However, while the complexity of teaching means that attempts to describe it solely in objectivist terms are likely to fail, there are elements of teacher knowledge that

can be usefully described in ways that are consistent with objectivist views of knowledge. The type of knowledge that Aristotle's categorized as *epistēmē* and *Technē*, are frequently present in competence lists, whereas knowledge of the type that would be classified as *phronēsis* - judgment, sensitivity, emotional and ethical engagement - is less visible and lends itself less readily to description in terms of competences.

Schulman's pedagogical content knowledge, the amalgam of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that is the unique province of the teacher, presents a form of teacher knowledge that cannot be captured in an objective competence description. It also highlights decision-making about how and when to act in the classroom as a central form of knowledge, and one that is not objective. Data from this study suggests that within the Teaching Practice Group model trainers assess trainees' progress in learning to teach in a holistic manner, rather than simply ticking off the achievement of discrete and visible behaviours.

A subjective view of knowledge questions the validity of a centrally agreed source of knowledge, suggesting instead that knowledge is created by and understood in ways that differ according to individual experience. If all knowledge is indeed subjective and cannot be represented in single theoretical form then trainee teachers should learn how to become a teacher through the practical experience of teaching rather through the study of educational theory. Thus a subjective knowledge-base for teacher education would be dependent upon each individual's experience of learning in their own particular classroom.

The subjectivist view of teacher education rejects the use of objectivist classification of teacher knowledge with the danger that beginning teachers lack understanding of the teaching and learning process beyond their own particular experience and context. This, it is suggested, leads to teachers who lack:

... the forms of autonomy and the right to be critical which were previously the defining characteristics of the teaching profession. (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 115)

Subjectivist views of knowledge are also unhelpful in the design and organization of teacher education programmes, as they not only work against standardization, but also call into question the validity of the knowledge held, and passed on, by the trainers. It is argued that this knowledge, being itself subjective, may have limited value for trainee teachers working in different contexts to that in which the trainers' knowledge was formed. Objective views of teacher knowledge, in contrast are far simpler to identify, and provide a much simpler and more replicable structure for teacher education programmes. The naming of particular areas of teacher knowledge can lead to trainers and trainees focusing explicitly on the individual 'parts' of teaching such as 'error correction' or 'classroom management'.

However, it is hard to reject the notion that subjective knowledge plays a part in learning to teach. The teaching practice group model allows for individual understandings of the classroom to be explored and developed as trainees bring their own experience and personalities to bear on the process of learning to teach the teaching practice group. Aristotle's *phronēsis* and Schulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge both acknowledge the individual, or subjective nature of some of the knowledge needed to make decisions in complex situations.

The data from this study suggests that subjective and objective forms of knowledge interact to enable the trainee to make judgments on how to act in the classroom. It also suggests that objective descriptions of teacher knowledge are frequently used in order to help trainees to name elements of the teaching and learning process - the classroom and its moves. While subjective knowledge is foregrounded in the focused reflection that Teaching Practice Group model provides on the experience of teaching.

7.2.2 The integration of theory and practice

This study considers how theory and practice are integrated within courses of teacher training, and how a particular form of teacher training, teaching practice groups, can support such integration. It is grounded in the understanding that teacher's practical knowledge is informed by theoretical ideas which are drawn upon by teachers in judging what to do in a certain situation, but also supports them in understanding why they should act in a certain way. Thus, the hypothesis is that

both theoretical and practical knowledge are required for effective teaching and that they are most effective when they are used together, when one is integrated with the other in teacher learning.

Thiessen gives four functions of theoretical knowledge in teacher education: to guide what trainees learn; to offer a lens through which to analyse observed practice; to judge the use of certain approaches in different settings; and to act as a jumping off point for the development of more personalized theories about teaching (Thiessen, 2000: 530). In all of these there are two important principles. Theoretical and practical knowledge intersect continually and are applied to the process of learning to teach concurrently. Theory should not be presented or considered isolation from practice.

Data from this study suggests that in the Teaching Practice Group model the classroom is both the focus and the place of learning about how to teach. Thus, for trainee teachers on courses using the model the practical element of teaching a group of learners is central. However, the fact that it is a shared experience means that the classroom also contextualizes the theoretical knowledge presented in input sessions or discussed following readings. Theoretical knowledge plays a central role in guiding trainees' thinking about the teaching that they observe and that they discuss in feedback sessions. They are required to reflect on the practical teaching decisions they make, and those made by their peers. In making these decisions *phronēsis*, or wisdom - knowing when to apply technical and theoretical knowledge to achieve a certain goal - plays a central role. Both trainers and trainees highlighted the way in which, in the teaching practice group model, teaching is the central focus and ideas from input sessions, can be considered in its light. This means that discussions of such ideas can be contextualized through reference to the shared class and the shared experience of teaching that particular group.

Teachers' practical knowledge is gained and applied in the practical field. It is personal and situation-specific and above all it is about making decisions. Teacher's practical knowledge allows them to react to a learning situation and select appropriately from a repertoire of learned actions, and teaching scripts. Elbaz emphasises the practical aspects of teacher knowledge as a function of a teacher's

response to a situation. Both Elbaz (1983) and Connelly & Clandinin (1988), focus on the knowledge that is central to the teacher's ability to assess a situational context and select the appropriate pedagogical response. Their decision-making is informed by theoretical knowledge, but is also contextual, relying on understanding of the learning environment. This situational decision-making, the bringing to bear of other forms of knowledge in order to judge and act, recalls Aristotle's *phronēsis*. Saugstad (2005) also addresses the situational nature of teacher knowledge through his concept of 'participant knowledge'.

We have seen from the data collected in interviews with trainers and trainees, but also through the analysis of documentation used and observation of the model in practice, that within the Teaching Practice Group model trainees are constantly required to make decisions about what to do, both in advance in the form of lesson planning and on their feet in front of a group of learners. They are then required to justify those decisions as well as critiquing the decisions made by their fellow trainees. In doing this they draw on theoretical knowledge from input sessions and readings, as well as previous feedback from the trainer. Thus, trainees' focus is not just on what happened in the classroom, but also on why the teacher made the decisions that they did, how those decisions might be justified and what alternative courses of action there were.

7.3 Teacher learning in the Teaching Practice Group model

This study focuses on a particular model of teacher training, Teaching Practice Groups, which is highly social. As we have seen, trainees on courses using the Teaching Practice Groups model interact a great deal with each other, with their peers, and with the learners in the teaching practice group. Thus the development of knowledge and understanding of teaching within the Teaching Practice Group model can be described using social constructivist concepts. It is driven by engagement with concepts of teaching and learning and with other players - peers, students and the trainer - in the specific cultural environment of the shared language classroom. In this section I will draw on social constructivist theories of learning to explore teacher learning within the Teaching Practice Group model.

7.3.2 Learning to teach grounded in, and centred on, the classroom

Learning to think, talk, and act in ways that characterize being a member of the language teaching community, is an important aspect of initial teacher training and one that is well supported by the Teaching Practice Group model. Trainees are fully engaged in the world of teaching and learning through the shared group of learners. Teaching these learners is the constant and most immediate topic of conversation and there are myriad opportunities for the trainers to engage trainees in discussions of teaching that are not abstract but rather deal with the events of a class that they have all just witnessed. The Teaching Practice Group model is distinctive in the way that it is centered around the teaching practice, and this appears to support trainees in learning how to talk about teaching. The trainer is also able to use discussions about the teaching practice group class to support trainees in learning to talk like a language teacher.

This is not to suggest that such a process does not exist in other models of initial teacher training courses, just that with Teaching Practice Groups the context for discussion is so rich and immediate and trainees' need for the language is so real that trainees quickly become adept at talking about teaching as this acquisition of the discourse of teaching is necessary for them to be able to engage in the type of analysis of their own and their peers' teaching that is required. Not only does this internalization of the discourse and metalanguage of the course allow trainees to talk about their own and others' lessons using shared language and with the appropriate technical terminology, it also acts as a filter directing the trainees' attention to aspects of teaching that can be described in these terms, and which are important for trainees to understand as they develop as teachers.

This collaborative process of analysis of the observed teaching, to which all contribute, is an example of the way that within the Teaching Practice Group model, learning to teach is grounded in, and centred on, the shared group of learners and the classroom in which their learning takes place. Indeed, another key element of the Teaching Practice Group model is the occurrence of problem-solving moments focussed on the learners and their classroom. These are times when trainees are required to identify and resolve issues that arise from planning for and teaching the

shared group of learners. Many of these problem-solving moments occur during the collaborative work of planning and/or are posed by the trainer and discussed by trainees in the feedback session.

However, it is not just the application of knowledge that is important here. The process of solving the problem in collaboration with others, or alone, develops trainees' knowledge of teaching and learning in turn. Deciding what language to present, and how, is part of every teachers' planning, however informal the process may be, and requires analysis of the form and meaning of the language item. This knowledge is also a required resource 'on the hoof' in the classroom, live, as language emerges from learner exchanges that requires attention.

Joint planning provides trainees with contextually meaningful experiences. The lesson planning that they carry out is for an actual class of learners and their language analysis is developed with the learners from that class in mind. Through this they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models with reference to, and in collaboration with, other trainees at different stages of development and with different initial understandings of the teaching and learning process. By working together to design coherent learning sessions for a single group of learners the potential for trainees to learn from each other and influence each other's constructs of teaching and learning is enhanced.

7.3.4 Designed-in and contingent scaffolding

The data gathered as part of this study suggest that the cyclical nature of the teaching practice group model and the documentation that is used within each phase of the cycle, supports trainers in scaffolding the learning of trainees, supporting them in moving through and beyond their zone of proximal development. As discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of scaffolding support for learning coming from more knowledgeable others that helps learners to internalize what is being learned (Vygotsky (1960/1978). I also drew on the work of Hammond & Gibbons (2005): to suggest that within a teacher education programme such scaffolding could be both designed -in – pre-planned as part of the course structure, or contingent – provided in response to a particular situation. The designed-in, structural elements of the process provide contextualization for the contingent

scaffolding provided by the trainer in the form of advice and guidance to individual trainees as they navigate the course.

Designed-in scaffolding can be seen in the way the course is structured, in the activities that learners are expected to engage with and the documents and processes through which these processes are managed. There are many examples of designed-in scaffolding in the teaching practice group model. For example, trainees plan their classes using a pro-forma lesson plan. The headings on this pro-forma guide trainees to think about particular aspects of their teaching, such as the timing or the interaction pattern. Trainees are also required to complete observation tasks and self-evaluation forms which similarly focus trainees' attention. However, designed-in scaffolding does not just come through the use of forms. The structure of the teaching practice group model itself, with its careful progression through planning, teaching to and feedback, scaffolds trainees' learning about teaching.

Trainees' growing understanding of the classroom is scaffolded in designed-in ways through the structure and tasks used as part of the teaching practice group model. The cyclical nature of the teaching practice group process is one example of this designed-in scaffolding. Trainees were able to identify an explicit relationship between the feedback that they received on their teaching and the group planning that they would engage in following the feedback session in preparation for their next teaching slot. A number explained how the feedback that they received would influence their planning of subsequent teaching slots. At times this was through explicit individual recommendations that trainees were given by the trainer. Such 'development points' were often included in the written feedback given to trainees and progress in meeting them would be checked through the next observation. In other cases, the initiative to focus on a particular point came from the trainee in response to comments made to the whole group or to another trainee.

... there was one point about addressing the whole class rather than individual groups, because that was something that had come up a couple times, so I put that as a reminder to see if I had actually done that. And that, I think, worked, because by the final lesson, I was talking to everyone. (Trainee

1)

Contingent scaffolding on the other hand is unplanned and occurs in the moment-to-moment interaction between trainer and trainee. It is the spontaneous actions and guidance of the trainer in response to the immediate learning needs of the trainee teacher. Much contingent scaffolding in teacher training courses comes in either the input sessions or in feedback, in the form of oral feedback on teaching, comments on a lesson plan, suggestions for a learning activity or signposting to reading material. It can also be in written form. For example, the written feedback that the trainer gives the trainee after each teaching session is contingent – it depends on the context of the individual trainee and the issue under focus.

Designed-in and contingent scaffolding are most effective when used in combination. The designed-in elements enable more effective use of contingent scaffolding by the trainer. Much of the contingent scaffolding observed took place around the designed-in scaffolds within the lesson planning, observation, and feedback cycle. Designed-in elements such as the setting of Teaching Practice points by the trainer, the use of a pro-forma lesson plan, observation tasks and a self-evaluation form, contextualize the interventions of the trainer and help trainees in making best use of the support of the trainer.

7.3.5 Progression in attention

Cognitive descriptions of learning provide a number of key ideas that allow us to better conceptualise and understand the processes involved in learning to teach with the Teaching Practice Group model. We have seen that cognitivists view learning as an internal psychological process, assuming that behaviour occurs as a result of information processing within the mind. They further propose that there is a limit to how much the mind can process at any one time, implying a model of learning in which knowledge, both subjective and objective, is acquired and activated in stages. A staged understanding of learning to teach would suggest that it is of great difficulty for trainee teachers to see beyond themselves and their own actions when they begin to teach. They are likely to be self-conscious in front of the class, placing excessive focus on their own actions and behaviours. The Teaching Practice Group model facilitates reflection on those actions and behaviours within the scaffolded structures and processes described above.

