

**FROM STUDENT TO NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHER: A STUDY  
OF BEGINNING TEACHERS' TRAINING EXPERIENCE AND  
HOW THIS IMPACTS ON PRACTICE**

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This thesis was completed as part of the  
PhD Doctoral Programme in Educational Research.

**Declaration**

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for  
any other degree or diploma

Signature

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## Contents

Acknowledgements .....	1
Contents.....	2
Glossary of Terms .....	7
List of Figures and Tables .....	10
Abstract.....	12
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	13
1.1 Introduction to the Chapter.....	13
1.2 Research Context and Focus of the Study .....	13
1.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory Considerations.....	17
1.4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory .....	22
1.5 Symbolic Interactionism and Relationship to Beginning Teacher Experience .....	25
1.6 Combining Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism .....	27
1.7 The Practice-based Nature of the Research and My Dual Role in the Research Process .....	28
1.7.1 Biographical Details and Professional Relationship to the Study .....	30
1.8 Ongoing Changes to Teacher Training in England.....	33
1.9 PGCE Model for Teacher Training Practice .....	36
1.10 Description of the Research Field .....	38
1.11 Commentary on Initial Considerations Situating the Research.....	38
1.12 Issues Relating to the Integration of Grounded theory, Symbolic Interactionism and Activity Theory to Provide a Coherent Description of Practice .....	41
1.13 Preliminary Objectives .....	45
1.14 Thesis Structure .....	47
1.15 Chapter Summary .....	48
Chapter 2 The Beginning Teacher Experience .....	49
2.1 Introduction to the Chapter.....	49
2.2 Descriptions of Teacher Development.....	50
2.3 School Culture and the Character of Teaching.....	54
2.3.1 Norms, Values and their Relationship to Teaching .....	60
2.3.2 The Characteristics of the Hidden Curriculum .....	63
2.3.3 Tacit and Formal Aspects of Beginning Teacher Knowledge.....	65

2.4 Beginning Teacher Experience and Relationship to Practice .....	67
2.4.1 Theory to Practice Gap .....	67
2.4.2 Practice Shock .....	69
2.5 Key Concepts in Teacher Training Teaching and Learning .....	70
2.5.1 Reflective Practice .....	70
2.5.2 Experiential Learning .....	72
2.5.3 Personal and Professional Development.....	74
2.6 Training within Competence Based Systems and Relationship to Reflective/Reflexive Practice.....	76
2.7 Chapter Summary .....	77
Chapter 3 Background to the Grounded Theory Methodology.....	78
3.1 Introduction to the Chapter.....	78
3.2 Constructing Knowledge .....	81
3.2.1 Inductive/Abductive Methodology.....	82
3.3 Theoretical Sampling.....	83
3.4 Synchronous Data Collection and Analysis.....	84
3.5 Memo Writing and Coding .....	85
3.6 Theoretical Sensitivity and Research Reflexivity .....	86
3.6.1 The Use of Literature and Theoretical Considerations in Relation to Data.....	88
3.7 Trustworthiness of Data.....	89
3.8 Chapter Summary .....	90
Chapter 4 Methodological Details .....	92
4.1 Introduction to the Chapter.....	92
4.2 Data Analysis Considerations.....	94
4.3 Ethical Considerations for the Study .....	95
4.4 Validity Issues .....	97
4.5 Background to the PGCE Study Group .....	97
4.6 Backgrounds of Beginning Teachers who Participated in the Study .....	100
4.7 Grounded Theory Phases - Preliminary Work .....	103
4.7.1 Grounded Theory Phases - Phase 1 Details.....	104
4.7.2 Grounded Theory Phases - Phase 2 Details.....	105
4.7.3 Grounded Theory Phases - Phase 3 and 4 Details.....	106
4.8 Observational Fieldwork in the School Setting .....	109
4.9 Semi-Structured Interviews.....	112
4.10 Reflective Journals .....	114
4.11 Training Documentation.....	115

4.12 Memoing .....	116
4.13 Diagrammatic coding .....	116
4.14 Open and Axial Coding .....	116
4.15 Chapter Summary .....	117
Chapter 5 Understanding Beginning Teacher Behaviour Through Symbolic Interactionism and Implications for Reflective Practice .....	119
5.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	119
5.2 The Significance of Beginning Teachers' Awareness of Their 'Persona' in Successful Teacher Development.....	123
5.3 David's Case: Exhibiting Difficulty in Articulating and Understanding the Expectations of Mentors and Others in the School Setting.....	127
5.3.1 School Setting for Fieldwork .....	128
5.3.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting .....	129
5.3.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice.....	130
5.3.4 Extract on Memo on Practice.....	135
5.4 Anne's Case: Little Classroom Presence and Lack of Awareness of Whole School Teaching .....	136
5.4.1 School Setting for Fieldwork .....	137
5.4.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting .....	138
5.4.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice.....	139
5.4.4 Memo on Observation.....	140
5.5 Julie's Case: Displaying Secure Awareness of How Others 'See' Her in the Teaching Situation .....	141
5.5.1 School Setting for Fieldwork .....	141
5.5.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting .....	142
5.5.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice.....	143
5.6 Making Sense of the Cultural Cues That Define the Beginning Teacher Environment .....	147
5.6.1 School Setting for Fieldwork .....	148
5.6.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting .....	149
5.6.3 Post Observation Insights into Practice .....	149
5.7 Interpreting the Role of the 'Other' in Beginning Teacher Development.....	150

5.8 Themes Developed from the First Phase Analysis.....	152
5.9 Chapter Summary .....	153
Chapter 6 Beginning Teachers' Reflective Understanding of.....	155
School Practice Using Activity Theory .....	155
6.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	155
6.2 Background to Reflective Practice Issues .....	155
6.3 Activity Theory Framework.....	157
6.4 Findings .....	159
6.4.1 Vignette 1: Dealing With Interpersonal Conflict through Understanding the Nature of the Object-Community-Division of Labour Dynamic.....	160
6.4.2 Vignette 2: Dealing with the Normative Aspects of School Culture: Understanding the Subject-Community-Object Activity Interactions.....	166
6.4.3 Vignette 3: Expansive Learning through a Deeper Understanding of the Use of Mediating Tools .....	170
6.4.4 Vignette 4: Illuminating Procedures and Rules Embedded Within School Culture: the Subject-Community- Rules/Procedures Activity Element .....	174
6.5 Chapter summary .....	177
Chapter 7 Theoretical Insights into Practice Developed from the Constructivist Grounded Theory Process .....	179
7.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	179
7.2 Variables Emerging from the Phase 1 Data.....	183
7.2.1 Summary of Themes and Related Variable Codes Resulting From Coding Phase 1 Data .....	190
7.3 Discussion of First Stage Variables Which Emerged from the Grounded Theory process, and How These Relate to Beginning Teacher Practice.....	199
7.3.1 Pre-Teacher Self.....	199
7.3.2 Personal Attributes .....	200
7.3.3 Concerns.....	200
7.3.4 Confidence .....	201
7.3.5 Self-efficacy .....	201
7.3.6 Values.....	201
7.3.7 Relationships.....	202
7.3.8 School Placement.....	202

7.4 Developing the Model: Key Concepts and Themes Emerging from Practice .....	203
7.4.1 Codes Emerging from Phase 3 of the Theoretical Analysis .....	203
7.4.2 Strategies for Developing Confidence in Teaching.....	206
7.4.3 Engaging with the Challenge of Teaching .....	207
7.4.4 Interpreting the Meaning of Teaching Situations.....	207
7.5 Insights Emerging from Phase 4 of the Grounded Theory Process .....	208
7.5.1 Becoming More Aware of the Outward ‘me’ One Wants to Project in Particular Teaching Situations.....	210
7.5.2 Developing One’s Own Pragmatic Awareness of the Contextual Setting in Which One Works.....	211
7.5.3 Working Towards Developing a Strong Sense of Teacher ‘Voice’ .....	212
7.6 Chapter Summary .....	214
Chapter 8 Developing Beginning Teacher Practice Beyond the QTS Minimum Standards Competence Requirements.....	215
8.1 Introduction .....	215
8.2 Using the Symbolic Interactionism/ Activity Theory Model to Help Beginning Teachers Understanding Wider Aspects of Practice.....	217
8.2.1 Classroom Level Understanding .....	217
8.2.2 Whole School Level Understanding.....	222
8.2.3 Wider Educational Level.....	223
8.3 Expanding the Model: Key Moments in Beginning Teacher Development.....	223
Chapter 9 Recommendations for Further Work and Relationship to Beginning Teacher Reflective Practice.....	227
Appendix One .....	231
Appendix Two.....	238
Appendix Three.....	241
Referencing .....	247

## Glossary of Terms

Abductive reasoning	A process, central to constructivist grounded theory, of finding the best explanation of a set of observations.
Axial coding	Second level coding in which themes and categories of data are created by grouping open codes and labels into meaningful theoretical categories.
Beginning teacher	A classroom teacher who has less than two years' teaching experience.
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
Constructivist grounded theory	A form of grounded theory which assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered but are constructed by the researcher and participants in the context in which research takes place.
DEE	Department for Education and Employment.
DES	Department of Educational and Skills.
DfEE	Department of Education and Employment.
Experiential learning	The process of making meaning from direct experience.
Grounded theory	Systematic research methodology involving the discovery of theory through analysis of data.
HEI	Higher educational institution.
Hidden curriculum	Unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to pupils through the underlying educational structure.
Inductive reasoning	Process of reasoning from detailed facts to general theoretical principles.

Memoing	Researcher's records of analysis which attempt to derive meaning from data.
National Teaching Standards	Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education.
Open coding	First level coding in which concepts are identified and then properties and dimensions are discovered in or constructed from data.
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPD	Personal and professional development.
Practice shock	The 'reality of practice' difficulties teachers may encounter during their first classroom experiences.
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status.
Reflective practice	The act of reflecting on one's own practice through a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation to help understand one's own actions and reactions to teaching situations.
School climate	The feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school's environment.
School culture	Traditions, beliefs, policies and norms within a school.
Schools' partnership	Teacher training partnership system between a higher educational institution and a number of partnership schools.
Self efficacy	Belief in one's own capability as a teacher.
Symbolic interactionism	A view of social behaviour that emphasises the role of language and cultural cues and symbols as core elements of human interaction.

Tacit knowledge	Knowledge people have gained from activities which cannot be easily or readily codified.
TDA	Training and Development Agency.
Teacher 'persona'	A teacher's projected self.
Teacher 'voice'	A stage in teacher development in which the teacher has belief in their teaching abilities.
Theory to practice gap	Potential 'gap' between the theoretical work taught in formal course situations and what is practised and experienced in the classroom.
Theoretical sampling	Sampling procedure where participants are selected in order to inform the researcher's developing understanding of the research field.
Theoretical sensitivity	Refers to the personal experiences the researcher might have in relation to the research field in question, and relates to the researcher's interpretation of data.
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

## List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1 Activity theory framework with the QTS standards being regarded as the main mediating tool shaping and informing beginning teacher practice.

Figure 1.2 Activity theory framework with the QTS standards as the main mediating tool in the context of beginning teacher symbolic interactionism engagement with practice.

Figure 1.3 Activity theory framework where symbolic interactionism is considered to be the main tool mediating practice.

Figure 1.4 Activity theory framework where QTS standards are considered to be the main tool mediating practice.

Figure 1.5 Flow diagram of thesis structure.

Figure 2.1 Katz's linear stages of beginning teacher development.

Figure 2.2 Moir's (1990) model of beginning teacher development.

Figure 2.3 Schein's description of levels inherent in organisational culture.

Figure 2.4 Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

Figure 2.5 La Banca's (2008) conceptualisation of how beginning teachers might learn in the work place.

Figure 3.1 The grounded theory analytic process.

Figure 4.1 Outline of grounded theory phases and relationship to the data.

Figure 5.1 Symbolic interactionism map of beginning teacher interpretive behaviours.

Figure 6.1 Beginning teachers' adapted framework.

Figure 6.2 Working with the object-community-division of labour framework.

Figure 6.3 Working with the subject-community-object framework.

Figure 6.4 Expanding trainees' learning through the subject-tool-object framework.

Figure 6.5 Beginning teachers' rules and systems framework.

Figure 7.1 Theory generating analysis carried out at each phase of the process.

Figure 7.2 Theoretical sampling sequence of participants in Stage 1 of the coding

Figure 7.3 Example of mind map topology of a respondent's perceptions of practice.  
process

Figure 7.4 'Topology' of practice emerging from the grounded theory process.

Figure 8.1 Modelling classroom interaction using activity theory.

Figure 8.2 Activity theory model with three key moments of practice.

Table 4.1 Outline of the PGCE year indicating school-based placement periods.

Table 4.2 Details of participants who took part in phase 1 data gathering and analysis  
activities

Table 4.3 Details of participants who took part in phase 2 data gathering and analysis  
activities

Table 7.1 Coded themes and sub-themes emerging from the stage 1 grounded theory  
process.