Kagan (1992:144), translated general cognitive learning theory to a staged theory of learning to teach. He referred to the stages as: rote knowledge, routine knowledge and comprehensive knowledge of classroom strategy. This categorisation implies that teacher learning can be described in terms of a progression in attention. The more experienced teachers become, the less need they have for conscious control of certain classroom processes. As these become automatic, processing space is freed for the teacher to concentrate on other, deeper, elements of the classroom, focusing more on learning and less on logistics.

The language classroom is an extremely complex place. In order to make sense of the language classroom teachers need to listen carefully to their students and understand what they are saying (or want to say), they need to be aware of the social interactions taking place and judge the mood of the learners; they need to know who is paying attention, who has lost concentration and who is annoyed with whom, among many other things. And they need to do this constantly, while at the same time remembering what they have just done, planning what they are going to do next, responding to learners' questions and comments, and watching the clock to make sure they are on track to achieve their aims in the time available.

This study suggests that teachers need to listen carefully to learners, gathering data on their language use, their mood, their interactions with other students and many other things. They then use this data to guide their actions, allowing them to act in a purposeful way in the classroom, making informed decisions about the activities that they plan and their interventions during the class. Such analysis needs to be carried out quickly and accurately, as the results inform the decisions that the teacher takes. For example, in an English language class, while listening to students talk the teacher needs to weigh up a number of factors that will inform what action she takes:

'Should I intervene while the student is speaking to correct an error?'; 'What should the focus of my intervention be – the vocabulary, the pronunciation, the grammar? All three?

In making these decisions the teacher needs to draw on a great deal of linguistic knowledge. Firstly, to identify an error (or a correct piece of language that she may want to highlight for other learners), then to make an informed hypothesis about

why the learner may have made that error – is it to do with their L1 or have they confused it with something else? It might also be just a slip rather than the result of a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. As we have seen in chapter 6 the teacher also needs to be able to see connections between the language item / structure in question and other items / structures in order to help the learner develop a holistic understanding of the language and to accelerate their learning.

To make such decisions in real time, in front of a class of adults requires a principled understanding of the types of interactions, linguistic and social, that make up the activities of the language classroom. But above all it requires that the teacher is focused on the learners and their learning rather than what she is doing.

In the trainer interviews in particular, there was clear evidence that trainers are aware of the importance of trainees acquiring basic teaching techniques and a series of routines to manage learning processes in order for them to begin to focus on the learners rather than themselves. This broadening of what trainee teachers are able to take in, an increase in their processing capacity through the automatising of certain teaching functions, we can conceptualise as a progression in attention. As trainees move beyond a focus on their performance they are better able to make sense of the classroom and pay attention to learning rather than teaching. Successful use of basic teaching techniques of classroom management, use of voice, grading of language, teacher position in the classroom, giving of instructions, handling of feedback, among others, appear to play a key role in trainees feeling confident in the classroom and facilitate a progression of attention beyond themselves to the learners and their learning. As discussed in chapter 6 mastery and automatising of routines, strategies of teaching that teachers use at regular points in the course of a lesson in regular configurations and sequences, also appear to play an important role in freeing up trainee teachers' cognitive capacity to focus on supporting the learning that is taking place in the classroom.

It was interesting to note that a number of the trainers interviewed were reticent to discuss the basics of teaching at first. One trainer said that it felt '*slightly wrong*' to talk about equipping trainees with such basic techniques. And another referred to the basics, with obvious distaste, as the '*conventionalities of language teaching*',

before acknowledging that these conventionalities were of importance and that she explored them with trainees from the beginning of the course.

It was clear that they associated the explicit teaching of these basics with a checklist, a discrete set of things that a language teacher needs to know, something they felt suggested a reductive view of teacher learning, which they were uncomfortable with.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the distinction between teacher education and teacher training, suggesting that they are not necessarily binary concepts, but rather should be seen as part of a progression. At the initial stages of teacher learning, trainees need to master and understand more behavioural, or mechanistic, aspects of teaching, freeing up mental resources (attention) to focus on learning. It may be that the trainers' reticence to acknowledge an explicit focus on the basics of classroom management stems from the fact that they associate these with teacher training, rather than teacher education and they were thus uncomfortable highlighting the focus that they put on these in their courses.

The evidence from this study is that there is indeed a focus on the teaching of basic techniques of classroom management in the initial stages of teacher training courses. Trainers spoke of introducing the techniques in input sessions, and reinforcing awareness through observation tasks and in feedback. The quote below was typical of the points made by the interviewed trainers, acknowledging that they focused on basic techniques, but also emphasising that just telling trainees 'how' to do something was not enough.

I think there's a certain- a certain amount of sort of skill-based techniques that form part of the beginner teacher repertoire. I think they have to be there, knowing what to do at a particular moment. For example how to deal with pronunciation, how to clarify a language structure, how to ask concept-checking questions. So the kind of things that are- could be labelled sort of "techniques". (Trainer 4)

Here we can see that the trainer is not only concerned with the trainee's mastery of a particular technique,, '*knowing what to do*', though this is acknowledged. She is

also concerned that the trainer understands when to deploy the technique, '*at a particular moment*'. This acknowledges the importance of trainees mastering certain techniques, knowing how, but also being able to apply the technique at the appropriate time.

However, it is also apparent that there is a lack of attention in the teacher education literature to the basics or to the use of routines. In my professional experience working with others on teacher education programmes, I have also come across this reticence to address such prosaic matters as where to stand in the classroom. This is perhaps related to the teacher training / teacher education dichotomy, with the former often seen with some distaste as narrow, and perhaps limiting, in its preoccupation with equipping teachers with toolkits and ready-made solutions to enable them to survive in the classroom and the latter being seen as concerned with more substantial, holistic, and perhaps lofty, concerns.

7.5 Conclusion: The Teaching Practice Group model

As noted in the introduction, there is very little previous empirical evidence about the ways in which the Teaching Practice Group model supports teacher learning. This is despite the fact that every year thousands of prospective English Language teachers take the CELTA course, which centres around the Teaching Practice Group model, and other courses of initial teacher training that use the model. This study, therefore, makes an important contribution to understanding of the teacher learning that takes place through the teaching practice element of that course as well as on the other teacher education programmes that use the Teaching Practice Group model As suggested by my review of understanding of teacher knowledge and teacher learning, there has been constant debate about the effectiveness of English language teacher education. It is therefore important to consider why my study is of value and what new knowledge it might contribute to the debate.

In this thesis I have not attempted to prove that the Teaching Practice Group model 'works', or indeed that it 'works' better than other models of teacher training. I believe that the Teaching Practice Group model provides a rich and productive environment for teacher learning, though not one without limitations. The model is

complex to run, and relies on the engagement of trainees in the social interactions which are central to the model. As described in chapter 6, such engagement is not always possible. Individual differences, trainees' personal circumstances, and other difficulties mean that for some trainees such engagement is difficult.

Instead of trying to prove or disprove the effectiveness of the Teaching Practice Group model I have attempted to identify the mechanisms by which it supports teacher learning and the ways in which it provides opportunities for trainers to support teacher learning.

The centrality of the classroom in the Teaching Practice Group model, and its shared nature, mean that theoretical knowledge is considered by trainees in relation to the practical context, and practical knowledge gained in the classroom can be considered in the light of the theoretical ideas presented and discussed outside of it, in input and feedback sessions. The decisions trainees take when planning for and teaching the shared group of learners, make visible their understanding of the theoretical ideas that they are confronted with through the activities of the course. They are also required to justify these choices in the feedback sessions. Their focus is therefore not just on the choices they and their peers have made when planning a class, or when they are in front of the group of learners during the class, but also on why they made those choices. Decision-making, the ability to select the appropriate teaching technique at the appropriate time, is placed at the centre of teacher learning within the Teaching Practice Group model, with both theoretical and practical knowledge being drawn on to inform the decisions made in the classroom, and reflection on those decisions in feedback.

This study suggests that the Teaching Practice Group model supports teacher learning through a series of structural mechanisms which allow trainers to focus trainees' attention on relevant elements of teaching and learning, supporting them in achieving a progression in their attention from themselves to the learners, and to their learners. It appears that an important element of this, in the context of initial teacher training, is a focus on the basics of language teaching – in particular classroom management – with routines playing a key role in automatizing elements

of the trainees' work, allowing them to focus more attentively on the learners themselves.

I have described a learning experience that is highly social, with peer learning playing a significant, if indirect role. I have also argued that a key feature of the Teaching Practice Group model is that it provides teacher training in which learning to teach is grounded in, and centred on, the language classroom. This creates an extremely rich and stimulating experience for trainees and one that can be used by trainers to effectively support trainees in learning to teach. This support is both designed-in, inherent in the processes of the course and the documentation used by trainers and trainees, and contingent, with ample opportunities for trainers to make connections for trainees between the practical experience of being in a classroom with real learners and the theoretical input and readings that make up the rest of the course.

In identifying and describing the processes through which teacher learning is supported in the Teaching Practice Group model I have also highlighted the importance of trainee teachers gaining confidence in their ability to manage the classroom in order for their attention to 'progress' from themselves and their actions to the learners and their learning. The Teaching Practice Group model provides mechanisms for trainers to support trainees in seeing beyond themselves and their own performance to notice other aspects of the teaching and learning process.

Teacher learning within this model is highly social with trainees interacting intensively with their fellow trainees, the trainers, and the teaching practice class students. It is grounded in and centred on the context of the classroom with trainees supported in seeing the classroom and encouraged to engage in discussions with their peers and the trainer, to explore the relationship between teachers' actions and the learning of their students.

The data collected as part of this study suggests that the Teaching Practice Group model is a distinctive approach to teacher education and one that which has much to offer. The social context in the Teaching Practice Group model is the shared group of learners and the classroom in which the teaching takes place. The classroom is both the focus and the place of learning about how to teach. Within this context the learning of trainees is mediated by the environment created as part of the model –

its structures, processes, documentation and activities. Through engagement with that environment trainees are guided and supported to reflect on elements of the teaching and learning process. Their learning is mediated by the collaborative activities of the Teaching Practice Group model; the documentation that orders their participation in the model; and the contingent scaffolding of the trainers.

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9. Appendices

9.1: Summary of pilot survey findings

TP groups trainee survey

(November 2013)

There were 10 responses to the survey, from 21 who I emailed. I did not send a follow up email to chase those who had not responded the first time.

CLOSED QUESTIONS

How much teaching did you do in the training class in your PGCE?

Most of the respondents (6) taught the training class between one and two hours, 3 others taught for more than two hours and one did not respond to this question. 7 of them are currently teaching.

Rank the importance of the following elements of the training class for your development as a teacher (1 = not important / 5 = very important)

They were asked to rate the importance of the following elements of the training class for their development as a teacher.

<i>Observing the trainer teaching the training class</i>	<i>4.75</i>
<i>Teaching the training class</i>	<i>4.00</i>
<i>Trainer feedback on your teaching in the training class</i>	<i>3.00</i>
<i>Trainer feedback on other trainees' teaching in the training class</i>	<i>2.75</i>
<i>Joint planning sessions</i>	<i>2.75</i>
<i>Observing other trainees teaching the training class</i>	<i>2.33</i>
<i>Other trainees' feedback on your teaching in the training class</i>	<i>2.14</i>

It is interesting that they valued observing the trainer teach the class so highly. It would be good to know why they felt that this was so beneficial. *I will explore this in the interviews.* Unsurprisingly, teaching the class came next followed by the feedback that they received from the trainer on their own teaching. The trainer's feedback on the teaching of other trainees was given only slightly less importance than feedback on their own teaching, suggesting that they viewed the feedback sessions as general discussions about teaching rather than personal critiques of their performance.

Did you feel that the trainer focused more on assessment or development of your teaching in feedback?

This is supported by their answers to the later question on whether they felt that the trainer focused on assessment (2) or development (8). *I will explore this in the interviews.* I was surprised that they appeared to place little value on observing the other trainees. Perhaps they were not given much direction as to the importance of actively observing the other trainees - the trainer may not have used observation tasks for example. It is also possible that they understood the question as asking whether they were observing the teacher as opposed to the learners.

When you were observing other teachers in the training class what was your main focus?

When asked what their main focus was when observing other teachers in the training class they answered the teacher (2), the learners (5) and the lesson (3). *I will explore this in the interviews.*

OPEN QUESTIONS

There were three open response questions:

1. What did you like most about the training classes?
2. What did you like least about the training classes?
3. Name five things you learnt from the training classes.

I have grouped the responses below.

1. What did you like most about the training classes?

I have grouped respondents' responses to this question into three areas: feedback, camaraderie, supportive environment.

1.1 Feedback

One of the main features of TP groups is group feedback straight after the teaching sessions and respondents were largely positive about the immediacy and depth of the feedback that they received.

- *The possibility of detailed feedback on classes taught*
- *to receive constructive comments in feedback and planning sessions.*

One respondent felt that the feedback enabled her to better understand the class she had just taught from the learners' perspective.

- *the opportunity to see how your teaching was impacting the learners.;*

I will explore respondents' experience of feedback in the interviews.

1.2 Working with other trainees (camaraderie)

TP groups are purposefully set up as a collaborative activity. As well as the joint feedback, trainees share classes and plan for them together. This is partly practical, but is also to require trainees to be explicit about the decisions they are making and to learn from each others' mistakes as well as successes.

- *the comradery and the mutual support of the other trainees, I think this is helpful/neccesary when staring out*
- *The collaborative working*
- *joint planning; working with other trainees*
- *I liked the shared experience as it helped bring trainees together and this gave them the scope to share ideas and give each other support.*
- *Working with other trainees in a collaborative fashion to deliver the best lesson we could*

I will explore the benefits that respondents' felt they gained from working together in the interviews.

1.3 Supportive environment

The scaffolding provided by the structure of the TP group teaching, by the trainer and by the other trainees is an important element of the TP group model and this appears to be supported by the respondents' comments.

- *It enabled me to plan, teach and reflect in a very supported way, which as a year 1 trainee I really needed.*
- *to make mistakes and learn from them.*
- *The ability to try out teaching approaches in a supported environment*
- *The ability to learn how to teach in a real classroom "safely" i.e. knowing that you were teaching real students but would not be allowed go dangerously off piste*
- *The teacher trainers were without exception amazing and they all taught me so much, and patiently fielded all my questions.*

I will explore this in the interviews.

2. What did you like least about the training classes?

Respondents highlighted two main areas that they felt were negative about the training classes: practicalities and emotional issues.

2.1 Practicalities

Most of them picked out practical issues such as the timing of the class or lack of information from the course team about logistics. One person also noted that she would have liked to have taught more than one group – this is common on CELTA courses where there are two TP groups and trainees move from one to the other, either as a group after an initial block or individually. The latter is more complex for the course organisers, but does have the advantage of allowing trainees to see more of their fellow trainees teaching.

- *It would have been helpful to have changed the mix of trainees more. I spent too much time observing the same people, and would have liked to see more of a range of teaching styles*
- *The only thing that consistently lets this course down is the admin. Allowing for the fact that the course had changed since the previous year, it was hard to ascertain fundamental information such as how many weeks the training class would last for, which is vital for part time students who have to arrange other paid work in order to be able to afford to stay on the course.*
- *Sometimes it could be a last minute rush to get things photocopied etc on the day which frequently meant I would have to get them done before, which was difficult without a printer at home. This was a very small thing though!*

2.2 Emotional issues

TP groups can be difficult for some people. Not only are they asked to stand up in front of a class and teach, but the trainer and their fellow trainees are also sat at the back taking notes. Things often come to a head in the feedback sessions where both trainees and the trainer are expected to give feedback. There was a comment suggesting that one of the respondents had negative experiences with a fellow trainee and also reference to the trainer not being fair in the feedback sessions. *I will explore this in the interviews.*

- *One difficult trainee*

- *trainers unfair treatment*

The comment below is also interesting. Part of the strength of TP groups is the requirement to reflect not just on your own teaching, but also that of others. This provides more opportunities for reflection on teaching (in general and, if the feedback is well handled, on your own teaching). However, the emotional side of feedback can get in the way, as it can with 1 to 1 feedback, but probably to a greater extent. *I will explore this in the interviews.*

- *It was sometimes difficult to give honest comments to fellow trainees*

There were a couple of other comments that I will explore with the individuals who made them:

- *Feeling somewhat constrained by the lesson plan and unsure how freely I was able to depart from it if I felt this was warranted.*
- *Making a complete hash of the technology occasionally - but it all had to be done*

3. Name five things you learnt from the training classes.

As would be expected respondents' answers covered a wide range. Planning was mentioned by all and classroom management by nearly all, the others were all mentioned by more than one person.

3.1 PLANNING (mentioned by all)

Most of the answers here were quite straightforward and point to the collaborative, supported focus on lesson planning as a strength of the TP groups model.

- *lesson planning*
- *How to plan a lesson effectively and realistically*
- *How to plan lessons*
- *Effective lesson planning*
- *Better planning*
- *How to plan effective lessons*
- *Importance of planning and timing*
- *Better understanding of meaning of the aims of a lesson*
- *To stage every session and connect to the next stage of learning*
- *Not to plan too much content for each lesson*
- *Mixing types of activities and group and individual work*
- *Better understanding of pacing*

Some of the responses were specifically about materials development:

- *To adapt materials to level of different classes*
- *How to develop effective teaching materials*
- *making good resources*

3.2 Classroom management (9)

Classroom management was also mentioned by most respondents. They were all more or less new to teaching and so the challenge of making sense of the classroom and feeling in control of what went on during their lessons appears to have been a major concern and one which the TP group supported them in learning. I think that the very practical, 'sink or swim' nature of TP groups forces trainees to confront the need to make sense of the classroom early on, allowing them to notice other, deeper elements of teaching and learning quite quickly. *I will explore this in the interviews and also look for any awareness of the role of routine formation in this.*

- *managing a class*
- *Class management strategies*
- *Better understanding of how to give instructions*
- *importance of remembering students' names*
- *Understanding classroom dynamics*
- *Classroom management*
- *Some aspects of classroom management*
- *Classroom management*
- *How to teach i.e. specifically what to do*

3.3 Differentiation

Differentiation is an important concept in ESOL teacher training (less so in the rest of the ELT world) and so it is unsurprising that a number of respondents picked up on this as learning point. It does highlight the way in which TP groups (and any practical teaching experience) can make theoretical concepts such as differentiation real to trainees. If half the class finish an exercise early (whether it is their class or one they are observing) and are at a loose end, while the rest of the class struggle to finish, that is a problem to be addressed and an important learning moment in terms of understanding differentiation.

- *The importance of differentiation*
- *The importance of differentiation*
- *How to relate learners level differentiation*
- *Different techniques for managing differentiation*

3.4 Focus on students

The concept of progression in attention in teacher learning, by which trainee teachers move from a focus on their own role in classroom management and organization and to learning activities before finally turning to what students are learning from these activities, appears to be supported here. Trainees appear to have become more aware of their learners through the TP groups. *I will explore this process with them in the interviews.*

- *How to make my lessons more learner focused*
- *To focus on the students more than myself*
- *What works to engage learners*
- *Students have high expectations of trainees*
- *How and when to shut up and let students get on with it*
- *Being flexible and not slavishly following a plan*

- *Importance of personalising the lessons*

3.5 Reflection / use of feedback

Trainees appear to have valued the focus on reflection that is implicit in the iterative and collaborative process of teaching, feedback and planning of the TP group model

- *Reflective thinking*
- *The importance of feedback for self-development*
- *When everything went badly wrong what you can learn out of that lesson*
- *How to adapt my teaching based on feedback*
- *Practical advice from very experienced teachers*

3.6 Teaching approaches / AFL

A number of other more specific points were mentioned implying that the respondents had used TP groups to think through and try out specific teaching approaches and methods of formative assessment.

- *Identifying learning points / 'teaching moments'*
- *Importance of assessment and checking learners' learning*
- *How to assess learning formatively*
- *Different strategies for facilitating and delivering learning*
- *The method of 'noticing' language in use*
- *How to use a smart board*

9.2: Field notes

TP 1400 40m 25x2

Align sources chronologically?
Lesson plan
v notes eg?
field notes or illustrate a point?
extract from?
so write this section in correct order, other bits.

2

me

V.

Ch

com (10 min)

D. Justin

Need to reference ALP + TP session notes + feedback sheet

V. chats to m about course / careers / teaching. D + J chat. J has papers on her lap - looks prepared for sth. - not sure if it's her lesson tomorrow or obs task.

V. has papers on the desk, water, pen in hand

Quickly writing stuff - concentrated (listening + writing?)

looking at ss / time

J doing a obs sheet on errors

V. writes (but smiles - clearly still listening to Tansie - ss exchanges.

V. writing

clean data

drills / phonemes on board

what's the word class?

Protocol?

replicate class?

mini i-pad in Lona

- Did anyone go shopping this weekend?

That's what we'll be talking about

now explaining about course

ss ask about level - impromptu chat

Ch explains elem / pre - it etc quite unsure.

Le Cave o France

* Penicillin - discuss or favourite stop.

→ pics to elicit dep't store

it begins with D ...

It's a dep't store

V. has two lts
of paper?
Process?

V. notes
sth
on 2nd
piece of paper,
then goes back
to main
narrative.

V. answers of
the need to
compose her face?
smiles, responds.

V. writes

Pay here

Cash desk
V. laboured board
(uses colours, odd
spacing.)

Chester Hunt
explains task
iPad mic/speaker
- good audio

Listening 1
- trainees briefly
discuss the task
ss - what's a
suit?

DA hands out
Qs for L2

Lesson plan

Evaluation of teaching

Ta ... feedback (tutor)

Lesson failed mainly
because of the last
section

Not enough Qs (LP)

No cross-check

V. Fibb

The final task
not being substantial
enough

MEET

V. writing

V. pauses
and
writes

V. pauses
before writing
- looking
for the word,

Feedback on L2

He thought he was
funny / doesn't
correct it (V.
writes)

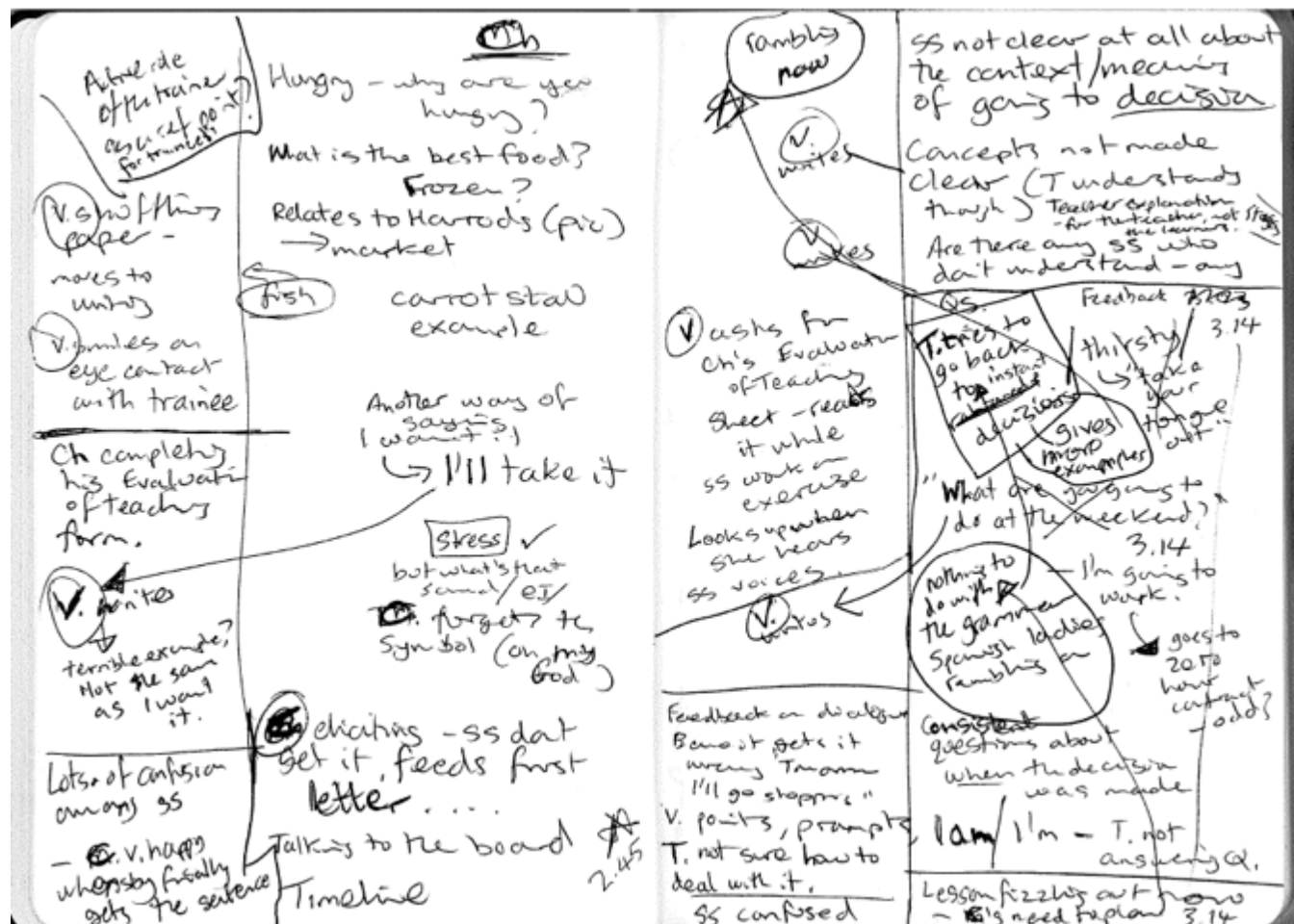
What's the best
service you've
had?