Table 7.2 Themes and sub-themes emerging from the second stage of the analysis.

## **Abstract**

This thesis sets out a case for using a combined symbolic interactionism, cultural historical activity theory model to explore the experiences of beginning teachers working within the training standards (QTS) framework which defines teacher training in the England. Research has been carried out using a constructivist grounded theory approach where theoretical insights into beginning teacher practice were developed through four data gathering and analysis phases. To facilitate a ‘holistic’ understanding of beginning teacher experience in a competence based system e.g. one which describes the training process in England, it is assumed, in activity theory terms, that the QTS framework is the main mediating tool through which training takes place. Thus, beginning teachers work towards achieving qualified teacher status within a training field characterised by the cultural, systems and power relationship features of the schools they work within. Outcomes from the study are divided into four stages (i) ways in which symbolic interactionism can characterise beginning teacher experience (ii) how cultural historical activity theory can be used as a reflective tool to help beginning teachers understand aspects of practice (iii) the development of grounded theory thematic codes which offer theoretical insights into practice (iv) ways in which the work can be used as the basis for reflective tools to help beginning teachers have a broader understanding of practice than provided by the QTS standards alone. Three key moments of practice which beginning teachers should aim to achieve during practice emerged from the final stage of analysis. These being, becoming aware of one’s own teacher oriented ‘me’ with respect to the educational setting in which one works; developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field; and working towards a strong sense of teacher ‘voice’.

# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

This chapter describes the research context, the aims of the research and the rationale for exploring insights into beginning teacher transition from student to newly qualified teacher. It introduces the theoretical framework I use to examine beginning teacher experience and briefly discusses the constructivist grounded theory approach used to gather and analyse the empirical data supporting the thesis. The chapter also outlines the characteristics of the research sample and educational setting in which research takes place.

## **1.2 Research Context and Focus of the Study**

This thesis sets out the case for using an integrated symbolic interactionism and cultural historical activity theory framework to characterise and explore beginning teacher training experiences whilst working within a standards-based training system. In doing so, the research raises critical questions about beginning teachers' reflective abilities when operating within the competence framework which currently defines teacher training in England (standards at the time research was carried out were TDA 2007; TDA 2008, see appendix 1; standards from September 2012 are found at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk), see appendix 2).

The concepts, insights and empirical data supporting the thesis have emerged from a two year constructivist grounded theory study of beginning teachers training in North West England. Teacher training in England, as opposed to many other countries e.g.

Finland, France, Italy and Spain, is competence based. In this system, beginning teachers have to demonstrate they have met a set of minimum competences defined by the Teacher Agency, formerly called the Teaching Development Agency (TDA), before being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). It is within this context the work has been undertaken to examine ways beginning teachers interpret, make sense of and enact their role through engagement with the National Teaching Standards framework.

My interest in this study stems from my role as teacher trainer responsible for professional aspects of training and how these relate to beginning teachers' practice in schools. I have been involved with teacher education since the introduction of the first set of standards in 1998 (DfEE, 1998) and during this time have become increasingly aware that the framework has not always been successful in raising beginning teachers' awareness of a number of aspects of their role. Issues such as coping with practice shock (Robson 2000; Roehrig et al. 2009; MacDonald 1993), reconciling one's own value position with that of the school (Jones 2003; Cribb and Gewirtz 2003) and understanding the normative culture of the school (Flores 2004; Higgins-D'Allessandro and Sath1998) are often more difficult for beginning teachers to deal with than practices such as lesson planning, assessment and organising the learning environment which are some of the main themes of the current standards.

A further consideration, in terms of direction and focus for this work, relates to the relatively few research studies which examine beginning teacher transition within the QTS context. For example, much of the literature on beginning teacher experience discusses issues without explicit reference to the standards framework. This is generally because, in the case of England for example, studies were carried out before

the introduction of the first QTS standards in 1998, or studies are based on research in countries where teacher training is not competence based. However, even though such studies provide rich and illuminating insights into beginning teacher transition, e.g. issues relate to progression models (Fuller and Brown 1975; Burden 1980), the enhancement of teachers' reflective capabilities (Ottesen 2007; Moore and Ash 2002), and insights into novice teachers' coping strategies (Cherubini 2009; Fantilli and McDougall 2009), it may be argued that they provide limited descriptions of the realities of teaching specifically under QTS conditions.

In practice, the QTS standards markedly influence how teacher training is organised in England. For example, in the institution in which this work has been carried out, the standards guide (i) the pedagogic planning, assessment and classroom management knowledge beginning teachers should know (ii) how beginning teachers and school mentors should engage with the training process (iii) the competences beginning teachers need to meet to become qualified teachers and (iv) the organisational relationship between the institution and schools in which school practice takes place.

The need to explore beginning teacher transition from a broad standpoint, whilst at the same time acknowledging the significant role the QTS standards play in training provision, influenced the direction of this work. From a professional point of view, I sought research outcomes which would illuminate the interplay between wider aspects of beginning teacher experience and QTS provision. This, in turn, would help improve the beginning teacher training experience in the researched institution and also in the institution's partnership schools.

Of particular concern, in this respect, are reasons why some beginning teachers fail at the end of training or are at risk of failing at certain times of the year. In a number of cases, this is simply because they had not met particular competence standards e.g. not adequately planning lessons, or not displaying effective classroom management techniques. However, for some beginning teachers it is difficult for school mentors, tutors and others to suggest reasons for failure in purely QTS terms. In many instances, commentators suggested that beginning teachers were ‘not born’ or ‘cut out’ to be teachers, and that ‘teaching was not within them’; sentiments which seem to imply that some beginning teachers fail because of wider concerns than those identified by the QTS standards alone.

To facilitate the holistic examination of the beginning teacher experience I sought, as part of the study, to develop a theoretical perspective which would provide an expansive explanation of beginning teachers’ practice: in particular (i) their personal engagement with the school culture in which they work (ii) how they made sense of the organisational systems and theoretical knowledge which inform practice and (iii) the power relationships developed between pupils, staff and other stakeholders during school experience. This was achieved by making use of an activity theory based transition model which integrates symbolic interactionism, as a way of describing how beginning teachers make sense of and enact practice, and cultural historical activity theory which takes into account the organisational, cultural and power characteristics of schools in which training takes place. This model, further, assumes the QTS standards to be the main mediating tool facilitating training and providing training focus.

Although there have been a number of beginning teacher research studies incorporating either activity theory (see for example Spendlove et al. 2010; Roth and Lee 2007; Wilson 2004) or symbolic interactionism (e.g. Smit and Fritz 2008; Allen 2009) to aid analysis, there has been little or no work to date which considers intimately combining both perspectives to model practice. Thus, a main feature of this study is it makes use of a framework to explore beginning teacher transition from a holistic point of view. A description of the transition model and how it emerged from the early stages of the constructivist grounded theory process is outlined in sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6

### **1.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory Considerations**

Constructivist grounded theory was the chosen methodology for this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, I favoured grounded theory's inductive approach to data collection and analysis whereby fresh insights into beginning teacher practice could emerge from a 'blank canvas' setting rather than explaining outcomes, wholly, in terms of existing theoretical frameworks. As Skeat and Perry (2008) note, grounded theory is an appropriate methodological choice when a phenomenon has not been adequately described, or when there are few theories to explain it; whilst Grbich (2007) sees the methodology as useful when there is a need for new theoretical explanations built up from previous knowledge.

In the early stages of the study I was aware that some of my own insights into trainees' practice were founded on pre-conceived ideas of how I, or colleagues, thought training should be carried out. Teacher training, in the institution in which

research was carried out, was well established and there had been little change to the curriculum for a number of years. Details of course provision were outlined in a number of documents including course validation documents, schools' partnership handbooks, mentor training handbooks, tutor handbooks, Ofsted guidelines on teacher training entry requirements and induction (Ofsted 2008-11) and QTS standards' documentation (e.g. TDA 2008); all of which, I felt, emphasised institutional oriented perspectives on practice rather than describing insights from beginning teachers' personal points of view. Grounded theory invites the researcher to begin analysis from a 'blank canvas' point of view so that fresh, firmly grounded, ideas can emerge systematically from the social situations under investigation. Approaching the study from an initial 'blank canvas' point of view stemmed from my wish to explore beginning teacher experiences without many pre-conceived ideas about the nature of training in the institution I was working in. My understanding of how beginning teachers felt about their training had been mainly gained from evaluating 'standard' institutional documents such as teaching observation reports, mentors' reports on beginning teacher experience and beginning teacher's evaluation of practice reports. These, I felt, gave a limited account of what beginning teachers really felt about their practice and also that data gathered from such sources were dependent upon the type of questions set in the evaluative documents. However, making use of the grounded theory approach helped me explore beginning teacher experience from a wider perspective than could be achieved by using the 'standard' evaluative documents e.g. observation documents alone. Furthermore, the grounded theory methodology encouraged me to explore beginning teacher practice without having too many initial ideas about what outcomes I might expect from the work and what theoretical

descriptions of practice might emerge from subsequent data collection and analysis processes.

Secondly, and in relation to insights developed from such a 'blank canvas' point of view, I favoured theoretical sampling as a way of systematically carrying out data collection and analysis as research progressed. By using theoretical sampling, described by commentators such as Charmaz (2009; 2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008), I was able to begin data collection and analysis by firstly interviewing and observing a small group of beginning teachers to gain initial insights into their practice. Analysed outcomes from this first stage of research were then used to inform the next phase of the process. This involved interviewing and observing a second group of respondents using modified interview questions and new observation criteria in line with a realigned research trajectory. The theoretical sampling process was repeated in this iterative fashion until enough data had emerged from the grounded theory procedure to make useful critical judgements on beginning teacher experience in the situational context. In this way, theoretical sampling helped ensure subsequent data collection and analysis processes were grounded in actual beginning teacher experience and had 'fit' and 'grab' with the phenomenon in question (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Thus, the descriptions of beginning teacher practice can be seen to have 'fit' because they closely match the patterns of behaviour embedded in the teacher training field; a factor which works towards enhancing the validity of the work in professional practice terms. 'Grab' helps ensure that outcomes are relevant to professional practice issues seen to be important to sections of the teacher training community.

A third consideration was I sought a systematic methodology which could be used to generate conceptual insights into key aspects of beginning teacher practice rather than provide purely descriptive accounts of experience. The use of coding and memo-writing, both key features of the grounded theory methodology, facilitated the generation of conceptual categories which, in turn, could describe key episodes of beginning teacher transition, and conceptual understandings of how beginning teachers interpreted aspects of practice.

Finally, grounded theory is regarded by many commentators (e.g. Charmaz 2008; Aldiabat and Le Navenec 2011) as the most suitable methodology for uncovering the symbolic interactionism interpretations people make about the environments in which they operate. Grounded theory, because of its focus on uncovering meanings respondents make about particular social situations, has close methodological attachments to exploring symbolic interpretations of peoples' behaviour. Thus, for this study, grounded theory data gathering and analysis methods became the preferred tools for seeking the symbolic meanings beginning teachers have about aspects of practice; especially with respect to the cultural and competence mediated setting in which they work.

In the Glaser and Strauss' (1967) original description of grounded theory it is suggested that researchers refrain from using pre-conceived ideas, e.g. theoretical concepts gleaned from literature, to inform research in the early stages of the process. For Glaser and Strauss, ideas should emerge systematically and naturally from the phenomenon in question without being unduly influenced by prior ideas the researcher might have. However, Glaser and Strauss acknowledged that this might be difficult to

achieve in practice, and using one's own professional knowledge to make judgements about the research activity could be an advantage in sensitising the researcher to aspects of the work in question i.e. directing the researcher to key issues in the research field. Charmaz (2006, 2008, 2009), in her constructivist version of grounded theory, expands this theme and suggests research perspectives gained from literature and/or ideas the researcher may have about the research field can be useful in (i) orienting and framing the study at the beginning of the process and (ii) guiding the direction of subsequent stages. For Charmaz, and many other constructivist grounded theory commentators (for example Schwandt 1994), it is unreasonable to expect researchers not to use pre-existing knowledge of the research field to guide practice. The expert, professional knowledge one might have, coupled with the wealth of resources gained from the literature work towards *constructing* an understanding of the phenomenon being examined rather than, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe, *discovering* wholly new insights into the researched field.

Charmaz's (2006, 2009) notion that one can use ideas and concepts gathered from literature or from one's own experience to inform research has influenced this work. In the early stages of research I sought a perspective of teacher training which could characterise and model the educational field in which beginning teachers operate. This perspective would help provide a framework within which the salient features of the beginning teacher experience could be examined using the constructivist grounded theory methodology, and also provide the unit of analysis for exploring beginning teacher transition as a whole.

The combined cultural historical activity theory and symbolic interactionism model serves this purpose, and provides the framework for exploring the meanings beginning teachers attach to training within a competence based, culturally mediated activity theory context.

#### **1.4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory**

The significance of using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) for this study lies in its ability to characterise the main dimensions of the teacher training process from the beginning teacher point of view. Using Engeström's (1999, 2001) description of activity theory, the beginning teacher transition process can be seen to exist within a culturally mediated learning environment in which beginning teachers work towards the objective focus of becoming competent, qualified teachers. During such activities, beginning teacher development will be influenced by a number of factors including school systems e.g. behavioural or homework policies which affect practice, the cultural characteristics and normative expectations of schools in which training takes place, and the hierarchical, power and division of labour relationships that exist between beginning teachers, pupils, mentors and others involved in the teacher training system.

A central feature of activity theory, and one that builds on the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1981), is that situational learning is facilitated by engagement with mediating tools which shape and inform practice. In the case of teacher training in England such tools could include the QTS standards, curriculum documents, policy documents, and the informal and formal language used by pupils, teachers and others in the learning environment. It may, further, be assumed that such tools are embedded

in the rules, norms and other cultural dimensions that define a particular school's activity system.

There have been a number of studies which explore teaching in an activity theory context. However, at the time this research was carried out no work seemed to exist which considered the QTS standards as the primary activity theory tool shaping and guiding beginning teacher practice. Wilson (2004), for example, considers beginning teachers' agency to be the focus of analysis whereby beginning teachers have the opportunity to develop pedagogic knowledge appropriate to their own teaching and learning situation. For Wilson, teacher transformation takes place with the help of mediating tools and signs located within the expansive university and school setting. These include access to research literature and other professional knowledge. Beginning teacher learning takes place in relation to 'the implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain the actions and interactions within the system' (Wilson 2004: 596). Edwards (2007) has, also, made use of activity theory to examine practising teachers' understanding of their work through a socio-cultural explanation of pupils' learning. Edwards considers socio-cultural theory to be a main conceptual tool that can be used to change teachers' attitudes to their practice. In other examples, Feldman and Weiss (2010) make use of learning technologies as mediating tools to facilitate technological driven teaching and learning improvements; Boag-Munroe (2004) link activity theory to researching the level and form of language teachers use in the school setting; and Saka et al. (2009) have used activity theory to examine the role communities play in beginning teacher transition.

A useful and detailed description of the expansive learning environment in which novice lecturers working towards acquiring teaching qualifications operate is provided by Fanghanel (2004). This model consists of two interrelated activity systems defining what is happening in both the teaching course environment and lecturer's practice. Each system considers (i) the 'subject' as agent carrying out the activity (ii) the 'object' as the raw material at which the activity (teaching) is directed, and (iii) the 'instruments' indicating how the activity is mediated. For Fanghanel, such instruments are mainly 'a syllabus, a set of teaching methods, and a teaching infrastructure' (Fanghanel 2004: 579).

In contrast to these approaches I have regarded the QTS standards to be the main mediating instrument which shapes practice in the competence-based, English teacher training setting (see figure 1.1). Beginning teachers make use of the standards to help them negotiate the complexities of the teaching process constrained by factors implicit in the activity system i.e. culture, school systems and power relationships; each of which is indicated on the activity theory diagram (figure 1.1). Since their introduction, the teaching standards have been a key factor in setting the teacher training agenda in training institutions. The standards, for example, set out the minimum number of days beginning teachers have to complete to become fully qualified teachers; they define what school practices should be covered and addressed during training; how beginning teachers should plan and organise their work; and ways in which beginning teachers should develop positive relationships with pupils, colleagues and other stakeholders in the educational system. Thus, beginning teachers, in general, regard the standards as being crucial to their training development. Giving prominence to the QTS standards in the activity system in this

way, emphasise their importance as the fundamental tool mediating practice in the competence oriented QTS system.

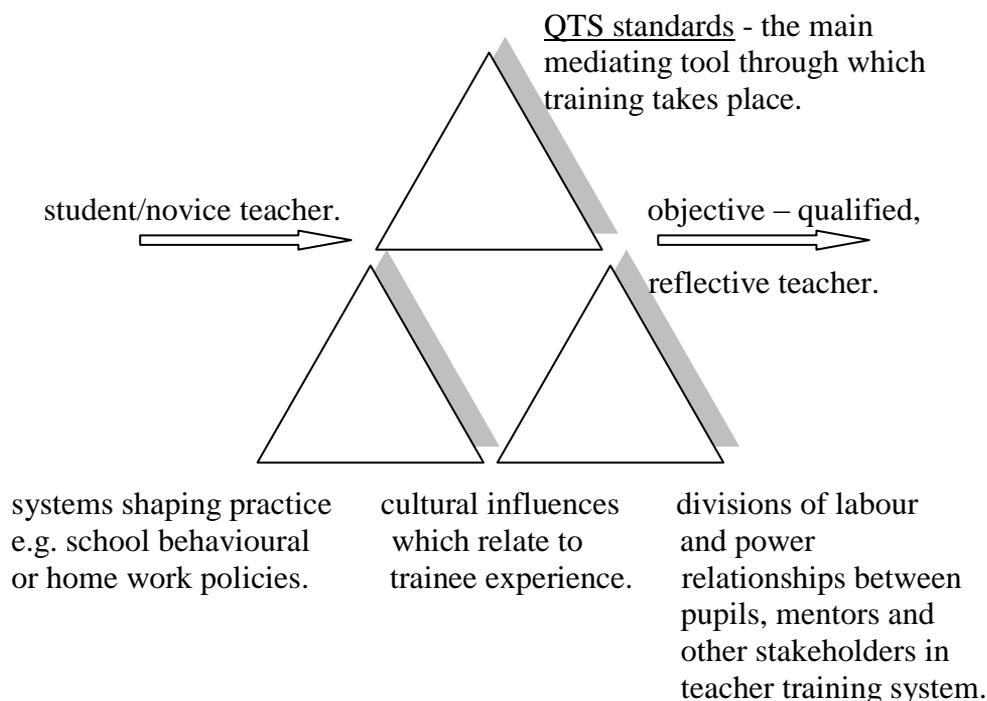


Figure 1.1 Activity theory framework with QTS standards being regarded as the main mediating tool shaping and informing beginning teacher practice.

## 1.5 Symbolic Interactionism and Relationship to Beginning Teacher Experience

A further perspective, in relation to this activity theory point of view, is that I explore aspects of beginning teachers' practice through the symbolic interactionism engagements they have with the social and non-social environment in which they operate. Symbolic interactionism places emphasis on the personal meanings people attach to their behaviour rather than the structural effects which might influence the way they act. For Mead (1967) three principles describe symbolic interactionism

(i) interpreting the meaning of social situations is a central aspect of human behaviour, and humans act towards each other in certain social circumstances on the basis these meanings have for them, (ii) language gives people the means by which interpreted meaning is negotiated within particular social settings, and (iii) reflecting on one's own action is central to embedding the interpretations of the meaning of particular circumstances into the development of the self.

Mead (1967), further, suggests individuals modify their behaviour in social situations through reflective dialogue between two components of the self: the 'I' which may be described as the impulsive, in-the-moment and creative self; and the 'me' which Mead suggests is the reflective self which takes into consideration how one ought to act in particular circumstances. The 'me', which may be viewed as the accumulated understanding of the generalised 'other' i.e. how people think they ought to act based on their own interpretations of how others behave in social situations, allows individuals to enact their role in ways they perceive others see them. Thus, the 'me' is the outward portrayal of the social self the person wishes to show.

The 'me' is learnt through reflective interaction, and includes both knowledge about the environment in which they find themselves and a sense of who he or she is (Allen et al. 2009). Reflective thinking shapes the actions of the self by enabling the individual to develop and sustain a role. Role taking is a means by which the individual, through an understanding of one's self is able to organise and react to experiences, make reflexive adjustments, often by recalling previous actions, in the creation of a regulated self (Allen et al. 2009).

Descriptions of the 'I' and 'me', especially the way individuals are seen to take the role of the generalised 'other', relate well to notions of teacher socialisation (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002; Quaglia 1989; Britzman 2003; Battersby 1979), models of beginning teacher transition (Veenman 1984; Griffin 1983; Lasley and Payne 1991) and reflective practice (Schön 1983; Aygyris and Schön 1974; Loughran 2002). For example, as beginning teachers become more aware of the value aspects of their role through reflecting on school-based experience they may adjust their behaviour in response to the expectations of mentors, tutors, pupils, parents and other influential people in their training environment.

Furthermore, beginning teachers learn aspects of teaching by observing, discussing and evaluating the practices of tutors and mentors, they may seek out the meaning of pedagogic theories to inform practice and are encouraged to use self-reflection to evaluate the course of their actions. Training is carried out in a socially dynamic environment in which beginning teachers construct an understanding of teaching through interaction with 'significant others' e.g. mentors, tutors or other teachers, and through their interpretation of instruments such as the QTS standards which guide practice.

## **1.6 Combining Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism**

The transition model developed for this study which combines activity theory and symbolic interactionism is detailed in figure 1.2. As described, the QTS standards are regarded as the main tool through which training takes place and therefore situated - in activity theory terms - at the apex of the activity theory triangular 'structure'. This

has the effect of intimately tying together the QTS standards, school systems, and cultural and power relationship into the activity theory scenario. Using this model I was able to use constructivist grounded theory methods to explore the symbolic interactionism relationships beginning teachers have with key aspects of practice.

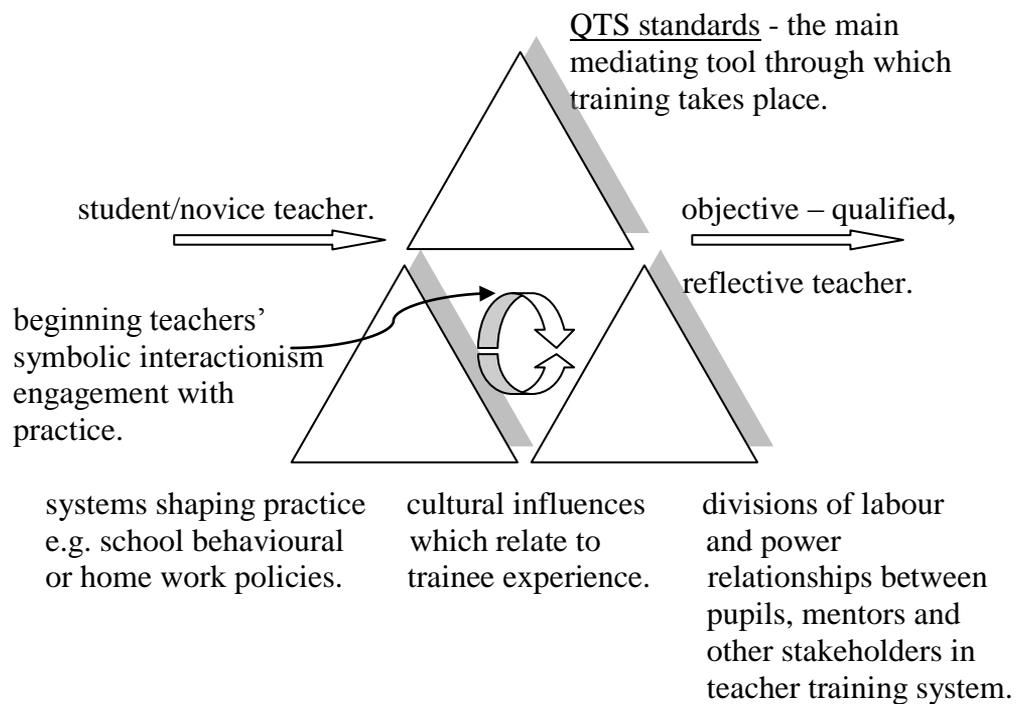


Figure 1.2 Activity theory framework with QTS standards as the main mediating tool in the context of beginning teacher symbolic interactionism engagement with practice.

### 1.7 The Practice-based Nature of the Research and My Dual Role in the Research Process

A decision I made in the early stages of research design was that the study should be practice-based. This, I felt, would allow me to explore the practicalities and complexities of teaching from a school-based practitioner point of view. I also felt

that outcomes from practice-based work would enhance my understanding of the realities of the beginning teacher-school dynamic, and that research outcomes would provide key insights into practice which could be used to update training materials and practices in the institution I was working in.

During such practice-based activities I considered myself as an ‘insider’ researcher who worked closely with respondents in all observational, interview and discussion situations. This approach helped me gain first hand insights into the sorts of experiences beginning teachers encounter when working in the practice situation.

However, being so close to the research field raised particular issues in relation to my dual role as researcher and programme leader responsible for judging the competence of beginning teachers working in schools. Of particular concern, and one I worked towards reconciling during the research process, was the need to reduce the ‘power gap’ perception which may have resulted from respondents regarding me as programme leader rather than as researcher during research activities. This was mainly achieved by emphasising to respondents that any work carried out as part of the research programme would not affect their standing on the course.