TTT
rushing here
too many Qs
trying to elicit
stories

Dying...
compare with your
country
'a range of
restaurants?
compare

LOSES ② - not
sure what she's
saying -
rambling
conv.

You've been
loud



9.3: Pilot interview frame (trainees)

Background

What is your professional background?

What is your teaching background? *Probe: previous teaching experience; teaching qualifications; teaching courses; previous experience of TP.*

Were you teaching before / during the course? *Probe: others on the course; similar experience?*

Teaching practice

What has been your overall impression of the course? *Probe: TP*

In terms of your development as a teacher, which of input sessions, reading, placements and TP has been the most important?

How well did you think the TP was integrated into the course? *Probe: relation between focus of lesson, feedback and input session*

When you were planning your lessons did you have a particular personal development goal in mind? *Probe: relation to feedback in TP; basic techniques*

When you were observing other teachers in TP what was your main focus – the teacher, the lesson or the learners? *Probe: basic techniques*

Did you think that the feedback sessions were helpful? *Probe: feedback on other teachers; was the feedback critical enough*

What about the practical aspects of TP – how did they impact on your experience? *Probe: timetabling; classroom; learners*

9.4: Trainer interview frame

A) Interviewee background

What is your experience of using TP groups? *Probe: other types of teacher education?*

What do you base your TP practice / procedures on? *Probe: models from training-up? Co-trainers?*

B) Teacher knowledge

How do you go about assessing trainees in TP? *Probe: underlying criteria? CELTA checklist? Consistency on courses?*

"...there are instances of teaching and teacher behaviour which are representative of what good teachers do."

Do you agree? *Probe: What do English language teachers need to know? Trainees seeing experienced teachers exhibiting behaviours (e.g. echoing) that trainers have suggested are undesirable.*

What do you see as the role of theory, or the principles that underpin practice in TP?

What is the relationship between input/reading etc. and TP? *Probe: do you make reference to points made in teaching seminars or previous TP f/b sessions?*

C) Teachers learning

Do you vary your approach to TP feedback depending on the trainee? *Probe: factors to take into consideration? Stages of teacher learning / progression in attention.*

Do you vary your approach in any other types of interaction? *Probe reading, observation tasks, assignment marking)?*

What do you think informs how trainees approach their teaching aside from the content of the course? *Probe: preconceived beliefs about teaching? Made explicit? Challenged?*

Do you consciously attempt to help trainees feel like members of the teaching community? How? *Probe: symbols / artefacts of language teaching?*

What do you think are the most important aspects of the teacher's professional knowledge?

Do you encourage trainees to establish any teaching routines? *Probe: making trainees aware of the 'why' as well as the 'what' in routines?*

9.5: Trainee interview frame

1. Describe TP

- planning/teaching/feedback
2. Did you enjoy the training class?
 3. What did you get out of the training class?
 4. What did you find most challenging / enjoyable?
 5. How important was the training class in you learning to teach?
 6. What did you feel that you learnt from the other trainees? Can you think of any examples? *Probe: collaboration with other trainees / support from the trainer / influence of input sessions*

PLANNING

7. What was your process for planning your teaching slots in the training class? *Probe: relation to feedback in TP; basic techniques.*
8. Were you given consistent guidance from the individual trainers? *Probe: focus / consistency of feedback between trainers / personal hobbyhorses?*
9. What about experimentation? Did you feel you had the chance to experiment in your teaching during the training class sessions? *Probe: why/why not?*

TEACHING

10. Were you aware of certain things you needed to demonstrate in your teaching in order to pass? *Probe: influence on planning? Decisions while teaching? Participation in feedback?*
11. When you were observing other teachers in TP what was your main focus – the teacher, the lesson or the learners? *Probe: basic techniques / routines /*
12. Do/did you feel like a teacher during the course? When? What helped you to feel that way?

FEEDBACK

13. During feedback sessions how did you feel about the comments of the trainer? And of the other trainees? *Probe: balance of critical / positive comments; validity of trainee comments;*
14. When the feedback was about other trainees' teaching did you contribute honestly? Were you critical? Supportive? Did it vary as the course went on?
15. How did you feel that you learnt from the other trainees? How do you think that you contributed to the development of the other trainees? Were you aware that you were being assessed on the quality of your feedback to other trainees?

GENERAL

16. Was there a consistent message from the input sessions, reading, placement, and the training class?
17. How well did you think the training class was integrated into the course? *Probe: relation between focus of lesson, feedback and input session*
18. In terms of your development as a teacher, which was most influential: input sessions, reading, placement, or the training class? *Probe: Why*

9.6: Participant information sheet and consent form

Participant information sheet

The role of Teaching Practice Groups in teacher learning

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study? The use of Teaching Practice Groups has not been assessed in any formal academic study despite the fact that it is the dominant model in initial teacher training for English language teachers. The aim of this project is to gather empirical data to explore the role of Teaching Practice Groups in teacher learning.

Research question: In what ways do Teaching Practice Groups facilitate and support teacher learning on initial teacher education programmes for teachers of English as a second, other or foreign language to adults?

Do I have to take part? The research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? You will be interviewed, the interview will be recorded and this data will be transcribed and analysed. Data from the interview may be used in the final PhD thesis or in related academic papers.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential? The data will be anonymised and you will not be named or in any other way identifiable. All information collected about the individual will be kept strictly confidential. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on research ethics. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project.

Thank you

David Mallows

(d.mallows@ioe.ac.uk)

Interview consent form

As part of this study I would like to collect interview data from trainers who have experience of working with Teaching Practice Groups.

Please tick box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information on the participant information sheet, have had the opportunity to ask questions and I agree to take part in the study.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to change my mind at any time, without giving reason.

☐

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research

☐

Signature:

Date:

If you would like more information feel free to contact

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Many thanks

9.7: Trainer and trainee interview analysis codes

Trainer interview analysis codes

Description of the Teaching Practice Group process

- The importance of this role in maintaining consistency
- Assessor role in standardisation.
- Context for TP
- TP points

Teacher knowledge

- Prior beliefs about teaching
- Competences
- Stages – progression in attention.
- Integration of theory and practice
- Basic teaching techniques
- Routines
- Trainer knowledge
- Standardising trainer assessment

Teacher learning

- Assessment
- Social constructivism
- Community of practice
- Integration of theory and practice
- Technical rational approach.
- Motivation to learn
- Stages: progression in attention
- Basics: importance of classroom management.
- Role of the trainer
- Routines
- The skill of the trainer in managing the group.

Trainee interview analysis codes

Teaching Practice Group process

- The iterative teaching practice cycle
- Similarities in courses that use Teaching Practice Groups
- The role of the trainer in maintaining quality? /Consistency?
- The role of the trainer in standardisation
- The role of the trainer in setting teaching practice points
- The skill of the trainer in managing the group (KNOWLEDGE OFFER Collaboration among the course team)

Teacher knowledge

- Competences
- Integration of theory and practice
- The basics
- Prior beliefs about teaching

Teacher Learning

- Constructivism
 - Planning
 - Scaffolding ZPD 'go beyond'
 - Observing
 - Feedback
- Stages (including progression in attention)
- Routines
- Integration of theory and practice
- Teaching Practice as situated learning

9.8: interview analysis table

CELTA DESCRIPTION	The importance of this role in maintaining quality? /Consistency?	the actual observation of other sessions has been largely through my training up process, but obviously also I'm an assessor for the CELTA and so as part of every assessment I do I watch a feedback session. I think I've had ideas for the operational side of that- of that TP feedback- you know, putting people into pairs, getting somebody to lead the group-	T2
CELTA DESCRIPTION	Assessor role in standardisation.	- in all these assessments there is going to be an element of subjectivity in it, and the only thing you can do to try to increase the level of reliability is all the kind of things like standardisation, if possible two people sitting in a lesson and occasionally that's- I think that's why every CELTA course is externally assessed. And I think- you know, the more tutors can be- can work as assessors, the better because they can go and see other people's practice	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	BASIC TECHNIQUES	JA: Okay. I mean I think there's a certain- a certain amount of sort of skill-based techniques that form part of the beginner teacher repertoire. I think they have to be there, knowing what to do at any particular moment. DM: For example? JA: For example how to deal with pronunciation, how to clarify a language structure, how to ask concept-checking questions. So the kind of things that are- could be labelled sort of "techniques". I think there needs to be some understanding, even at CELTA level, of why you're doing these- these techniques.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Competences / Stages – progression in attention.	would you say there is- there is a discrete set of things that a language teacher needs to know? JA: Discrete sounds like it's kind of a list with an end, and I don't think it is. I think when teachers start off, learning some behaviours can help them think more freely about what's going on in the classroom because there's an automaticity about some of the behaviours. But I wouldn't see the behaviours as the end of the list.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice	so working on pronunciation, so you- they kind of memorise the idea that you should say something at least three times and then the learners say it together, choral drilling, to give the learners confidence, etcetera, then you get individual learners to say it. What you're trying to instil in them is the behaviour about the number of times you say it and the way learners say it. But the only way that will lead to learning is if they understand that the nature of pronunciation, the nature of utterances, and the formulation of sounds. But probably they can start with just say it three times and get them to say it X number of times and then get individuals to say it.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice	I think the behaviour helps you to get to the latter. So I suppose I- one of my beliefs is that it's important to theorise practice, so that you start with some of the practical things, out of which you draw the theory. But I would never like to say that all they would come out is knowing, "I have to say it three times and they have to say it five times," unless they have some understanding of why that is. Because otherwise they won't replicate it. So I think the list of behaviours is a door to understanding, and it's- I think it's an important door to understanding. Particularly if teachers are beginning, they're very nervous, or they're very worried about global things like standing up there and being exposed. But actually the individual, as I say, "Say it three times, get them to say it," can be very helpful.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice	- I try to be mindful of people who are struggling with some of the concepts in input when they come to TP.	T2

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice	I mean a recent intensive course I did, the- one of the trainees really struggled with some of the grammatical terminology, particularly around tenses and so I remember the first lesson she did with me was- it must have been an upper intermediate group so something like conditionals, something a bit complex, and I spent a little bit more time with her in the planning because I thought from the input that she was really confused by the terminology and the concepts.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice	: Because otherwise I think you'll never- you'll never replicate them or change them according to the group, because they will become things that happen all the time as opposed to [inaudible 35:46] who the students are.	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Integration of theory and practice – links between course elements.	this is the first time I've ever done a TP where I've not been doing any input on the course and I found it very challenging, because I do that all the time. So in input I would- maybe an example would come up of something and I'd say to somebody I'd seen in TP, "Can you tell the rest of the class," because not everyone would have seen him or her, what happened, and we explore that. So I do that very, very explicitly, and that's- it's one of the things I miss on some of the other courses I teach on, that if you take an example from a trainee, the trainee's the only one in the room who's seen it so there's less of an impact. I do that very, very explicitly on the CELTA	T2
TEACHER KNOWLEDGE	Prior beliefs about teaching	They come- they come to the course with X number of years sitting in a classroom at the other side, and they have strong- they have expectations about what teachers do or what teachers should do, and they also maybe have a- kind of things that they're not even able to express. So I think there's a- now a more, if I can say, socially acceptable model of the teacher as a facilitator. So if you ask trainees, "What do good teachers do?" "Oh you know, they get all the students talking, and it's all very jolly, and they all do tasks." And I fell- I feel that underneath there's another view of themselves as the teacher, the knower and the expert. So when they get up, the fall-back position is not to get into groups and do these tasks, it's "I will tell you". So I think that there's a huge amount that they bring to the course that they've gathered, either from being in the classroom, or from watching teachers, or from talking about teachers, or from watching Waterloo Road or whatever, that we don't have a chance to explore. And we do kind of surface level things like, "So what was your favourite lesson and why? Who was your favourite teacher and why? Describe a positive learning environment." But I think that really only scratches the surface.	T2

9.9: The CELTA

The CELTA is an initial qualification for people with little or no previous teaching experience (<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/celta.html>).

The structure of the CELTA is currently described thus by Cambridge ESOL:

What does CELTA involve?

You can take CELTA full time (typically four to five weeks), or part time (from a few months to over a year). Your chosen course:

teaches you the principles of effective teaching

provides a range of practical skills for teaching English to adult learners

gives you hands-on teaching practice.

There are five main units of learning:

Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context

Language analysis and awareness

Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing

Planning and resources for different contexts

Developing teaching skills and professionalism.

You will be assessed throughout the course, with no final examination. An external assessor, appointed by Cambridge ESOL, moderates each course. There are two components of assessment:

Teaching practice

You will teach for a total of 6 hours, working with classes at two levels of ability. Assessment is based on your overall performance at the end of the 6 hours.

Written assignments

You will complete four written assignments: one focusing on adult learning; one on the language system of English; one on language skills; and one on classroom teaching.