However, even though measures were taken to foster a cohesive researcher/respondent relationship during research activities I acknowledge that some respondents may have acted in self interest ways during some observational, interview and discussion situations. For example, some respondents may have answered questions and acted in ways they thought appropriate in particular circumstances

rather than giving wholly truthful and unbiased accounts of their training experiences and perceptions.

To help direct the way respondents might regard me as researcher rather than programme leader I undertook a number of measures during the research process.

These being,

(i) defining and describing the scope and nature of the study to each respondent and making clear that my research role would be different to my role as programme leader,

(ii) discussing with each respondent the reasons for a particular research activity e.g. observation, interview or post observation discussion,

(iii) explaining to respondents my role as ‘insider’ researcher and the need to work closely with them to ‘construct’ a mutual understanding of practice from an unbiased beginning teacher point of view.

### **1.7.1 Biographical Details and Professional Relationship to the Study**

Empirical work for the study was carried out during beginning school practice periods using a mixture of observational, interview and beginning teachers’ reflective journal data gathering methods. Also, the data included beginning teachers’ school placement records and beginning teachers’ teaching observation reports.

At the time research was carried out I was programme leader for teacher education at the university which co-ordinated researched respondents’ training provision. This role included overseeing the administrative aspects of the programme; planning and

delivering the professional practice modules associated with the programme e.g. special educational needs or behaviour management skills; being a counsellor and personal tutor to beginning teachers; and co-ordinating partnership activities between the university and schools in which training took place.

The relationships I built up with beginning teachers, mentors and others responsible for training during my time as programme leader can be regarded as professionally close. For example, in the case of beginning teacher respondents I had tutored many of them on a one-to-one basis, developed close working relationships during seminar activities and had acted as critical advisor when they were practising in schools.

This close association with key research participants had a number of advantages in terms of gaining access to and working within the research field. I was able to gain relatively free access to the schools in which research was conducted and could openly discuss issues with respondents. Moreover, entering the field as an ‘insider’ (Mercer 2007; Elliot 1988) helped reduce some of the potential communication barriers with participants during data collection periods. I felt, in general, they viewed my presence in the school setting, not as a threat, but as an active research participant in their ‘natural’ environment; a factor which, I felt, encouraged respondents to give honest accounts of their perceptions, behaviours and feelings towards their training experiences.

However, I was aware that the professionally close relationship I had developed with beginning teachers and workers in schools could have implications in terms of research bias and objectivity. Thus, a main concern was to maintain the respondents’

trust and confidence during research so that truthful accounts of practice could emerge from the grounded theory process. To help facilitate this, during times of research activity, I worked to ensure participants regarded me as researcher maintaining anonymity and confidentiality rather than as programme leader managing aspects of their practice. This invariably led to some tensions between the duality of my role; especially since I was privy to beginning teachers' more intimate thoughts about their training experiences. In some cases this included criticism of colleagues in schools and university, criticism of aspects of training, and criticism of management of particular schools. In such instances I found it important to stress, during research activities, that respondents were free to discuss issues in confidence and any outcomes would not be detrimental to their success on the programme. In terms of securing respondents' confidence in the way the research was carried out I worked towards providing a private and secure environment in which discussions and other activities could take place. This included ensuring that there were no disturbances during interview and discussion sessions, that any discussions would be kept private and not discussed with others after the event, work disseminated would be anonymous and that respondents were not coerced into discussing issues they did not want to.

A further consideration was to ensure I worked with beginning teachers' school experience data from an unbiased point of view. As previously discussed, much of my understanding of beginning teacher experience had been informed by my interpretations of the information available to me as part of my programme leader's role. For example, mentor's written feedback on a particular beginning teacher's performance, or beginning teachers' end of school placement reports. Such information gave a potentially institutional oriented perspective of beginning

teachers' practice. However, and in relation to the principles of constructivist grounded theory adopted for this work, I worked towards 'constructing' insights into beginning teacher practice through mutual consideration of beginning teachers' viewpoint of practice, as well as insights gained from institutional oriented data such as mentor feedback sheets.

Although practice-based research has received some criticisms in relation to researcher/respondent bias (Mitchell 1999; Given 2006), reliability of data (Glesne and Peshkin 1992), lack of objective rigour (Mays and Pope 1995) and the fragmentary nature of research in producing a consistent body of knowledge (Joram 2006) I found it useful in providing rich insights into the beginning teacher training experience (Goodson and Numan 2002; Van Manen 1990). In line with many other practice-based studies (see for example Cohen et al. 2007), the rationale for this work was to provide a deeper understanding of beginning teacher perceptions in a particular setting, rather than providing generic rules which may not necessarily apply to all teaching and learning situations. However, it is envisaged that the work will be useful for other practitioners by contributing to the growing body of shared knowledge in the teacher training field.

## **1.8 Ongoing Changes to Teacher Training in England**

Teacher training in England has been subjected to a number of changes in recent years, some of which relate to this study. Over the last decade the conceptual framework for teacher education in England has shifted from a predominantly academic to a competence based domain (Jones and Straker 2006). It has been

suggested that this change is in response to government policies aimed at establishing a more utilitarian role for state school education where the pedagogical focus is to pass on straightforward facts from informed teachers through a context based National Curriculum (Gillard 1997).

This governmental viewpoint can be seen to have influenced the introduction of the competency based structure for teacher education as defined by the National Teaching Standards; a system which is now central to the planning, delivery and evaluation of teacher training programmes. The teaching standards used at the time of this research (TDA 2007 and TDA 2008) were revised from previous standards (Department of Education and Employment 1998, 1999; Department of Education and Skills 2002, 2003; TTA 2003) and consist of thirty three competence statements divided into three main categories: professional attributes, professional knowledge and professional skills. Both the TDA 2007 and TDA 2008 standards used for the study were replaced by a new set of standards which became effective on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. These standards were implemented after the data collection period for this study. Beginning teachers provide evidence that they have met each standard and are expected to critically reflect on aspects of their practice. Beginning teachers, school-based mentors, programme tutors and other stakeholders make use of the standards to set training targets, monitor beginning teacher progress and organise training agendas. Thus, they can be regarded as the main instrument through which beginning teachers begin to understand the complexities of their teaching world and are prominent in shaping beginning teacher identity.

Beginning teachers in the institution in which the study was carried out were formally introduced to the teaching standards as part of their personal and professional development (PPD) sessions. Individual standards relate to particular PPD topics, such as lesson planning and barriers to learning, so that the beginning teachers were familiar with how the standard's framework as a whole related to aspects of school practice. In this respect, a large part of the beginning teacher's school-based learning was based on their application of the standards in the practice situation.

Although it has been suggested that the QTS competence model has reduced the gap between theory and practice, facilitated an equitable training programme ([www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk)) and helped assure quality across the training field, many commentators have been critical of these claims. For example, Eynon and Wall (2002), Storey (2007) and Martin and Cloke (2000) suggest that the techno-rational format of the QTS standards provide a limited description of training experience. Also, wider issues, other than identified by the QTS standards, can be seen to impact on beginning teachers' development (Gratch 2001; McGinnis et al. 2004) and that teaching tasks (Downing 1998), pupil behaviour (Veenman 1984) and school culture (Brock and Grady 2007; Barth 2002; Cohen-Evron 2002) work together to affect practice. Beginning teachers often feel powerless newcomers to the school (Lipka and Brinthaupt 1999) and have an overriding need for security and inclusion within the community. They may do this by avoiding conflict (Khamis 2000), developing agency through coping strategies (Admiraal et al. 2000), or avoiding confrontations with more powerful staff (MacDonald 1993). Literature also suggests that assessment of professional values is largely subjective, and is more often than not reliant on the

value judgements of the mentors, beginning teachers and others who are involved in the training process (Burnett 2006).

In addition beginning teachers now have to work within a complex and competitive environment characterised by the genre of the ‘new management’ approach to schooling (McCulloch et al. 2000). This is exemplified by factors such as school league tables, individual pupil target setting and school success criteria based on examination results.

At the time of research there were also a number of changes taking place in the way teachers were being trained. This was primarily due to a shift in emphasis from a predominantly partnership based system to one which was becoming more school-based; the rationale being that beginning teachers can learn to teach more effectively when training ‘on the job’. New training programmes include Schools Direct and Teach First.

### **1.9 PGCE Model for Teacher Training Practice**

The beginning teacher participants in this study were all following a ‘traditional’ post graduate certificate in education (PGCE) training route. For this model of delivery, a higher educational institution (HEI) works in partnership with a number of schools who provide on-the-job training. A defining feature of a partnership is that schools in the partnership should provide a structured training programme, integrated with aspects of HEI provision, delivered by trained mentors. Mentors usually receive training to help them carry out their role effectively, and are responsible for aspects of

training such as observing and commenting on beginning teachers' abilities when they are teaching, giving beginning teachers advice on practice, and judging whether or not beginning teachers are meeting specific competence targets. In this respect, school-based mentors have a crucial role as 'gatekeepers' of the profession. Thus, in terms of partnership relationships, mentors can be seen to hold powerful positions in the teacher training system because of their role in judging whether a beginning teacher has passed their placement period or not. During placement periods there may be a number of conflicting issues which arise between mentors and beginning teachers as a result of the assessment and 'gate keeping' duties mentors carry out as part of their role. For example, conflicts may occur due to personality differences between beginning teachers and mentors and the way mentors might be critical of a beginning teacher's performance when teaching. In activity theory terms, such potential conflict scenarios can have a marked effect on how beginning teachers engage with practice at the 'division of labour' level of the activity theory framework.

Beginning teachers undertake a minimum of 120 days school-based training during the PGCE course. Training is conducted in a least two different schools: the first placement is typically termed the development phase; the second placement typically termed the synoptic phase. During the developmental phase, beginning teachers develop their teaching capabilities and work towards teaching 50% of an established teacher's timetable. In the case of the synoptic phase, beginning teachers work towards teaching 70% of an established teacher's timetable. Throughout training, beginning teachers gather evidence to show they have met all the teaching standards and, typically, record their experiences in a profile of professional development (PPD).

## **1.10 Description of the Research Field**

Research was carried out in the education faculty of a university located in North West England and eight schools in the locality. Data were gathered between January 2009 and December 2011. Data were gathered from beginning teachers' experiences of both developmental and synoptic placement periods. During the developmental placement, beginning teachers typically worked towards developing their pedagogic skills such as classroom management, lesson planning and assessment. For the synoptic placement, beginning teachers placed more emphasis on developing areas such as differentiation, special needs and value added assessment. During each placement beginning teachers were expected to critically reflect on aspects of their practice. Beginning teacher participants, selected through the theoretical sampling process, had a range of backgrounds. Some had entered teaching straight from school whilst others had worked for a number of years in other occupations. There was also a mixture of ages, gender and biographical backgrounds which helped provide a varied sample with which to explore experience.

## **1.11 Commentary on Initial Considerations Situating the Research**

An issue I thought necessary to consider in the early stages of research design was how to represent the ways in which beginning teachers mediate transition in the context of this study e.g. within a competence, practice-based system. These considerations would, also, help frame the preliminary objectives associated with the grounded theory study (see section 1.12). Making decisions about a suitable perspective to frame the research study took some time to formulate. During this time I examined different approaches to modelling the transition process with respect to the

activity theory framework. Insights into how I could model practice evolved from initial sensitising considerations (see ideas of Charmaz 2006, 2009) gathered from observations and discussions with beginning teachers, and a preliminary review of literature on (i) symbolic interactionism and (ii) cultural historical activity theory. During the course of this initial exploration, I considered the characteristics of three activity theory systems and how each might describe practice in the proposed research context. These being;

- (i) considering reflective practice techniques and professional knowledge as the main activity tools through which beginning teachers engage with practice,
- (ii) considering symbolic interactionism as the main activity theory tool through which beginning teachers mediate practice and begin to enact aspects of their role,
- (iii) considering the QTS standards to be the main activity theory tool through which beginning teachers can negotiate the training process.

In the first instance, I favoured symbolic interactionism to be the main tool through which I could explore the meanings beginning teachers attached to aspects of their training. As my insights into symbolic interactionism and how it might be utilised to model beginning teachers' behaviour developed, I became more convinced that it could be a suitable description of how beginning teachers interpret and enact aspects of practice. Moreover, I considered that it might be a useful strategy to encourage beginning teachers to make use of symbolic interactionism as a reflective tool to

examine aspects of their own practice. Using symbolic interactionism as a reflective tool in this way could have the ability to shift beginning teachers' understanding of their own practice beyond the minimal requirements of the QTS standards. In the case of failing trainees, for example, viewing their practice through a symbolic interactionism perspective may illuminate reasons why they are finding aspects of practice difficult. By having a understanding of how others see them and how they should better make sense and interpret key stages of practice should help them through these particular stages. The model is shown in figure 1.3.