To be awarded the certificate you must pass both components. There are three grades — Pass, Pass 'B' and Pass 'A'.¹

9.10: CELTA Assessment Criteria

Candidates can demonstrate their learning by:		You	Tutor
TOPIC 5 – DEVELOPING TEACHING SKILLS AND PROFESSIONALISM			
5a	arranging the physical features of the classroom appropriately for teaching and learning, bearing in mind safety regulations of the institution		
5b	setting up whole class and/or group and individual activities appropriate to the lesson type		
5c	selecting appropriate teaching techniques in relation to the content of the lesson		
5d	managing the learning process in such a way that lesson aims are achieved		
5e	making use of materials, resources and technical aids in such a way that they enhance learning		
5f	using appropriate means to make instructions for tasks and activities clear to learners		
5g	using a range of questions effectively for the purpose of elicitation and checking of understanding		
5h	providing learners with appropriate feedback on tasks and activities		
5i	maintaining an appropriate learning pace in relation to materials, tasks and activities		
5j	monitoring learners appropriately in relation to the task or activity		
5k	beginning and finishing lessons on time and, if necessary, making any relevant regulations pertaining to the teaching institution clear to learners		
5l	maintaining accurate and up-to-date records in their portfolio		
5m	noting their own teaching strengths and weaknesses in different teaching situations in light of feedback from learners, teachers and teacher educators		
5n	participating in and responding to feedback		

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Teaching practice

Candidates can demonstrate their learning by:		You	Tutor
TOPIC 1 – LEARNERS AND TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTEXT			
1a	teaching a class with an awareness of the needs and interests of the learner group		
1b	teaching a class with an awareness of learning styles and cultural factors that may affect learning		
1c	acknowledging, when necessary, learners' backgrounds and previous learning experiences		
1d	establishing good rapport with learners and ensuring they are fully involved in learning activities		
TOPIC 2 – LANGUAGE ANALYSIS AND AWARENESS			
2a	adjusting their own use of language in the classroom according to the learner group and the context		
2b	identifying errors and sensitively correcting learners' oral and written language		
2c	providing clear contexts and a communicative focus for language		
2d	providing accurate and appropriate models of oral and written language in the classroom		
2e	focusing on language items in the classroom by clarifying relevant aspects of meaning, form and phonology to an appropriate depth		
2f	showing awareness of differences in register		
2g	providing appropriate practice of language items		
TOPIC 3 – LANGUAGE SKILLS: READING, LISTENING, SPEAKING AND WRITING			
3a	helping learners to understand reading and listening texts		
3b	helping learners to develop oral fluency		
3c	helping learners to develop writing skills		

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STAGE TWO PROGRESS RECORD – HOURS TAUGHT ☐

Planning for teaching

Candidates can demonstrate their learning by:		You	Tutor
TOPIC 4 – PLANNING AND RESOURCES FOR DIFFERENT TEACHING CONTEXTS			
4a	identifying and stating appropriate aims/outcomes for individual lessons		
4b	ordering activities so that they achieve lesson aims		
4c	selecting, adapting or designing materials, activities, resources and technical aids appropriate for the lesson		
4d	presenting the materials for classroom use with a professional appearance, and with regard to copyright requirements		
4e	describing the procedure of the lesson in sufficient detail		
4f	including interaction patterns appropriate for the materials and activities used in the lesson		
4g	ensuring balance, variety and a communicative focus in materials, tasks and activities		
4h	allocating appropriate timing for different stages in the lesson		
4i	analysing language with attention to form, meaning and phonology and using correct terminology		
4j	anticipating potential difficulties with language, materials and learners		
4k	suggesting solutions to anticipated problems		
4l	using terminology that relates to language skills and subskills correctly		
4m	working constructively with colleagues in the planning of teaching practice sessions		
4n	reflecting on and evaluating their plans in the light of the learning process and suggesting improvements for future plans		

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9.11: Example trainer interview transcript (Trainer 2)

DM: The subject of what we're interviewing you is about your experience with TP groups specifically in- not particularly within CELTA, it's the TP groups themselves. And we can talk a little bit about the constraints of CELTA with TP groups but it's the teaching practice element and how it relates to the rest of the course.

TRAINER 2: Right.

DM: So first of all can you tell me what you- what your experience is of TP groups ?

TRAINER 2: So- well I've been a CELTA tutor- well I did CELTA myself so- that and DELTA, and I've been a teacher on CELTA for eight years.

DM: Do you remember your experience on CELTA?

TRAINER 2: Yeah, I do, yeah.

DM: What were your memories of doing the teaching practice? Did you- did you [taught?1:05] before you did the CELTA?

TRAINER 2: No, I didn't have any experience. Well, I did the intensive course and I just found it very, very, very intensive, and part of that intensity was definitely to do with being part of the TP group, having people around you all the time and that intense focus on each other. Yeah. And that's- yeah, and I think that's what my trainees feel about it now as well. That is the characteristic of the course, that intensity and focus on each other.

DM: And is that the thing that you most remember from the course, the TP group?

TRAINER 2: It is actually, yeah. That's interesting. Yes, I hardly remember the input sessions or anything else. Yeah.

DM: Okay. And have you done teacher training without TP groups?

TRAINER 2: Just as a mentor on PGCE programmes.

DM: And have you done other sort of CPD sessions and other types of- ?

TRAINER 2: Oh yeah, I was a director of studies for a while so I did observations and CPD sessions. Yeah.

DM: But not like as part of a course.

TRAINER 2: No.

DM: Okay. What do you- [inaudible 2:29]. What do you base the thing- the procedure you use and the way you use teaching practice groups- why do you use them the way you do?

TRAINER 2: Yeah. I'm afraid I don't think we've put much thought into it. Or I haven't personally. I've kind of inherited it from the person who trained me here. And I'm applying to be a CELTA assessor and- you know, obviously I'll be able to find out how other centres do it, because I don't know how it compares. But I don't know, assessors who have visited us have never said, "Oh, that's unusual," or visiting tutors have never said, "Oh, I've never seen it done that way." So I just kind of assume it's a CELTA thing, although I don't think that Cambridge specifies how.

DM: So why is it- why do you do the things you do? Where does it come from?

TRAINER 2: It- yeah, I inherited it from the person who trained me, and she must have inherited it from the place that she trained as well, she just brought it with her. When she came here they'd never done the CELTA before and she just set it up that way.

DM: And your- the way you handle feedback or the way you place the training groups in the class- in the rest of the course- presumably that comes directly from training up and inheriting the course?

TRAINER 2: Yeah, and then other kind of input, like when we do standardisation, you know, we see other DVDs or- we've had visiting tutors working with us who brought new ideas about- but they've basically been tweaking really, just different ways to sit people or different handouts you can use, you know. The basic format is the same that we all get together after the lesson and it's all the people who observed it and- yeah.

DM: Could you take me through a day in your CELTA course?

TRAINER 2: It depends- we organise it differently depending on the- depending on the timetable. You know, so we've got an evening course, we've got a day course, we've got an intensive July course.

DM: Tell me about the intensive July day.

TRAINER 2: Well the intensive course half of the day they're being taught by us with the input sessions and the other half of the day they're teaching, having a feedback. That's the way it works.

DM: Okay, and when do they do the planning? Do they do the planning on the back of the feedback?

TRAINER 2: Directly afterwards. They get together and plan the next session, yeah.

DM: It's an amazing inherited model, isn't it. I mean I've handled- intensive courses I've worked on have been exactly that model, either morning or the afternoon, and variations of it. Right, when you're in TP how do you go about assessing trainees?

TRAINER 2: Hmm. Well, that- it really depends. So it depends on the stage of the course, so it depends on what kind of things we're focusing on at that point of the course. So at the beginning of the course there'll be a lot of input sessions on managing classes so that's really the main way we're assessing trainees, and I think they're aware of that, that that's what we're looking for. And then we move on to planning, so for the second half of the course there's a strong focus on planning. Moving onto by the end of the course achieving your aims.

DM: Okay. Why is there that breakdown?

TRAINER 2: Well it's to do with the timetable of the input sessions, because you can't expect somebody to do something they've never heard about before .

DM: Sure.

TRAINER 2: And I suppose a perception of what's more- you know, what's more difficult. I guess you have to start with classroom management because the really, really basic things about rapport and being able to start and finish a class and all of that, that has to come at the beginning.

DM: Why do you say it has to come at the beginning?

TRAINER 2: Hmm. I guess because given that most teachers are completely inexperienced it's important that they feel comfortable standing up in front of a group of people. I think you can't achieve the other things until you've established that.

DM: And what is involved in that confidence? What sort of things do they need to be able to do?

TRAINER 2: Really basic things I guess first of all like project their voice, make eye contact, know where to stand in the room. Really basic things like that, in the first lesson that's what we'd be looking at.

DM: Okay, and then you talk about them moving on to planning and then achieving aims. What would be involved in those?

TRAINER 2: Well being able to produce a description of the lesson that supports them when they're teaching a lesson and includes evidence of the research they've done into the language and things like that. Using- also being able to use the terminology that we use to describe lessons and stages of lessons.

DM: Okay. And do you use- is there a checklist that you use as you're assessing during a class? I mean do you assess on that sort of level? Or is it more broad?

TRAINER 2: Yes we do. We use the checklist that's in the- you know, the Cambridge checklist.

DM: And how do you- do you use that for them as well as for you? Or do you use it- is it hidden from them or do you share it with them?

TRAINER 2: No, we share it with them.

DM: And so after a lesson do they expect to be told that they've met that one and that one and that one?

TRAINER 2: Well we have- we don't actually every lesson sort of have a copy of that checklist because it's really, really long and overwhelming and there are some things that are really- things like have they organised the furniture, say for example, stuff like that. It's just really not that important. And there are some things that are really important, you know, like did you understand what you were teaching. So we don't find it that useful, we tend to just refer to it when there's- when they say, "I don't really understand why you're getting at that or what-" you know, as a backup reference. So I think we're really clear in our written feedback how- how they're being assessed and I think- yeah, I think it's clear in the written feedback, but it's not on- we don't directly use that checklist for every lesson.

DM: And how do you- how do you sort of ensure you're consistent across the team, two or three, or however many people are teaching the course? And across courses as well?

TRAINER 2: Well, you know, that's not easy. The groups swap tutors, that's- that's one thing. We always talk about the lessons directly afterwards, so the lesson stops and then we have a break, we've got twenty minutes between us, the two of us. Because often we'll say, "I think this is what I think about their lesson, what do you think? Have a look at the lesson plan or have a look at what I've written." Hmm. I guess that's the way we do it.

DM: And is- do you think to a certain extent your- your judgements on whether they've passed or what they need to work on are impressionistic or they're- are they anchored in anything other than your general understanding of what a teacher at that stage should look like?

TRAINER 2: Well you never know, do you, to be honest. I mean you know, obviously I would like to say it's clearly objective, it's to do with the stage of the course, it's to do with the syllabus. You know, that's what you aim for as a tutor, but you can't help other things coming into the equation. You can't help it.

DM: All right, let me read this out, just tell me if you agree with this. "There are instances of teaching and teacher behaviour which are representative of what good teachers do."

TRAINER 2: I don't understand that.

DM: "There are instances of teaching and teacher behaviour-" teaching and teacher behaviour- so you can see things that represent what good teachers do. In a sense you could say there's a model there that if people do that, they'd be good. And these are things that teachers do in a class, their behaviours.

TRAINER 2: Yeah. Yeah.

DM: Okay, so what for example?

TRAINER 2: Well, okay not in the classroom but planning, so if the teacher comes to a class and the plan is thorough and clear and easy to follow, then you know that in their head at least they've mentally rehearsed it, so it's likely to be a solid lesson. So things can go wrong, accidents can happen or whatever, but that's a sign that- that's a sign of a solid teacher who's on track. And somebody who is managing the lesson successfully, so that the students are clear about what they're doing, you know, the instructions are clear and the tasks- you know, they begin and end the tasks and they manage the timing. Yeah, so- yeah, focused management of the students.

DM: And when- and in for example if you've got instructions which are obviously a clear part of managing the group, if they then go and observe an experienced teacher, somebody out here, who gives- who's a good teacher, experienced teacher, but gives terrible instructions, how do you- how do you- well, how do they react- but how would you react to their questions? Would they be right to then turn to you and say, "Well look, you told me that instructions were really important."

TRAINER 2: This really- this is a really good question and it's something- it's a really strong impression I have of when I did my CELTA all that time ago, when we went to observe teachers and they were just not doing what we were told we had to do. And yet they were- you could see that they were- well, I suppose that they were good teachers, they were experienced, the students looked, you know, involved and- so- and I remember it happening again when I did my DELTA. Exactly the same, thinking, "Why are you so prescriptive-" of our tutors- "so prescriptive about what we do when real life isn't like that?" So I mean actually my trainees here have never said that to me when they've come back from their classes, but I'm always aware that they might think that. Also, especially because they're watching teachers at Lewisham College, many of whom haven't done CELTA, so they might have done a PGCE or even something else. So something where there aren't such prescriptive rules about teaching. So at the beginning of the course I tend to think, "Well actually they don't really know what they're watching," you know, they're just- they're just overwhelmed with what's going on in the classroom. But if we organise observations towards the end of the course I do often- do often think that, yeah. And about when they first start teaching- so when I went back to teaching after I'd done my DELTA, thinking, "There's just such a big difference between what I've just done and what I'm really doing," and you know that- I don't know.