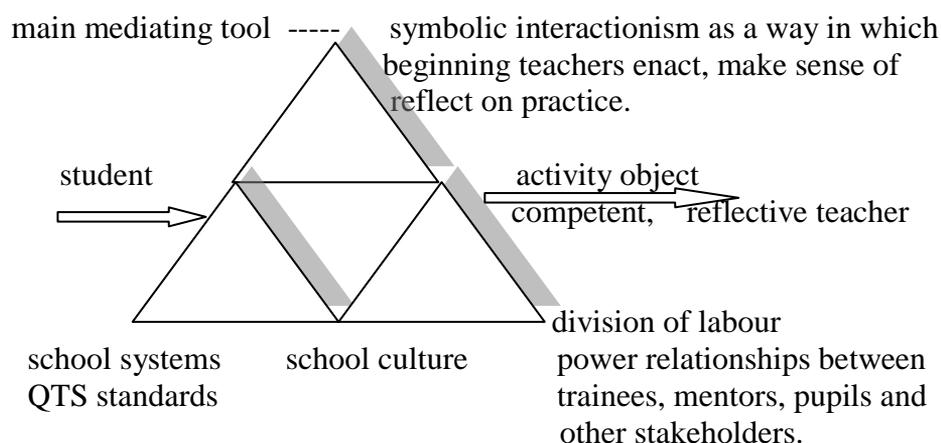


Figure 1.3. Activity theory framework where symbolic interactionism is considered to be the main tool mediating practice.

However, as I worked through ideas relating to beginning teacher development in the context of a standards based training environment, I became more convinced that I required a perspective which would foreground the QTS standards into activity theory. This view of practice had the effect of linking key aspects of beginning teachers' practice into a systematic whole. By using the model shown in figure 1.4, I was able to make use of constructivist grounded theory to explore the symbolic

interactionism meanings beginning teachers associated with the transition process as a whole. As detailed in figure 1.4, the model locates the QTS standards (in activity theory terms) as the main mediating tool ‘directing’ the training process. As activity theory suggests, beginning teacher practice will be influenced by the characteristics of the school system, the cultural features of the school environment and the power relationships which exist in the training field.

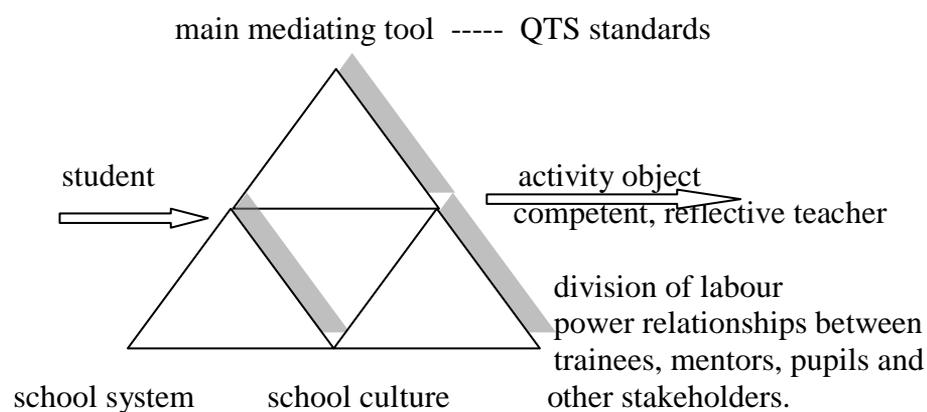


Figure 1.4. Activity theory framework where the QTS standards are considered to be the main tool mediating practice.

Grounded theory can then be used to explore beginning teacher symbolic interactionism interpretations of elements of the system.

### **1.12 Issues Relating to the Integration of Grounded theory, Symbolic Interactionism and Activity Theory to Provide a Coherent Description of Practice**

At the beginning of my research design I needed to consider whether grounded theory could be considered an appropriate approach to gain insights into practice when using the combined activity theory and symbolic interactionism framework. In addition (i) I

thought it appropriate to consider the degree to which the beginning teachers might see the relevance of this framework in relation to their own learning experiences and (ii) the extent to which the QTS standards could be regarded as the main ‘tool’ mediating beginning teacher practice and provide a meaningful description of the practice in the competency based context. Reconciling such issues, as illuminated in the vignettes (see chapter 6), would have a bearing on how credible and valid the work would be in the practice-based situation.

There are clearly similarities and differences between activity theory and symbolic interactionism, yet the two approaches can be integrated using constructivist grounded theory as a way of widening the theoretical field from which analysed outcomes emerge.

Activity theory can be regarded primarily as a ‘clarifying tool’ which maps out the main characteristics of the learning process in relation to the cultural, systems and hierarchical power structures which impact on the activities carried out. In the case of beginning teacher practice, for example, activity theory can illuminate the wider cultural features which impact on experience. Activity theory assumes learning is fundamentally goal directed where the beginning teacher purposefully interacts with ‘tools’ which mediate and shape practice: a perspective which helps illuminate practice from a ‘holistic’ point of view. This viewpoint can be seen to differ from the essence of symbolic interactionism which seeks to describe individual behaviour in terms of a person’s interaction with their immediate environment. A further feature of activity theory is that it can account for ways in which the contradictions and tensions that occur during beginning teacher development e.g. between mentors and beginning

teachers can be a driving force in a person's transformation through the activity system. Such contradictions 'are not simply conflicts or problems, but are historically accumulated and structural tensions within and between activity systems' (Engestrom 2001: p37). Such contradictions typically appear as the critical incidents beginning teachers encounter as they progress from student to newly qualified teacher. A critical incident could be reconciled by critical reflective activities e.g. relating practice to pedagogic theories and discussing issues with mentors and other colleagues in the school system.

However, symbolic interactionism can be seen as a 'predictive tool' which could identify ways in which a person might engage with a particular social setting based on their interpretation of the culture in which they work. In practice, it is possibly easier for practitioners such as beginning teachers and mentors to understand activity theory within an organisational context rather than symbolic interactionism. In this way, symbolic interactionism may be less clear to use as a predictive tool for teachers. However the approach is useful in the research context in that it allows the researcher to make use of a model to explain human action in particular social situations. The researcher is able to focus on reasons why beginning teachers act in a particular way and how they develop their role as teachers. If beginning teachers are to make use of the approach as a predictive tool they should have some guidance into ways in which symbolic interactionism principles relate to their own action and recognise its value as a suitable model to explain what they do in practice.

Even though there are differences between the focus of activity theory and symbolic interactionism I suggest there are enough similarities to link the perspectives together.

For instance,

- (i) both inform behaviour in a cultural and learning development context,
- (ii) both are conceptual systems which account for learning influenced by hierarchical structures,
- (iii) both theoretical approaches place active engagement with the environment as a central feature of human development,
- (iv) both provide a description of learning which focuses not on the individual but the interaction between the individual and the systems in which learning takes place.

Thus, these theoretical perspectives put forward the view of human activity being a dynamic process which is influenced by the social system in which it takes place.

Constructivist grounded theory further encourages the use of pre-existing theoretical frameworks to help make sense of data sets and invites the researcher to explore phenomenon from a wider standpoint than could possibly be achieved by using the limited data set as suggested by original versions of grounded theory. The broader constructivist approach allows one to extend the possibilities of what might emerge from the data set and helps give a more realistic and appropriate description of the phenomenon in question. Thus, the constructivist version of grounded theory suggests that when used in conjunction with activity theory works to give a more expansive and useful data generating pool.

### 1.13 Preliminary Objectives

Due to the ‘blank canvas’ approach I favoured for entering the research field, I felt having a fixed set of initial research questions would limit the way theoretical outcomes might emerge as the grounded theory methodology progressed. As the grounded theory approach suggests, one should be prepared to be ‘open minded’ about the direction the research might take which, in turn, helps the process of generating fresh insights into the phenomenon in question. Thus, in the early part of the study I felt it useful to begin with a set of loosely defined preliminary objectives which provided a starting point for the study rather than having a fixed set of research questions to be ‘tested’ as the research process progressed. Thus, instead of a set of fixed research questions framing the process in relatively rigid terms, I initially set out with a set of preliminary objectives to provide entry direction for the early stages of the work. In this context, I began the work with the initial idea of examining issues relating to the impact the National Teaching Standards may have on beginning teachers’ understanding and enactment of their role. In particular;

- (i) the meaning the QTS standards have for beginning teachers and the degree to which they provide realistic description of complexities of the teacher training environment,
- (ii) ways in which the beginning teacher role may be formed and transformed through their engagement with wider than QTS aspects of the training process,
- (iii) an examination of the interplay between the development of teachers as reflective/reflexive practitioners and the competence based system in which they operate;

- (iv) the strategies beginning teachers adopt to make sense of their training environment.

These objectives worked towards providing a starting 'frame of reference' for the study, and provided initial ideas into the way beginning teacher experience might be explored through the grounded theory process.

## 1.14 Thesis Structure

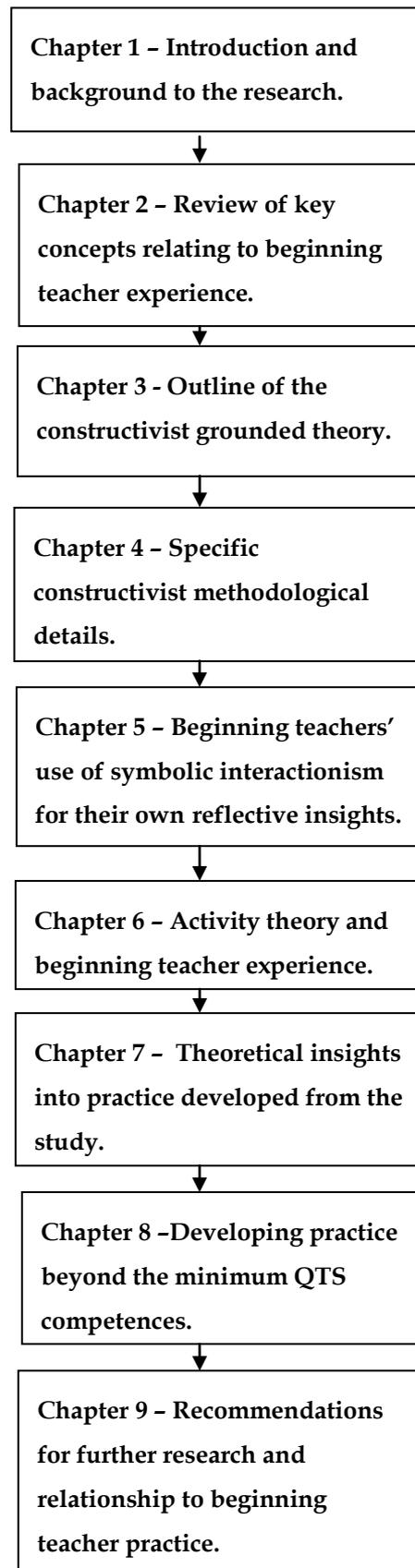


Figure 1.5 Flow diagram of the thesis structure.

## **1.15 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the background to the research in terms of the research focus, why student to newly qualified teacher transition was chosen for the study and how beginning teacher development lends itself to being explored through an integrated activity theory and symbolic interactionism framework. The work further commentated on the research setting, the background to the PGCE respondents' training experiences and reasons why constructivist grounded theory was the preferred methodology for exploring beginning teachers perceptions and enactment of their role.

## **Chapter 2 The Beginning Teacher Experience**

### **2.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

In this chapter I contextualise the range of emotional, cultural and professionally situated experiences the beginning teachers in the study may have encountered during transition from student to newly qualified teacher. The work gives insights into the scope of research carried out in the teacher training field, as well as providing descriptions of the complex and challenging nature of the beginning teacher role. Discussions focus on key features of the cultural historical activity theory setting I use to describe training within the QTS competence system.

The work is based on an initial exploration of literature designed to provide insights into factors affecting beginning teacher transition. The way I make use of literature has been informed by constructivist grounded theory principles some of which suggest literature is useful in sensitising the researcher to salient features of the research field. In this respect, the preliminary literature helped provide (i) sensitising insights into the scope, scale and organisational nature of the research field (ii) a general understanding of the research field from which more precise concepts could emerge through the grounded theory process (iii) a knowledge base to compare and contrast research outcomes.

For many beginning teachers, the classroom is a complex cultural mix in which students have to explore, negotiate and assemble personal knowledge, beliefs and interpretations of the environment they are working in (Geertz 1993). Such encounters will have bearing on the activities which shape and inform practice. In

relation to the activity system I use to describe beginning teacher experience, these will have a marked impact on beginning teachers' relationship with the cultural influences of the school, the power relationships between staff and pupils and the systems and tools which mediate practice.

The chapter begins with an outline of beginning teacher transition issues and how these affect teacher progression. The work then describes the cultural characteristics of schools and value perspectives which help define school culture. Beginning teacher practice is, further, explored in relation to ways beginning teachers survive and cope with practice, particularly in terms of idealised models of beginning teacher transition. The pedagogic concepts of reflective practice, hidden curriculum and tacit learning are discussed with respect to the beginning teacher learning process.