DM: Why might there be that? In particular, there are cultural things in terms of the background of the teachers and the training they've had, but for you who's followed that CELTA, DELTA, into teaching path, teacher training, similar to I have.

TRAINER 2: Well I don't- you know, I would really like to know more about PGCEs, for example, because I have- I've mentored on them and I can just tell the teachers I've worked with, the kind of feedback they get is really quite different. The first time I did this I gave a teacher feedback as I would in a CELTA and he was- "What's-" you know, "What's this about? You know, you're writing something about every single little thing I'm doing in the classroom? No." And so I realised okay, that's not the style. I don't know, CELTA is very, very prescriptive and there are good things about that and there are bad things about that.

DM: Tell me what the good things are.

TRAINER 2: Well I think when you begin anything new you need- you know, like if you're learning to play the piano you need somebody to say, "Here is a way of doing it," because you don't know how to do it at all. And then as you get more experienced and more comfortable you can improvise because you've got that basic structure. And also there's just a very, very short space of time to get everything done. So if you're- the teachers aren't- they don't have the luxury of being able to experiment or try things out. And I guess in order to assess people you have to get everybody doing the same kind of thing.

DM: Sure. And what do you- what do you think are the- you've got a short period of time and you've got to push people off with some form of control- what do you think the elements are that they need to have before they can start improvising, before they can maybe be less controlled by that?

TRAINER 2: Well these basics of classroom management, and that's what I notice when I've looked at PGCE teachers, I think really it would have been- I know that nobody said to them, "Why don't you do this

when you're setting up an activity?" for example. Or "Why don't you manage feedback like that?" And it doesn't- it's not a huge- you know, there's more important things in a lesson, but I think that's what's good about CELTA. Really basic things like how you start and finish activities, how you get attention, things like that. How- yeah, also with language, if you're teaching language, I do really like the focus on language in a CELTA. The research skills. You know, we get them all to fill in these grammar research forms so that obviously you don't learn grammar on a CELTA course as a trainee but you learn some basic sort of research skills, how to get your head around how language works. And phonology as well. So I think that's what's good about CELTA, but it does- you know, it prescribes that you need to think about language. Not that you're then going to bring it into the classroom and spout the rules, but it's part of your expertise as a language teacher to know these things.

DM: Right. What do you see as the role of theory in teaching practice experience? Not theory as in very abstract theory, but the principles that underpin what we do.

TRAINER 2: Okay, well that's a really interesting question because there's basically no room for it on a CELTA. But that's a big difference between- when I did my CELTA there was quite a lot of that and they had some background reading before the course started about there are these approaches, those approaches, this theory, that theory, and on CELTA we use these approaches. Whereas it seems that that's kind of disappeared from CELTA now. There's a whole- it's all- it's all pragmatic, so we just do what works, as if there is no theory. But there is- you know, obviously there are. Obviously there are background theories, but- and it's interesting that the trainees never question it as well, and I think that's how trainees are different maybe. Even when I first started teaching CELTA there were trainees who said, "Why do you do it like that? What's that based on?" So I'd have- it was something that I used to bear in mind in input sessions. But now- well, my feeling is that, I don't know, trainees are different. They just think, "You just tell me the stuff and I'll do it and pass the course."

DM: Do you tell- when you're talking in feedback for example, do you talk- do you say why people should be doing things? Not necessarily because [inaudible 19:35] has said this particular thing about the way learning should be organised, but do you explain why it might be a good idea to check in pairs, rather than telling them, "Check in pairs"?

TRAINER 2: Oh, definitely. Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So if- so yeah, why do we get students to check in pairs? Because this happens, that happens, and that happens, and then it helps them learn. But there are quite a lot of things that- like that- that I go through with trainees and I'm really aware, especially since I did my MA, that really it's just a way of doing things that CELTA people do. It doesn't- you can't actually say, "Do this and they will learn." It's just- it's just the way things are done. But that would sound a bit kind of cynical of me, so I don't put it to my trainees like that.

DM: No, no absolutely. I mean the language things are the obvious ones that jump out. Some of the course books, the way they describe language is just- well it's untrue- but is, as you say, is a way of doing it and you have to choose one way because you can't put everything in front and have no idea which one of these makes sense for you. How do you- what's the relationship between the input sessions and any reading they do and the teaching practice element of the course?

TRAINER 2: They don't do very much reading. I wish they did. I wish they- it would put it in a bit of context for them. So there isn't very much reading. We ask them to do reading before the course starts but we don't really kind of check that they have, and there's a certain amount of reading they do for the assignments. So the relationship between input sessions and the teaching, well ideally there should be like a direct relationship, so, "We've had this session on teaching speaking skills, and now you can teach a speaking skills lesson." That's the idea. Obviously it's not really like that, it all gets-

DM: But do you- in feedback do you refer to the input sessions and visa versa?

TRAINER 2: Yes, yes all the time. Yeah, try to. Because it's often the case that trainees aren't making a connection at all so it's really important to say, "Do you remember when we did this? Do you remember when we did that?" Yeah.

DM: And is that- so it's an explicit link, does it go both ways?

TRAINER 2: Yes, that- yes, also in the input sessions. So, "We've just discussed this, so when you're planning your lesson, you know, remember that we talked about this," or, "I know that you're teaching a lesson like this soon so maybe you can incorporate that." Yeah. Yeah you have to- you have to keep doing that.

DM: And do you use examples from- in the input sessions when you're talking about, for example, teaching reading, say, "As Joan did in her lesson-" and do you pick on the students- not the trainees, the students- as examples in the input session?

TRAINER 2: Yes yes you have to. Yeah.

DM: Why?

TRAINER 2: You have to- well, I've just- as I said, I think that trainees don't make those connections themselves. And they need to, because it's a very, very practical course. That is what it's about. And you know, a lot of trainees haven't done a course like that before. You know, what they expect is that what you're telling them is something theoretical and the teaching practise is something completely different, but in CELTA it's not like that so-

DM: But if you- you're talking within the context of CELTA, but do you think to learn to teach- this is one model and maybe it is too intensive and a bit too tight, but do you see anything inherently wrong with that as a way to begin to learn to teach?

TRAINER 2: Hmm. I like a lot of things about it. I like that really- the really, really practical nature of it. As long as a trainee you're aware that even things that you call practical or pragmatic do have a- you know, they do come from somewhere, they do come from some theory. As long as you're aware of that. And it gives- I think it gives trainees a lot of confidence, for somebody to say, "Look, do it like this," you know, because I think then they feel- yeah, they've got something concrete that they can- that they can work with.

DM: Going back to the beginning focus when we were talking about managing classes, what do you think the difference is when you've got a trainee who successfully manages the class and a trainee who doesn't successfully manage the class. How's their experience different at the beginning of the course?

TRAINER 2: How's their experience different?

DM: I mean what's the consequence of not managing the class effectively?

TRAINER 2: I think they- well it depends on whether they're aware of it or not, and a lot of trainees aren't aware of it because they're only aware of themselves. So they'll finish teaching the lesson and they'll say, you know, "That was- I felt okay about that," because they're so nervous really that they're just focussing on did they manage it without fainting or, you know, did they manage to open their mouths and say some piece of grammar information? And you know, it is a type of performance. However often you say to them, "It's not about you, it's about the students," it kind of is about them because I'm watching them. So that's a tricky thing, and some trainees never get past how they feel about themselves enough to realise that it's about how the students are responding to them. Some people are aware that it's not about them, it's about the students, but they still don't get to grips with the management and they feel uncomfortable through the whole course. And it means that they don't acquire other skill that they need. That- I mean that's why it is important to focus on that at the beginning, I think.

DM: Why? Sorry, explain that more.

TRAINER 2: Again, because if you feel- you need to feel comfortable in the class before you can begin to think about the content of the lessons and the individual students.

DM: And that management gives you that sense of comfort, that sense of control?

TRAINER 2: I think so. Yeah.

DM: Okay. Right. Think about when you do feedback with different trainees. Do you vary your approach to feedback after the sessions depending on the trainee or the stage of the course, or-

TRAINER 2: Yeah.

DM: What sort of factors come in?

TRAINER 2: Well we're kind of aiming to build towards by the end of the course them- the trainees really being able to be in charge of the feedback themselves, because we're hoping to develop them being able to reflect, you know, on the lessons themselves. So at the beginning of the course it is more led by the tutor I suppose. There's a lot more eliciting information and then hopefully by the end we are able to say, "You talk about it amongst yourselves."

DM: And are there any trainee factors that you take into consideration?

TRAINER 2: Oh yes. Yeah.

DM: Like?

TRAINER 2: Well, the different personalities, you know, making sure that particular people don't dominate or that people who don't- you know, who are very quiet, that they do contribute. People who feel defensive, making sure that they feel comfortable, things like that.

DM: Okay. And do you- if for example you've got a strong student and a weak student in the beginning stages, is your feedback- how can I put this? Do you- do you- is the feedback that you give the weaker student, which might be around, you know, just stand still and stop talking, do you give similar feedback or a similar level of feedback to the stronger student? Or do you also pick them up on maybe, you know, the

way they dealt with correction or the way they- I mean is it differentiated by their stage, if you like, of learning?

TRAINER 2: Well, I suppose the bottom line for every lesson is the stage of the course. So that's how you start. So at the beginning of the course you're looking at how they manage the class. So you'd make similar comments about that to both of them. But then with the stronger trainee you'd- you'd pick out how they've moved beyond that and you'd- I'd write something about that in the written feedback and bring it to the spoken feedback as well, to kind of highlight how they've- they did well in managing the class and they brought these other things in.

DM: Okay. What do you do if they arrive on the course, they've got different experience of life as well as of teaching, what do you- what things do you think inform the way they think about teaching when they arrive? Aside from what they might do during the beginning of the course.

TRAINER 2: Oh, yeah everything in their life and, you know, we- they might be twenty years old, they might be- I think we have someone in their seventies? You know, any age, from any country, any background. We've had people- on the last course someone had been teaching ESOL for fifteen years? Yeah. With an MA and maybe a PGCE. So you know, you name it.

DM: And what do you do with those beliefs they hold about teaching?

TRAINER 2: Yeah. Well this is something that's kind of- I think it's a problem on a course like CELTA because you can't really do anything about it and- because there isn't the time. It's not in the syllabus, it's not in the timetable. I mean there's all sorts of things we do- we do put into the CELTA course that's not, you know, extra stuff but- yeah.

DM: And do you challenge their- what you can see as their views on teaching and teachers through the TP sessions?

TRAINER 2: I don't know if challenge is the right word but we have to deal with it. Sometimes it's really urgent we have to deal with it. There's somebody on the course at the moment from Nigeria who- I think she's never seen- she's never been in any teaching situation in this country before and she- her idea of her role is completely different. Completely different. And it- that's- that had to be- I don't want to say challenged or dealt with. You know, we had to do something about that really quickly.

DM: And how does the teaching practice set-up or the structure of the course allow you to do that? Or help you to do that?

TRAINER 2: Well it does because obviously she's- she's seeing five other people teaching. Yeah.

DM: And does she see those five other people teaching as- as things that she should learn from?

TRAINER 2: I think so, because that's the way it's set up. But you know, we say, "You teach together because you learn from each other." But you know, just putting somebody in front of something doesn't mean that they're going to see the same things, so this particular woman I think she didn't see that for quite a while, even though she was watching people teaching in a different way. And also observing experienced teachers and watching DVDs. So things like that. That's when, you know, the observation tasks we give them are really helpful.

DM: Can you give me some examples of observation tasks [that they'd use? 32:46]?

TRAINER 2: So with somebody like that we might- we've got one where we ask them to look at, you know, the proportion of time that the teacher's speaking and the proportion of time that the students are speaking, and the balance of focus, you know, how much pair work and group work there is. Things like that.

DM: And how do you- how would that help her to see a difference or to see a-

TRAINER 2: Because then it kind of- well it forces her to focus on that aspect of the lesson. She might be watching the same lesson but she's paying attention to the parts of the lesson where the teacher's speaking and thinking is that teacher giving- explaining well or defining the language well, or- or speaking clearly or whatever, and the rest of the bits where the students are doing pair work or group work, she probably- I don't know, she probably didn't even notice it or maybe thinks the teacher's not doing their job properly, I don't know. But it's very easy for somebody to watch hour after hour of people teaching and get something completely different from it to what you intend.

DM: Okay. So directing their attention.

TRAINER 2: Yeah.

DM: Do you- do you- I think you probably do- do you encourage them to develop routines?

TRAINER 2: Yes.

DM: Can you give me some examples of routines?

TRAINER 2: Well I keep going back to classroom management but sort of giving instructions so you know, standing in front of the class, making eye contact, speaking clearly, asking the students to repeat it back

to you and then writing it on the board. So that's our kind of- and then, you know, we go back to that during feedback: you know, "Do you remember the routine we go through?" For pronunciation as well, so modelling, drilling, writing on the board using the phonetics, so eliciting from them, "Do you remember that we do this, this, this and this?"

DM: Why?

TRAINER 2: Why do I give them routines?

DM: Mmm.

TRAINER 2: Because I think it gives you confidence. Again, obviously it is not the right way to do it, there are many different ways of doing it, and- so I think I say to them, "This is- this is the way we do it on CELTA-" meaning it's not the only way to do it. But like anything, like playing the- yeah like playing the piano, like riding a bicycle, I think it gives you confidence if you have those routines. Then later when you're more experienced you can not do it that way.

DM: Sure, okay. Do you do- you mentioned something about this in terms of the language you use, using shared language. Do you consciously try and make them feel like teachers, and like members of a community of teachers?

TRAINER 2: Yes. I think that's really important, especially for ESOL and EFL teachers, because you know, a lot of trainees don't really feel or realise that they're coming into a profession. You know, they just feel like they've stumbled into, "I don't know what I'll do, you know, maybe I'll travel, this'll be easy," and I think it's really important first of all that they are aware it is a profession and it draws them into that. Yeah. Yeah to give them a shared language draws them into the profession.

DM: And what's the- so language is there, is there anything else that you think helps to do that? How are they made to feel like teachers during the teaching sessions?

TRAINER 2: Well we sort of place quite a lot of emphasis on the fact that the class of students belongs to them, it's not just something we've set up for them and they pop into it. So things like they're responsible for the register and making sure there are board pens and making sure the furniture's arranged the way they like it. Yeah.

DM: And do they liaise with the students, so do they deal with the students' questions and queries and-

TRAINER 2: They- they do, and I try to make sure they do. So if I can see a student has a question I might kind of go out of the room so that they deal with it. And then when they start doing their case study assignments, we've started doing that earlier in the course. It used to be towards the end. So they did start noticing the students as individuals more and people that they were responsible for. And once they've done that I think, yeah, it becomes- we do PETTLS with CELTA so that's another reason why there's quite a lot of focus on their role and the responsibilities they have.

DM: And does- I mean PETTLS you can just go to a classroom and do, can't you. Do you think the teaching practice set-up helps to bring them into a community?

TRAINER 2: Yes. The other aspect is of being a colleague, of being a good colleague, and that's- you know, if you're in a TP group that's really highlighted. You know, do you liaise, do you support each other, things like that.

DM: They're all part of the professional role.

TRAINER 2: Yeah they are. And that- I mean that [38:38] is a big advantage of CELTA I guess, that you wouldn't get so much on a PGCE. The fact that you're forced to work together well with other people.

DM: Yeah, it's part of the teaching practice model, isn't it, that you do the team teach, you share the class and you share the- many of the learners. All right, last thing, if you- this is obviously within CELTA, so you've got all the constraints, the short nature of the course and the, you know, the slightly prescriptive nature of it- can you- and we talked about DELTA, being within DELTA as well- can you imagine it if you had a course that was over the year, like for example a PGCE, would you want to have teaching practice as part of that course?

TRAINER 2: Because of what you learn from other people. It's not just you the tutor, you the tutor. You know there's just no end to the things that they can learn from each other, as long as they are focusing, as long as they notice things. You know, on every course there's teachers who just do things much better than I do in some respects, and they- you know, they show each other things that I- yeah, that I never would have thought of.

END

9.11: Example trainee interview transcript (Trainee 2)

- DM:** [technical difficulties] It seems to be working, fine So can you tell me which training classes did you do?
- TRAINEE 2** *Sara: I did one, the first one I did was, well they were both at Candy [?] and the first one I did was with Fiona Haywood, on a Tuesday morning, Literacy E3/L1 and the second one was at Candy again, and ESOL with Kate Fosco on Wednesday, I think. And that was a lower level? That was E2.*
- DM** Could you, it doesn't have to be exclusively, but where you can, just focus on the ESOL class? *Oh OK, yeah.* Just because it's a more traditional method in the ESOL, literacy is sort of quite new, I don't think anybody's done those classes with literacy before, and Kate is also, she's an experienced trainer using the training class method, so it's interesting to hear about her stuff. So in general, did you like the training class?
- TRAINEE 2** *I did, I'd got used to the format of it all by that stage, because I'd been so long out of education, and education has changed a lot since I was there, so working collaboratively with a sort of small group was quite a new thing for me, in a non-work environment, but yes I found them very useful, it was good watching other people, sort of seeing what each individual person, the strengths they had to bring to the class, and yes it was slightly, there was always a slight air of, not competition but slightly comparing yourselves to each other but no, it was mainly very enjoyable experience.*
- DM** And did you find that useful, having sort of the challenge of having other people teaching, and watching them teach?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yeah, oh yes.*
- DM** And when you think in terms of the course, how important was the class for you in terms of learning to teach?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh very important, yeah. And if you compare it to the other bits of the course? That was one of your questions, wasn't it, what was the most useful element? I think, probably the most useful was my placement with the mentor, because you got the most sort of in-depth, one-to-one training – well actually no, I'd say it was about equal between the training class and the placement, they were about equally useful.*
- DM** What was it, in particular, about the training class?
- TRAINEE 2** *I think it was the feedback sessions – I know what it was – it was making me think about it as it went on, because in the feedback sessions, we have to say 'what we thought went well', 'what could have gone better', 'what we'd take forward to next time', and I think because I had to think about it actively while I was doing it, and immediately afterwards, it really made me concentrate on what I was doing, and it didn't, feeling that I didn't have to be completely perfect all the time, the whole point was that it was a learning experience, and what I was doing less perfectly, it was OK.*
- DM** And what did you feel you learnt from the other trainees?
- TRAINEE 2** *Different approaches. There was one girl, who was quite young, but she was already a secondary school teacher, doing interventions with dyslexic children or teenagers, and she had very good classroom management techniques, students were always very engaged in her lessons, and she did all these techniques that I'd never seen before. And looking and Also seeing what people did wrong, and you think "oh no they're not going to - the learners aren't going to understand that because... whatever" and that sort of helped me formulate what I was going to do next.*
- DM** Did some – when did you collaborate a lot with the other trainees?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yes, Kate would say, 'we need to cover this grammatical point and this vocabulary and this, under this subject, in this way, using some of these resources, right, go off and sort out who's going to do what and how you're going to structure it', so yeah, after the feedback session we'd sort of sit together for half an hour and say 'OK how are we going to do this' and we'd come up with, and the sort of discussion between us of how we were going to do it was a useful brainstorming session, and we'd also 'oh we can do that!' and "yeah!", it was sort of more useful than doing it on one's own, and much better ideas. We sort of took it in turns to go first, because going first can be the worst or the best, so we'd take it in turns to go first or last in the teaching sessions, so yes, it was very useful.*
- DM** And did you find that when you were doing the planning that you were very conscious of what the feedback had been? I.e. did you respond to the feedback? Can you think of examples of that?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh yeah, oh god. Well the first few times, I was so conscious of wanting to incorporate everything that Kate said into my lesson that it was probably painfully obvious. Well because my*

previous ESOL mentor had been very different from Kate, she never did anything like drilling, and Kate talked at a sort of very natural pace, and she moderated her language, whereas my previous teacher/mentor had talked quite slowly and quite deliberately, so with drilling, she'd say well "yes you need to drill more" or "you to ask more concept-checking questions", things I'd never heard of or done before, so I immediately incorporated them, or lists – if it was a reading exercise, incorporating more list questions in the reading exercise rather than them having to interpret what they'd read and put it a different way, trying to make it very level-appropriate. So yeah there's probably lots more examples, but I can't think off the top of my head.

DM No, they're very clear examples. And did you feel that in the training classes, you were able to work on and develop the sort of very basic techniques of teaching?

TRAINEE 2 *Yes, yeah, I mean there was one thing that came out, actually, which was quite interesting. Kate was saying, "well why aren't you doing more drilling, or why aren't you doing more concept-checking, or pronunciation practice" and I was like "well I don't know, this is the first I've heard of drilling" or whatever it was, and she'd say "oh well I thought they were teaching you all this at the Institute", and I was like "no" so there was a kind of a gap between what they thought we were being taught at the institute and what we actually needed to know.*

DM We've had that discussion with them as well, there was a reorganization of the course and I think that element just got lost, because it is important when you're standing there *Well absolutely, it's how to do it!* Certainly how not to do it, is equally important. Now, your feedback was from Kate, so you said there was some disparity between her feedback or her guidance and the mentor's guidance.

TRAINEE 2 *They just had very different styles, she was more I don't know, she did a lot more, drilling for her was quite an integral part of her lesson, and it was quite structured the way she did it, and quite brisk, quite fast-paced. Caroline Hogarth, my ESOL mentor, she was much more, a word came up that everyone kept getting wrong, I think it was vegetable, she would sort of stop and go over it, but there wasn't any real structure to it.*

DM Different teaching styles, really.

Yeah, different styles.

DM And did you feel that you were able to experiment in the training class or did you feel under pressure?

TRAINEE 2 *Kate was a little bit scary, I didn't want to – and also I felt such a responsibility for the learners, I didn't want to experiment and end up wasting half an hour of their valuable time not teaching something very well, and they were all so keen sitting there, and it was also the term that we had their exam, so we had to be quite focused on making sure they were going to be OK on their exam, so there wasn't too much scope to be experimenting, no.*

DM Yeah, yeah, but did you feel confident that you could try new things?

TRAINEE 2 *Yeah, I now feel, I think, I may eventually get a job, that I could try new things.*

DM And did you feel, when you were in the training classes, did you feel that you were being assessed all the time?

TRAINEE 2 *Oh, very much so, yeah, it was like being multiply watched all the time, it's like you're being assessed and observed by the students themselves, or rather learners, by your fellow trainee students, and by your teacher, so it was like hundreds of eyes, so it tended to feel like a little performance, each one was a performance, very nerve-wracking, never really got less nerve-wracking.*

DM Doesn't really, does it? Did you, when you were participating in the feedback, we'll talk a bit more about the feedback in a minute, but during the feedback what Kate wanted everybody to do, i.e. what they were missing, what they needed to focus on?

TRAINEE 2 *Oh yeah, pretty clear, although she did sometimes seem to say one thing and then she'd say 'oh you could try this', and you'd do it, and then she'd say 'what on earth did you do that for' so quite often, a few of us thought 'no but you said to do that' and she'd say 'no, no, no I didn't mean that', so there was a certain amount of confusion but generally it was pretty clear, and you knew what you'd done right and what you'd done less right. It was all couched like that, it was never 'this was bad' or 'that was wrong', it was 'it could be better', 'could do better', yeah.*

DM And when you taught then, in the placement, after the training class, did it feel very different because you didn't have these, what did you call it, these multiple observers?

TRAINEE 2 *Well my ESOL placement was before my ESOL training class.*

DM OK, and did you find that very different, a very different experience not to be observed?