## **2.2 Descriptions of Teacher Development**

It is useful to begin this chapter by reviewing theoretical descriptions of the emotional, coping and pedagogic stages beginning teachers may go through during training. This will help relate researched respondents' perceptions of training to some of the widely understood models of practice development. Much research suggests that training invariably involves the beginning teacher coming to terms with strong emotional issues relating to self survival (Veenman 1984; Dodd 2001), personal coping strategies to deal with day to day classroom incidents (Katz 1972; Griffeth et al. 2010) and becoming more confident in teaching pupils with different needs and abilities (Katz 1972).

There are a number of models which consider the concerns beginning teachers may have during training development. For example, Katz (1972) has identified four stages beginning teachers may go through before they become confident in their teaching abilities. These being (i) a survival stage in which teachers' thoughts tend towards coping with practice on a daily basis (ii) a consolidation phase in which teachers begin to gain confidence in the classroom and wider school setting (iii) a period of renewal which can be regarded as the stage where teachers begin to introduce more innovative pedagogic approaches to their teaching and learning activities (iv) a maturity phase where teachers feel more secure in their professional setting. The linear progression route that Katz (1972) identified is illustrated in figure 2.1 below.

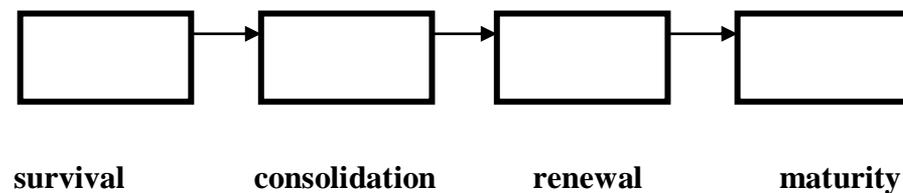


Figure 2.1 Katz's linear stages of beginning teacher development.

Although, Katz's ideas resonate to ways the beginning teachers in this study viewed aspects of their practice, it may be argued that the final maturity stage is now less defined. Regular scrutiny of teachers' work by organisations such as Ofsted have markedly changed how teachers feel about their teaching situation leading to higher levels of work related stress (Brimblecombe et al. 1995), insecurity (Troman 2000; Day et al. 2006) and alienation (Day and Smethem 2009).

Fuller and Brown (1975) offer, further, insights in beginning teacher experience by taking into account beginning teachers' concerns in more detail. Fuller and Brown see development characterised by the teacher moving through a hierarchical framework consisting of

- concerns about the self,
- concerns about the tasks that have to be performed and the teaching situations they find themselves in,
- concerns about how their own teaching and learning abilities impact on the pupils they teach.

Furlong and Maynard (1995) have also suggested that trainee teachers appear to pass through a number of stages as they progress from beginning teacher to teacher. These stages have been termed early idealism, personal survival, dealing with difficulties, hitting the plateau and moving on. However, as emphasised by Maynard (2001), unlike Fuller and Brown (1975) who consider the development to occur through a series of discreet stages and concerns the beginning teachers in the Furlong and Maynard study expressed a range of concerns throughout their school experience.

Warin et al. (2006) have explored the feelings and thoughts teachers have about practice and how these affect their teacher identities. For Warin et al. teachers vary in their capacity for reflection, and it is important for teachers to develop their reflective power in relation to their professional identities if they are to become successful teachers. As Warin et al. (2006) suggest, teaching can be seen as a practice which intensifies a consciousness of the self which can offer both an opportunity and a threat to the construction of identity. And, as they point out, in the current educational

climate, teachers' identities are exposed to rapid change at both the societal and political level as new discourses and policies reflect back ever changing images of the professional teacher self. Such contradictions and dilemmas faced by teachers can lead to what Warin et al. (2006) describe as identity dissonance which describes the psychological discomfort felt when a person is aware of such disharmonious experiences of the self. Thus, being able to come to terms and cope with such thoughts can be seen as a common feature of beginning teachers' reflective experience in the early stages of teaching.

In terms of Fuller and Brown's (1975) work, Conway and Clarke (2003) suggest this form of transition to be a general movement outwards from concerns about the individual's self to concerns about what they are teaching and how to deliver it more effectively. For Conway and Clarke (2003), this is appealing because it mirrors the realities of training for many beginning teachers (Conway and Clarke 2003); in particular, how it links to beginning teachers' initial concerns about daily survival and how they may then move towards abstract concerns as they become more competent. Burden (1980) describes teacher development as being able to master (i) the knowledge of the activities they are teaching (ii) knowledge of the teaching environment (iii) the image of their selves as a teacher (iv) approaches to the curriculum and how to organise learning more systematically (v) their level of self competence as teachers and (vi) a willingness to try out new teaching methods. In a similar vein, Moir (1990) suggests, beginning teachers may go through stages of experiencing personal feelings of anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and self reflection. As figure 2.2 suggests, beginning teachers' attitudes towards teaching is at a high point at the beginning of training, but is at a low point near the

end of the first half of the training cycle i.e. survival and disillusionment. These negative feelings, often due to anxiety and questioning whether they have the ability to cope with teaching, become more positive as beginning teachers develop their teaching competence.

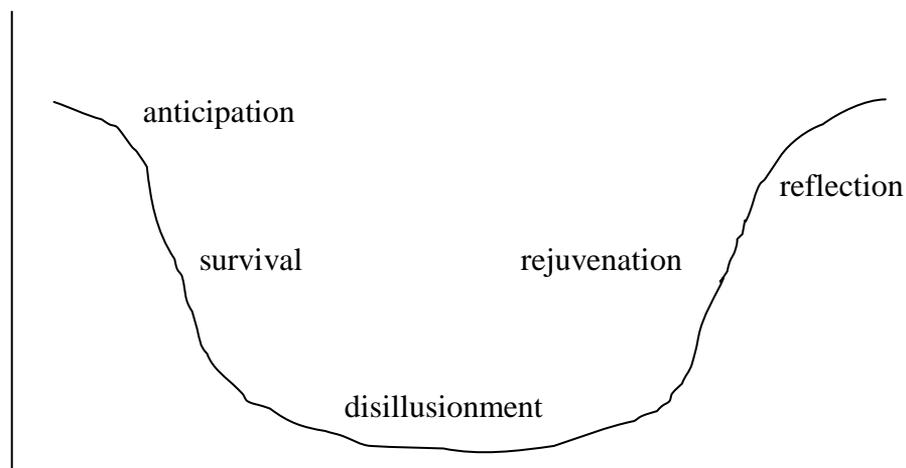


Figure 2.2 Moir's (1990) model of beginning teacher development.

A common feature of these models is they describe how beginning teachers' perceptions of practice change over time. For example, it is common for beginning teachers, in the initial stage of their practice, to have self doubts about their teaching abilities and how they might cope with the work load. However, as they become more confident they begin to move away from having initial 'coping concerns' to concerns about developing professional competence in line with the expectations of the teachers and tutors who mentor, judge and supervise them.

### **2.3 School Culture and the Character of Teaching**

As activity theory infers, the cultural characteristics of the school in which teachers work have a marked impact on how well they adapt and engage with their practice.

Viewed from a 'distance' all schools may seem the same. For example, they all have teachers, pupils and other staff making up the work force; they tend to deliver a common curriculum; the days, weeks and years are governed by timetabled sessions; and pedagogic teaching and learning principles are core concerns of the organisation. However, when examined more closely, and in more depth, the characteristics of schools can be significantly different.

This cultural diversity amongst schools is, in many respects, at odds with the objectives of the competence model of teacher training defined by the TDA (now Teacher Agency). The notion that beginning teachers, mentors in schools and others involved with the training process are working towards a common standard framework implies that this strategy will bring uniformity to a complex training process. For example, beginning teachers have to demonstrate that they have met all the current standard requirements, irrespective of the type of school they are in, and mentors and others responsible for training should be able to apply common assessment principles to measure beginning teachers' progress regardless of the type of institution they work in.

However, this is difficult to achieve in practice because of differences in culture from one school to another: particularly in terms of the school's ethos, mission, norms, atmosphere and character. For Deal and Peterson (1990), culture is regarded as the deep rooted patterns of values, beliefs and traditions which have formed over the course of an organisation's history. Schools can be regarded as having a distinct 'feel' for the beginning teachers who work in them which, in turn, may affect the way they cope with practice. Some schools may be perceived by beginning teachers as 'good'

and exciting places to work. Other schools may be perceived as just the opposite and become places which present a range of deep rooted behavioural, learning and cultural challenges. Thus, schools can be seen to exhibit different rituals (Henry 1992), expectations (Hargreaves 1995), curriculum foci (Lieberman 1988) and decision making processes (Cranston 2001).

Early descriptions of school culture tended to focus on the 'climate' of a particular school: a term which can be regarded as a narrower concept than culture. Climate, in this context, typically referred to peoples' shared perceptions of the school rather than a more expansive cultural description which not only relates to how people feel about an organisation, but takes into account its assumptions, beliefs and values which give an organisation its identity. Steele and Jenks (1977), for example, depict the characteristics of school climate in relation to 'what it feels like to spend time in a social situation', whilst Brookover (1978) suggests climate to be 'the composition of norms, expectations and beliefs which characterise the school provided by those whose in the school'.

A more precise description of culture is offered by Prosser (1999), who suggests school culture to be the unseen and unobservable force behind school activity, a unifying theme that provides meaning, direction and mobilisation of school members. For Prosser, school culture comprises of concrete representations in the form of artefacts as well as the behavioural characteristics such as norms, jargon, metaphors and rites.

This viewpoint, very much, relates to Schein's (1997), well documented, three levels of organisational culture (see figure 2.3) comprising firstly of the artefacts level, secondly the espoused values and beliefs level and finally the underlying assumption level.

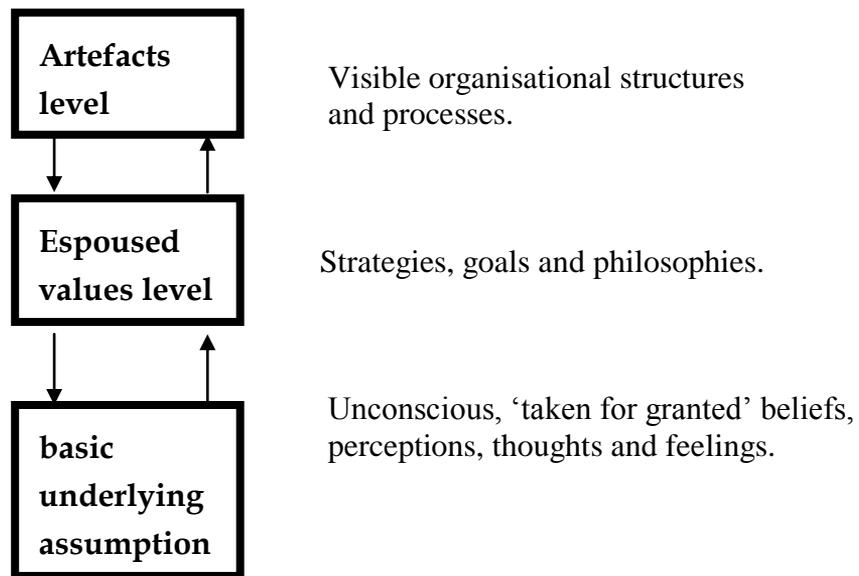


Figure 2.3 Schein's description of levels inherent in organisational culture.

The artefacts level, which can be considered to be the most visible of the three levels, is perhaps the one most closely associated with peoples' perceptions of school climate. Artefacts can be considered to be rituals such as registration, acting out the timetable, and moving to and from classroom situations. The initial 'feel' and 'mood' of a school can come from such experiences. Espoused views are the organisation's stated values and rules of behaviour which, in the schools' context, may refer to behaviour codes, dress codes and formalised rituals associated with school life. Espoused views are often expressed in official rule books, codes of conduct and school prospectuses and brochures. For Schein, the deepest level of culture lies at the assumptions level: the dimensions of which may not be clearly recognised.

Assumptions are the deeply embedded, taken for granted behaviours which are often tacit and difficult for beginning teachers to recognise without some form of deeper investigation.

A further, and useful, interpretation of the character of school culture is suggested by Carr (2006). For Carr (2006), the normative characteristics of teaching can be described using three normative features: (i) deontic norms (ii) aretaic norms and (iii) technical norms. Carr sees technical norms to be the most visible dimensions of the teacher's role which with respect to the QTS standards can be seen to be techniques associated with classroom activities such as lesson planning, assessment and behavioural management.

However, teaching is also characterised by certain (deontic) duties teachers are expected to carry out. Duty roles include acting in *loco parentis* for pupils, being expected to work in the evening preparing lessons, assessing pupils' work effectively and being responsible for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Deontic norms are implicitly embedded in the teacher's role and are cultural dimensions that trainees should examine and reflect upon during training. Beginning teachers often misunderstand the importance of recognising the hidden aspects of such 'deontic' obligations which can be a source of tension between themselves and colleagues. For example, mentors may expect trainees to implicitly understand how to deal with pupil-parent issues, or to be instantly aware of the behavioural dynamics of the classroom.

Finally areatic norms, which for Carr refer to the development of teaching character above technique and duty, describe the virtues of those responsible for pupils' moral improvement. The areatic characteristics of the teaching role are perhaps the most difficult for beginning teachers to come to terms with, and are best developed through experience and reflection.

Schoen and Teddie (2008) have linked the notions of climate and Schein's level of culture. For Schoen and Teddie, culture may be seen as;

- shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together (Deal and Kennedy 1982),
- the lens through which participants view themselves and the world (Hargreaves 1994),
- the unwritten rules and traditions, norms and expectations that permeate everything, the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and students (Deal and Peterson 1999).

Schoen and Teddie (2008) propose four dimensions to school culture (i) professional orientation (ii) organisational structure (iii) quality of the learning environment and (iv) student centred focus. Professional orientation involves the professional lives of teaching whilst organisational structures takes into account organisational factors affecting the way business is conducted in schools. The quality of the learning environment relates the rigour inherent in a school's teaching process and is

concerned with the extent to which individual pupil's needs are met by the school's programmes, policies, rituals, routines and traditions.

### **2.3.1 Norms, Values and their Relationship to Teaching**

A key feature of school life, and one that relates to the characteristics of a particular school culture, are the values and normative behaviours embedded in the working practices of that organisation. The value base of teaching is found in education's aims, goals, and objectives, and the teacher, as well as the pupils, bring their own values into the teaching-studying-learning process (Kansanen et al. 1999). This process has a moral core, and although teachers do not consciously make up their minds in this respect, values play an important role in teachers' implicit theory (Kansanen et al. 1999).

Questioning the nature of teacher held values and their influence on educational practice has been a re-occurring theme over the years. In many cases the debate has been the province of educational philosophers concerned about the nature of education, its intrinsic purpose and how it relates to society as a whole. In this respect, values are often viewed in terms of freedom, justice and democracy. However, Peters (1996) suggests that values should not be seen so much as overall educational goals or as end products, but as principles implicit in different ways of proceeding and producing at the school and classroom level.

Teachers have significant influence on the development of the values children and young people acquire, and schools, to a very large extent, reflect and embody the values of the society in which they operate. The value culture of an individual school

can therefore be noticeably influenced by what teachers choose to permit or encourage in the classroom, and how they respond to children's contributions to the learning process (Halstead 1996).

There have been a number of workable definitions of professional values which relate to school practice. These include attitudes and beliefs that an individual is willing to publicly affirm, and emotional commitments and ideas that relate to social worth. A useful definition is proposed by Halstead (1996) who sees values as principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards and life stances which act as a general guide or as a point of reference in decision making or in the evaluation of beliefs. They are the criteria by which we judge people, objects, ideas and actions to be good or desirable.

In the competitive climate that has emerged since the introduction of the Education Reform Act (Department of Education and Science, 1988), the focus of school-based values in English state schools can be seen to have changed. For example, school managers, in perceiving that their schools will be judged on the basis of factors such as examination performance and other market driven factors, now place emphasis on the value structures that support the 'industrial dimension' of school provision (Jones and Straker 2006). Thus, the value systems embodied in day-to-day activities such as discipline, school uniforms, homework policies are continually being adjusted (termed value drift) in line with a changing educational ethos. This shift in value emphasis can be seen in the way in which the latest set of QTS standards are worded and framed (see appendix 2) towards competences based around skills such as plan and teach well structured lessons; make accurate and productive use of

assessment; and manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment.

Beginning teachers now work within such a changing and competitive environment and, invariably, have to cope with the genre of the 'new management' approach to schooling during their early days of teaching. Making an assessment of a beginning teacher's value system entails an assessment of their attitudes and relationship with their pupils and colleagues. Jones (2003) has explored how values change over time and has indicated how newly qualified teachers endeavour to reconcile their personal values and beliefs with the reality of teaching. In a qualitative case study of ten newly qualified secondary school teachers, she has proposed that a period of destabilisation occurs in the early stages of their training in which teachers re-examine their beliefs and re-organise their roles. This entails a re-appraisal of the self. In this way beginning teachers have to modifying their personal beliefs and values to align with the reality of the school experience. This can be a source of potential conflict and results in the trainee going through a number of steps of value alignment. These have been identified by Jones (2003) as;

1. keeping the distance.
2. observing demarcation lines.
3. compromising values.
4. seeking support.
5. the synchronisation of reality and the ideal.
6. becoming pragmatic.
7. maintaining high aspirations.

Halstead (1996) suggests that values are deeply embedded in a teacher's take-for-granted world view and beginning teachers may not be very well prepared to reflect upon the nature and consequences of many of the value dilemmas that they encounter. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that reflective tools, such as their own understanding of activity systems, could be used to help beginning teachers explore their own value constructions in relation to the value structures of the school they are to work in. This may help in reducing some of the tensions that can arise from the constraints imposed by the highly prescriptive standards framework and the growing call for reflective-reflexive practices.

### **2.3.2 The Characteristics of the Hidden Curriculum**

Much character of school life can be considered to reside in what is termed the 'hidden curriculum' which is outside the boundaries of the official, stated curriculum area. Cornbleth (1990) implies that the curriculum is not always a tangible product, but is the actual day to day interaction of pupils, teachers, knowledge and the milieu of school life. Understanding the dynamics behind the daily realities of school life is to have some understanding of 'hidden curriculum' issues and, as Banks (2001) notes, the school communicates to students the school's attitudes towards a range of issues and problems, including how the school views pupils as human beings.

A number of commentators of the 'hidden curriculum' have related it to the notion of the socialisation process of schooling. Giroux (2001), for instance, identifies the 'hidden curriculum' as the norms and principles experienced by students in their educational life, which for Margolis (2001) reflects the hegemonic functions of the state. Such perspectives support Durkheim's (1961) earlier observations that much

more is taught and learned in school than is specified by the formal curriculum, and can be found in the social structure of the classroom and rules governing the link between pupils and the teacher. Vallance (1973) has, further, discussed how the link between schooling and societal expectations was once more explicit and used to inculcate attitudes such as punctuality, respect for authority and ‘good’ social behaviour.

An interesting insight into the way the ‘hidden’ aspects of the curriculum relate to subject knowledge is suggested by Apple (1979) who suggests there is high status and low status knowledge. Some pupils, depending on the position they find themselves in, may be excluded from high status forms of knowledge which, in effect, becomes a filter for social stratification within and between schools. A practice which, at the time of writing, may be currently exemplified in English schools with the possible introduction of the English baccalaureate (Ebac) which places academic emphasis on subjects such as mathematics, history and English rather than on subjects such as art, design and technology, and information and communication technologies.

Postmodernist interpreters of the ‘hidden curriculum’ view the norms of behaviour within the classroom as a main cultural driving force in schools, and workers, including Blumberg and Blumberg (1994), see hidden aspects as a by-product of an educational system and not just because of it. As such it may be seen in terms of the set of mediated messages appropriated by learners from the actual teaching and learning experiences they encounter.

The psychological features of school systems make power contributions to ways pupils may cope with 'hidden curriculum' effects. These have been identified by Jackson (1968) as;

- The crowded nature of the classroom,
- unequal power relationships between teachers and pupils,
- the different allegiances required by both teachers and pupils.

### **2.3.3 Tacit and Formal Aspects of Beginning Teacher Knowledge**

Much of the knowledge beginning teachers see as being useful for teaching is, at first sight, tacit and informal. Such informal knowledge may be unique to the individual (Polanyi 1966), and typically built up from years of experience in the workplace and through teachers intuition of the work at hand. Tacit experience seems to be a central feature of teachers' knowledge base which is difficult to quantify in QTS standards terms.

Following on from Polanyi's initial work on the tacit dimension of a person's knowledge base, workers have identified the informal aspects of knowledge as personal, difficult to fully explain and articulate, task specific, and tending towards transfer through conversations (see for example the work of McInerney 2002; Hegarty 2000). Thus, by its very nature, tacit knowledge tends to be more unstructured and informal than the more formal elements of teacher training programmes i.e. those relating specifically to the QTS standards, and may not be the most effective way for beginning teachers to gain insights into such knowledge bases. Elliot et al. (2011), for example, who conducted research into the level of effectiveness of five hundred teachers in England found the most successful teachers were those who developed the

‘tacit knowledge’ of how to handle situations inside and outside their immediate classroom situation. It was, further, suggested those teachers who did not acquire such ‘tacit knowledge’ may be setting themselves up for more long term difficulties within the profession.

Tacit knowledge in schools may be seen to be captured by collegiate collaboration through community of practice processes (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999). However, people may not always be aware of the exact nature of the knowledge they process or how it might be valuable to other teachers in the school. Effective tacit knowledge transfer in the school setting requires personal contact with the field and may, further, be revealed through practice in a particular context.

Thus, tacit knowledge may be characterised by teachers who act and make decisions, perhaps without explicitly reflecting on the rules and principles involved in its execution. Tacit knowledge complements formal knowledge, and allows the beginning teacher to go beyond the limits of the formal knowledge acquired through lectures and text books.

A useful description of the dimensions of such formal/informal knowledge base is give by Eraut (2000) who defines three types of knowledge (i) codified (ii) cultural (iii) personal. For Eraut, codified knowledge is the public, formal information contained in literature such as books and journals and controlled by editors etc. Cultural knowledge is defined as a wider, group understanding of phenomenon created through social interaction and networking which might include codified knowledge as well as informal, implicit forms. Personal knowledge incorporates the

abilities of individuals to make use of knowledge from their own personal experience and reflection to make sense of the situation they are in.

## **2.4 Beginning Teacher Experience and Relationship to Practice**

### **2.4.1 Theory to Practice Gap**

A recurring theme in the teacher educational field is making the theoretical features of the training curriculum relevant to beginning teachers' practice in the school setting. This issue has been debated for a number of years and still remains a concern of course designers in training institutions. Dewey (1904), for example, commented that it is difficult, if not impossible, to define the relationship of theory and practice without a preliminary discussion of the nature and aims of the two terms. Moreover, critics have questioned the degree to which pedagogic practice delivered on programmes such as PGCE courses adequately prepares the beginning teacher for their first experiences in the classroom. In this context, Lundvall et al. (2008) note the need for close integration of theoretical knowledge and practice, whilst Grossman (2008) argues the case for closer connections between research on teaching and research on teacher education.

My own experiences working with beginning teachers echo some of these sentiments. Many beginning teachers on the programmes I have managed have indicated that some pedagogic aspects taught as part of university-based professional practice sessions did not adequately prepare them for their first teaching experiences. In such cases, the beginning teachers who expressed these views, invariably, had to very quickly put into place personal coping strategies relating to the particular school and teaching situation they found themselves in. Moreover, they preferred to seek

mentors' and other colleague's advice on how to deal with the specific classroom issues rather than resorting to theoretical factors which may have informed their practice. A common concern, in this respect, was how they would cope with pupil misbehaviour. Self doubt about whether they will be emotionally strong enough to cope with the rigours of classroom management are common in the early stages of teaching (Fuller and Brown 1975), and these concerns can impact on beginning teachers' classroom confidence.

Many research studies reflect this view. Gore and Gitlin (2004), for instance, have indicated that in many cases teachers do not value academic knowledge and research, and prefer to rely on their own experiences and those of colleagues to guide practice. Furthermore, in many cases, traditional modes of teacher preparation have failed to produce the level of quality demanded by the new educational environment (Neville et al. 2005).

However, for commentators such as Banks et al. (1999) the objective of a teacher education programme is to equip beginning teachers with competences to cope with complexity and challenges of the everyday teaching world; a notion, according to Barksdale-Ladd and Rose (1997) can be achieved by university-based partnerships which can provide a learning environment in which collaboration between university ITT providers and teachers in schools can foster more coherent shared knowledge.

A number of factors which may be seen to contribute to the potential theory to practice gap can be identified. One is a lack of agreement as to what pedagogic knowledge is most important to include within the teacher training curriculum, and

how this knowledge can be successfully delivered in the school setting. Sellars and Stevens (1983) have identified three concerns which relate to how effective theory might be integrated with practice. These being,

- (i) lack of communication between educational research and teacher decision making,
- (ii) the belief that teaching has a shallow knowledge base,
- (iii) the belief that teaching does not require a theoretical knowledge base at all.

#### **2.4.2 Practice Shock**

A main difficulty encountered by teachers can be explained by ‘practice shock’ or the discrepancy between their expectations of teaching and the day to day realities of the classroom (Flores and Day 2006). Achinstein (2006) further suggests that new teachers need to understand the power, influence, conflict and control inside new teacher’s organisations.