- TRAINEE 2** *It was less nerve-wracking, and also my mentor did leave me alone with the learners occasionally, or we'd split the class in half and I'd have some in the library and we'd go through some reading while she did individual tutorials and what have you, so I was left alone with them a bit more, which was quite nice, I got to know them more naturally than I would do being watched all of the time.*
- DM** And when you were not teaching, when you were observing, what was your main focus, were you looking at the teacher, the learners, or the lesson, the activities?
- TRAINEE 2** *Well I knew that I should be focusing on the learners, but I couldn't help but focus on the other teachers and how they'd structured it and what resources they'd made and the how, a bit more than the why.*
- DM** Ok, that's interesting. And were you looking at the how because you wanted to replicate it, or because you wanted to critique it?
- TRAINEE 2** *Well, a bit of both, really, yeah. Looking at the how and seeing, were the students, the learners, did they understand, were they engaged in it, were they learning anything, and if not, why not, and if so, why, so it was a kind of, yeah I was looking at the learners, but mainly in the context of 'is what the teacher is doing working'.*
- DM** OK, and did you, when you were looking at what the teacher was doing, were there things there that you then copied, i.e. techniques they used, or different tactics and approaches?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yeah, yeah.*
- DM** Can you remember things that you specifically picked up that way?
- TRAINEE 2** *Things like a different way of drilling, I had sort of tediously gone round each person in turn and that was really dull and didn't really get very far, but sort of picking people out, nominating more individually, the woman on the training course who was already a teacher, the way she monitored, she'd just sort of lightly go round monitoring people and not stop and keep the pace going, then there's other things that people did wrongly and I thought 'I'm not going to do that', so I think one of the big things was my first teacher or mentor told me, the language thing, you have to think 'what exactly is it that you want them to learn' and you have to really understand what precisely it is that you want them to learn so that you can teach it properly. Because I'm full time and everyone else was part time, a lot of the others it was their first ESOL class, and it is such a different way of thinking about language when you're a native speaker and they didn't really think through what it was they were saying, like there was one about that and those and them, I think, the teacher teaching that, I don't think she'd thought what exactly that means and so I thought 'I don't know what the hell she's talking about, and the learners aren't going to know'. So that was... I've lost my train of thought. Yes, that was something I was keen to Not do not do, yes. It was strange because I always thought I was fluffing it and looking really nervous but my feedback from the other trainees was always like 'your lessons run so smoothly and you really it looks like it knows what you're talking about' so I thought 'oh, that's a result'. It didn't feel like it inside, then? No, absolutely not, like a swan, gliding on the surface. Paddling away underneath.*
- DM** OK and did, did you feel like a teacher when you were in the trainee group?
- TRAINEE 2** *By the end of it, I did, yeah.*
- DM** OK and what sort of things may have helped you to feel like a teacher?
- TRAINEE 2** *I think it was, I've always been a bit, having the authority and realising that I have something that they want, I have the English and the ability to get that over to them, and I was always a bit afraid of there being a mass outbreak of chatting and I wouldn't be able to control it in inverted commas, so I was sort of doubting my own authority, but then I realised that if I just did something simple, like just walk up to the person who is chatting and just touch the desk, even like that, and they'd 'oh!' and stop, and I'd think 'blimey, I'm a teacher, they do respect my authority, whatever it is', and then at the end, I mean it wasn't this class, it was my final placement, actually, and it was the last lesson they were ever going to have, this literacy class, and at the end they all gave me a card saying 'thank you teacher' and they had written the most wonderful things in it, and it 'oh my god I really am a teacher, this is amazing'*
- DM** And in the feedback sessions that you did, did Kate expect you to talk about teaching in quite a professional way, i.e. use the correct jargon and terminology? *Oh yeah, yeah* And did that help to make you feel more professional? *Oh yeah, yeah.* Because there is quite a lot of jargon, isn't there, and odd things that we say?

TRAINEE 2 *Yes, I can't think of any examples now, but yes we did, it was quite formalised, there was no sort of random chatting, it was all very, in the brief, kind of thing.*

DM **Let's focus specifically on the feedback sessions. Did Kate do the feedback sessions immediately after the teaching?**

TRAINEE 2 *Pretty much, it was about a quarter of an hour. She'd go and get something to eat.*

DM And did you have to do self-evaluation forms immediately after you taught?

TRAINEE 2 *Yeah*

DM How did you find that process? One of the questions I'm sort of interested in is how honest you were in your self-evaluation form and how much that was you writing down what you thought Kate would have liked you to have seen?

TRAINEE 2 *Gosh, that's tricky isn't it? No I was pretty honest, I had to do the self-evaluation immediately or it just went completely out of my head.*

DM And when you were writing them, were you thinking also of previous feedback?

TRAINEE 2 *Yeah I was trying to think how I'd acted on that previous feedback and whether that lesson had incorporated things she'd picked up on last time, yeah. So yes if I thought 'oh good, I did that thing this time, I'd put that'. One of my things that every single teacher trainer picked up on was my extraneous chat, like teacher talk, so I was always really conscious of not just mumbling away about something, so I was always 'ooh bit less of that this week' or 'oh, still doing it'*

DM And did you find that, in terms of your learning, did you find that useful, that sort of forced reflection?

TRAINEE 2 *Oh yeah, very much so, yeah. The whole reflective practice thing, I'd never really done it in life, not formally, I mean obviously one does it, or one wouldn't be able to walk and talk or anything, but I'd never sort of been forced to do it formally about myself, so it was really useful.*

DM And did you find it a natural thing to do?

TRAINEE 2 *No, not really. I mean I do it in previous work, I used to edit magazine, I would naturally think, magazine came out, that doesn't look right, or I'd sort of done it like this, and so next time I wrote about the same thing, I would take on board what I'd done before, but I never really sat down and wrote it, no systematic way, no.*

DM And you found that helpful?

TRAINEE 2 *Yes.*

DM OK and in terms of the feedback itself, did you enjoy Kate's feedback?

TRAINEE 2 *Most of the time. I found myself very sensitive to criticism, because I think, in these lessons, you put so much into it, and it would take hours and hours to plan, and you'd think, 'that's good, I'll do that', and there was quite a lot of backwards and forwards to Kate's thing, 'should I do this or that' and she'd say 'oh I don't know maybe you could think about doing it like this' so you finally think 'oh this is good, excellent' and it was nerve-wracking and performance and you do it, and she'd say 'well I don't know, you could have done that better, that wasn't very good', and I'd find I'd get quite cross, I'd get quite emotional if things hadn't gone very well.*

DM And did you feel like that she got the balance right [didn't hear this]

TRAINEE 2 *Oh no I think she was fair, she was quite, a little bit scary, she was firm but fair.*

DM And then how did you find the trainees' comments, your fellow trainees, how useful did you find their feedback?

TRAINEE 2 *It was quite useful, everyone was very, keen to be positive, so I don't think they were always totally honest about bad things you did, but it was nice having the positive comments.*

DM Did they pick up on different things to Kate?

TRAINEE 2 *Sometimes, not generally, actually, it was generally the positive things that Kate had said, it didn't really, no I wouldn't have said anything different particularly.*

DM Then when, not when you were teaching, when Kate was giving feedback to somebody else, how much did you contribute in terms of feedback?

TRAINEE 2 *If it was something that I'd thought as well, I'd say 'oh yes I thought so' and elaborate on that, and sometimes I would say to Kate 'well what did you think of this that they did, is that OK?' and Kate would be able to say 'oh that was fine', or she'd say 'oh that's a good point, actually', so I did, if Kate was being a bit negative, I didn't like to then pile on, and say 'yeah I didn't think that was very good either' but because I knew that people were quite sensitive about it, and I didn't want to, if someone was feeling a bit put upon, I didn't want to add to it, by saying 'yeah actually, I think she's right', it's quite, there's a balance between constructive criticism and people feeling a bit criticised, so I didn't...*

- DM** Yeah, it's true. Did it vary as the course went on and people got more confident?
- TRAINEE 2** *I think it did, yeah, it was a very nice group, my ESOL training group, it was a very nice bunch of people and we could be quite honest with each other because we knew that we all got on and there's nothing else to it, and what I used to do, I've just found my document, whenever Kate said, she'd always say 'always be sure you do this' so I wrote it all down, lesson planning top tips. A useful document. Very useful document. 'language has three elements, form function pronunciation', etc.*
- DM** Would be very interesting to see if the other trainers would have similar lists of 'what to do' or whether that's a specific Kate list.
- TRAINEE 2** *God it was so useful, I don't know what I'd do without it. Anyway, what were we talking about, so the other trainees.*
- DM** Yeah, the other trainees, and also did you learn from their feedback?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh yeah, yeah, things that she said to them I put on my top tips list.*
- DM** Excellent, so when you were listening to the feedback about one of your colleagues, were you also understanding that as useful feedback that you could use? *Oh yes, yeah, totally.* And did the conversation ever go from one trainee to the other, or was it always focused on, 'OK we're talking about Sara now, not anybody else', or were there general conversations as well?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh there were general conversations about 'how did the whole lesson go, did it have a good shape' we talked about the learners quite a lot as well, 'how did you think so and so was today' and so on, we talked about, because it was exams and deciding where they were going to go, which class next and whatever, we'd talk about them quite a lot and their progression, you know, strengths and weaknesses, stuff like that. There was a lot of general discussion as well.*
- DM** And do you think that you helped the other trainees develop?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh I'd like to think so, yeah. I think so, because I brought some ideas from my other classes that I'd done, and some of the stuff that I'd learnt at the Institute as well, that they had yet to do because they were part-timers, can't think of an example, but yeah I think, it was quite a sort of symbiotic relationship.*
- DM** And was the things that you learnt from each other, was that just in the feedback session, or was it also in the planning and general chit chat?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh in the planning and general chit chat, we'd have ideas of what to, well it was mainly – I can't remember. I think the secondary school teacher was very good at planning lessons, I mean obviously she'd done quite a lot of it, she could see through the flim flam and see what it was that needed to be done, and obviously the sort of thread that needed to run through the lesson, 'we can do that, then we can do that and that', and I'd tend to be 'oh yeah' and I'd tend to do more the language stuff, 'oh we could concentrate more on this tense by taking that out, extracting it out of this bit of writing and then they could do their own writing', so the language-focused stuff I always tended to be better at.*
- DM** There was a lot of collaborative planning?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh yeah, there was a lot of collaboration.*
- DM** And in that when you were planning and talking it through, would you say to a trainee 'yeah, and when you do that section, make sure you don't stand there talking too long' or 'make sure you –' No, no. No? It was focused on the planning rather than on the teaching?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yes, I didn't really feel it was my place to say 'don't do this' or 'do it like this', they can do it how they want and then see what Kate thinks or what they think afterwards.*
- DM** Of course. Alright, thinking about the training class in relation to the rest of the course, or perhaps of the lack of explicit teaching of basic techniques that could have happened, did you find that there was a consistent message from the training class, the placement, the input sessions at the Institute, your tutor?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yeah, pretty much. Yeah, there was, yeah. My literacy, I know we're not supposed to be talking about literacy but, my literacy tutor, Fiona was quite hot on theory, and brought up a lot of the theory that we learnt at the Institute.*
- DM** So can you give me an example?
- TRAINEE 2** *She talked about [fraring?] quite a lot – I can't do my Rs, probably a phonological problem there. Talked about that quite a lot, and actually, your lectures about phonology were sort of echoed in what Kate and Caroline would do about pronunciation. I mean there wasn't much, the sort of styles of lessons, like PPP or task-based learning, that wasn't really talked about in those terms, in placement or training classes, so the sort of, there was a sort of gap between learning and teaching*

- theories and actual lessons, where the how, such as, well task-based learning is a nice idea, but how do you, what would a task-based lesson look like, how would you do it? There was that kind of gap.*
- DM** That's probably a weakness, isn't it, because it's probably quite simple to do that, isn't it? Just get you lots of after the session to run some task-based learning sessions. And do you think that the, was there ever a sense in which you were planning things that you had been looking at in the input sessions, presumably not really?
- TRAINEE 2** *Not unless it was by coincidence, no.*
- DM** And were things in feedback that you were able to, either from Kate or from the other trainees, that you were able to bring in, for example learning theories or –
- TRAINEE 2** *Yes, there were a few that I was 'oh yes that's so-and-so, we covered that at the Institute', I can't think of an example but there were a few occasions where I'd think 'oh yes' and everything sort of joined together.*
- DM** And presumably that's a positive?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yes, my mentor was very hot on the noticing of grammatical structure, and get learners to notice themselves, don't tell them, which was something which I was not very good at to start with, and then we did a lecture about the importance of that, and then I read some Scott Thornberry, who's all about that, and I was all 'yes I see, hooray' and it all fell into place, but it was more about coincidences, so there wasn't a structure to it or anything.*
- DM** OK, one last question, Sara. When you were observing the other trainees, what did you do? Were you just watching?
- TRAINEE 2** *We were watching, we quite often had to fill in a sheet about what we thought they did well, or there might have been quite a specific thing we were looking at that week, like how were their instructions, or we might be asked to look at learners and see what they're doing, or concentrate on a particular aspect of the trainee's teaching but then sometimes we just sort of sat and watched, it varied a bit.*
- DM** And did you find it useful when you were given that sort of observation task?
- TRAINEE 2** *Oh yeah, absolutely, it concentrated the mind.*
- DM** And did it make you see things that you wouldn't have noticed before? Different types of feedback?
- TRAINEE 2** *Yeah, like instruction tasks, you realised that some people did it and were much too wordy, giving instructions that were much too advanced for that particular level, it made you drill down to the things more precisely, instead of thinking 'they didn't understand that instruction' you'd think 'why didn't they understand that instruction.'*
- DM** Yeah, exactly. OK, good. Sara, is there anything else you think you expected to say about the training class that we haven't covered?
- TRAINEE 2** *No, I don't think so, that's pretty much it.*
- DM** Well, OK that's been very very helpful for me, I appreciate you taking the time, and if there's anything you need or anybody to answer a question, I owe you a favour so please feel free to contact me.
- TRAINEE 2** *OK, will do.*
- DM** And I wish you the best of luck in your new search!
- TRAINEE 2** *Yes it's not proving easy, I've applied for a few jobs, one in Barking & Dagenham college, and they replied saying 'thank you for your application but the course has been cut'. Not a good time.*
- DM** You never know, maybe we'll have a coup and get rid of this government...
- TRAINEE 2** *Well when we started this course and the cuts were on the horizon, I thought well that'll never happen because no-one's going to vote the Tories in again.*
- DM** Dreadful isn't it? Let's just say things will get better.
- TRAINEE 2** *Yeah, it's a cyclical thing, they'll realise no-one speaks English. It's been quite valuable actually, got me thinking about it again, good for me.*
- DM** Take care, talk to you soon, bye.