Flores (2001), Gratch (2001) and Wideen et al. (1998) all comment on how early experiences in schools are crucial in determining beginning teachers’ attitudes towards teaching, their classroom practice and how long they might remain in the job. In many cases (see for example the work of Kelchermans and Ballet 2002) the reality beginning teachers face differs from what they expect teaching to be about, and how it is in practice. The differences between such expectations and the realities of teaching

can account for practice shock (Stokking et al. 2003), leading to the beginning teacher implementing coping strategies rather than learning to teach more effectively.

One consequence of practice shock for teacher training institutions is that teachers may leave the profession a short time after completing training. Stokking et al. (2003) see the teaching profession as ‘simply too demanding’, and cite Day’s (1999) research indicating that many teachers may suffer from stress-related illness, and many devoted 55-70 hours a week to their work. Stokking et al. (2003) further, cite Veenman’s (1984) list of problems teachers face which include;

- handling classroom discipline,
- motivating pupils,
- dealing with differences between pupils,
- assessing results,
- coping with problems of pupils.

## **2.5 Key Concepts in Teacher Training Teaching and Learning**

### **2.5.1 Reflective Practice**

Reflecting on practice is central to developing teachers as caring, thinking and self determined professionals. The notion of reflective practice has its roots in the pragmatic, social ideas of commentators such as Mead and Dewey who were concerned about developing the reflective process between thought and one’s action. The literature offers a range of views on the nature of reflection and its role in

professional development, leading to some researchers to question the precise use of the concept (McMahon 1997; Rogers 2002).

The work of Schön (1983) is generally considered to be responsible for a rise in the use of reflective practice in fields such as education, nursing and social work. Schön's work can be related back to the work of Dewey (1904, 1933) who distinguishes reflection from the random thought processes people might have, and suggests a personal introspective process which is situated within the individual.

For Schön (1983), the process of engaging with problems was a key factor in enabling teachers and other professionals to make sense of their experience and develop professional practice beyond a simplistic technical-rationalist approach to teaching. Schön (1983) distinguishes between reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action in terms of the difference between 'thinking on one's feet' (reflecting-in-action) and a more considered approach which encourages practitioners to think about events and actions after they have occurred with the aim of enhancing future practice.

Others have made similar distinctions. Mezirow (1981), for example identifies 'implicit' and 'explicit reflective processes. Mezirow is particularly concerned with the notion of critical reflection which may be seen to encompass elements of the wider social, political and ethical issues which relates to the educational context. Morrison (1996) relates the reflective positions of reflection on experience and considerations of the wider socio-political to the work of Dewey (1933) and Habermas (1971) respectively, and considers them to be complimentary. This critical view of reflection as a politically oriented tool is supported by Kemmis (1985) who

suggests it invariably takes place in contexts which serve the different self interests of the people within the system.

A number of commentators have attempted to identify stages in the reflective process (see for example Boud et al. 1985; Kolb 1984; Brocklebank and McGill 1998). Most theorists consider reviewing and describing events as the starting point for the reflective process which leads onto analysis, evaluation and implications for future practice. For Zeichner and Liston (1996), teachers should be capable of continually developing their practical theories, their images and their conceptions of teaching as long as they continue to teach.

### **2.5.2 Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning involves learning from one's own experience, and may go some way in explaining why beginning teachers approach learning experiences in different ways. Kolb (1984), who was influenced by the ideas of Dewey (1938) and Lewin (1951), described experiential learning as the 'process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb 1984: p38). Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. This suggests that during a particular learning context beginning teachers may continually choose which knowledge to use in that setting. As illustrated in figure 2.4, for Kolb, effective learning is deemed to be achieved when a person progresses through the four stages of the cycle. This being, having concrete experience followed by reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (used to test out ideas learnt). In this way, learning can be regarded as an integrated process with each stage feeding

into the next part of the process. It is also suggested that it is possible to enter the cycle at any stage and follow it through the sequence.

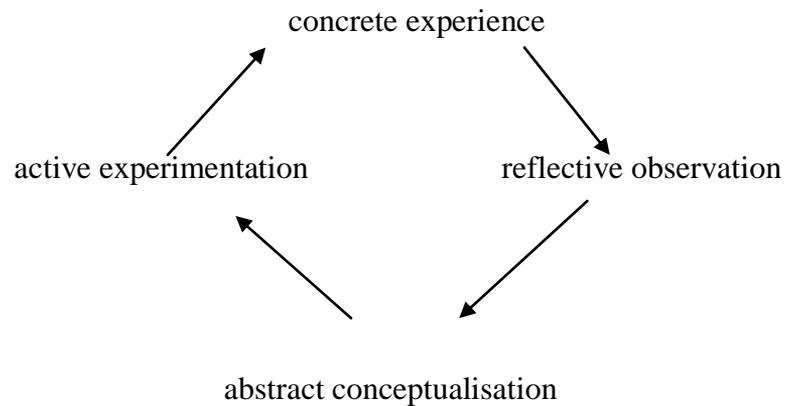


Figure 2.4 Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

The experiential form of learning can be seen to take a more 'holistic' view of learning when compared to pure cognitive or behavioural approaches, and places emphasis on how factors such as one's own cognition of a subject area, environmental factors and emotional issues influence the learning process. Kolb's model has two distinct modes of gaining experience: concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation. La Banca (2008) has integrated experience, critical reflection, active experimentation and abstract conceptualisation into a view of how beginning teachers might learn in the work place. In this approach it is suggested that the beginning teacher might begin to make sense of their teaching through concrete experience which gives a focus for further observation and reflection. After such considerations, the beginning teacher may then begin to create a more abstract, conceptual understanding of what has occurred. This can serve as a guide for further

action. As illustrated in figure 2.5, learning begins with concrete experience which then leads the person to reflect on experience e.g. classroom experiences. After this period of reflection it is assumed that learners begin to develop abstract conceptions of what has happened. This thinking serves to guide further practice by the person engaging in active experimentation with their learnt experiences. Thus, real life experiences help the individual begin to learn more advanced concepts.

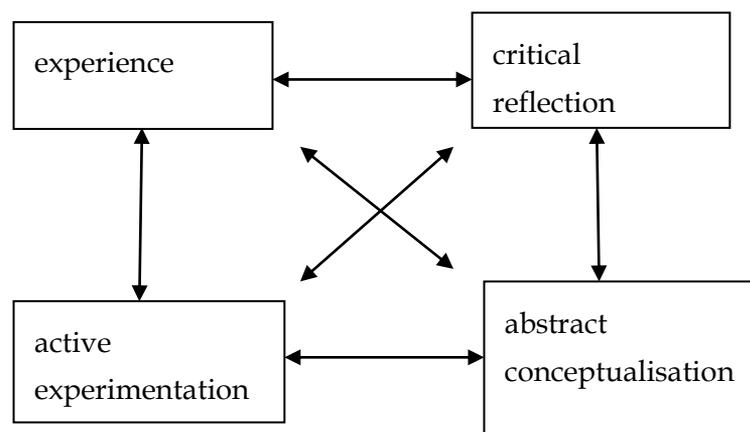


Figure 2.5 La banca's (2008) conceptualisation of how beginning teachers might learn in the work place.

### 2.5.3 Personal and Professional Development

Professional development is now central to teachers' development both during training and throughout their career. As Vonk (1989) describes, professional development deals with changes teachers experience with respect to functioning in practice (jobs skills, knowledge and behaviours), their attitudes, expectations, job satisfaction, concerns and career perspectives. The new set of QTS standards ([www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)), implemented in September 2012, outline the link between the range of standards for teacher training and the standards expectations for teachers'

continual development in the profession. As the document implies (www.education.gov.uk), by defining clearly the framework within which all teachers operate, the standards should provide the parameters within which teachers can identify and address their professional development needs, as appropriate to the role and setting in which they are working.

The 'high' professional expectation of teachers is set out in the new standards which particularly emphasise the proper and professional regard for the ethics, policies and practices of the school in which they teach (www.education.gov.uk). Furthermore, the standards make reference to the need for teachers to have an understanding of, and always work within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The emphasis on professional development in the English schools' system has led to each school in England taking responsibility for continuing development based on the requirements of each institution. Such sessions are commonly related to teaching and learning, teaching pupils with special educational needs, behavioural management and supporting pupils' literacy and numeracy (European Commission 2010).

In 2009, a new scheme for government support of teachers' postgraduate professional development at master's level and above was introduced, with the intention of reducing the barriers to teachers' participation in postgraduate level development (TDA 2009). Some of the ideas for this initiative were based on Stenhouse's (1975) notion of teachers as researchers. Stenhouse advocated the teacher as researcher who, instead of implementing theories of educationalists and outside researchers, should

put into practice pedagogic ideas based on their own action-based work. However, even though the masters scheme recognised the importance of personal and professional development in developing teachers' insights and competences suitable for 'lifelong' practice the initiative has now been halted because of lack of government finance.

## **2.6 Training within Competence Based Systems and Relationship to Reflective/Reflexive Practice**

Although significant research has been carried out in relation to the concerns, perceptions, and ways in which beginning teachers make sense of training, there has been a relatively small amount of work specifically associated with training in competence-based systems. The range of competences (see appendix 1 and appendix 2) beginning teachers in England must address during training and the specific nature of each competence standard has, in many ways, moved training away from developing beginning teachers' broader understanding of practice to placing emphasis on a narrower QTS standard's base. In this respect, much training activity in schools is directed towards helping beginning teachers meet the standards necessary for qualified teacher status. As outlined there are many aspects of beginning teacher development e.g. coping with practice shock, stages of beginning teacher transition and values in teaching which should play a greater part in 'holistic' teacher development.

The symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework and the focus on relating the QTS standards to wider cultural issues goes some way in integrating the complex nature of the teacher role. It acknowledges that training has to be seen within a competence-based system, but also acknowledges that training is carried out within a

dynamic process involving beginning teachers making sense of their practice. Encouraging beginning teachers to reflect on the wider issues of practice e.g. how to cope with practice, the characteristics of the school they work in and the nature of the ‘tacit knowledge’ they learn during practice will hopefully provide a conduit for wider self reflection on school-based work.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has reviewed issues which impact on beginning teachers’ school-based and other aspects of their practice. The work has outlined models of beginning teacher development and discussed ways in which some trainees experience and cope with practice shock, the norms and values of schools they work in, and how they reconcile potential theory to practice gaps in their learning. A key feature of the discussion is the nature of school culture and the characteristics of the hidden curriculum in schools; both of which are central to the activity theory systems in which beginning teachers operate. The chapter, further, emphasises how there is often tension between beginning teachers training in competence-based systems and the need to develop them as reflective/reflexive teacher practitioners.

## **Chapter 3 Background to the Grounded Theory Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe fundamental aspects of constructivist grounded theory and outline why I considered it to be a suitable methodology for exploring beginning teacher transition in the chosen context. The work in this chapter provides the background for chapter 4 where I provide details of the constructivist grounded theory process for my own study. In the early stages of research I sought a methodology which would allow me to gather and analyse data inductively and without the limitations of a specific sample size. By adopting a constructivist grounded theory methodology I felt I was able to address this issue.

Constructivist grounded theory can be seen to differ from the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) version by its emphasis on acknowledging participants' and researcher's positions, perspectives, priorities and interactions in the construction of grounded generated knowledge (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). It can be considered a 'sub-set' of the grounded theory 'family'; all of which take into account theoretical sensitivity of data, theoretical sampling methods, treatment of literature and other secondary data sources, constant comparison of data, data coding and the use of memoing to help facilitate theoretical and non-theoretical insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Charmaz (2006, 2009), further, suggests that outcomes of constructivist grounded theory leads to a multiple reality perspective of the phenomenon being studied, where generalisations are partial and conditional on the circumstances at the time research was carried out.

A characteristic of the grounded theory process, and one that has influenced this study, is it provides a well understood and consistent data generation and analysis format with which to enter and explore the research field. Weiner (2007) describes some key features of the grounded theory process in terms of

- (i) data gathering, analysis and theory construction proceed concurrently,
- (ii) coding starts with the first interview and/or field notes,
- (iii) memo writing begins with first interview and/or field notes,
- (iv) theoretical sampling is the disciplined search for patterns and variations,
- (v) theoretical sorting of memos sets up the outline for generating theoretical insights into the field.

In relation to the constructivist version of the grounded approach Dey (1999), further, emphasises

- (i) the use of theoretical sensitivity to help direct and inform the data collection starting point,
- (ii) the use of literature and one's own experiences to make sense of and orient the direction of the work,
- (iii) generating insights into experience through the grounded theory analytical framework,
- (iv) making appropriate decisions to stop sampling when thought necessary.

The cyclical characteristics of grounded theory, where data is constantly compared with previously gathered data, can be seen to be one of its strengths, because it forces the researcher to permanently reflect on the whole research process and on the particular steps in the light of other steps (Flick 2009). This close link between collecting and interpreting data, which Charmaz (2006) regards as abductive

reasoning, allows the researcher to constantly question the relevance of the data. The structure of the inductive process is illustrated in figure 3.1 shown below.

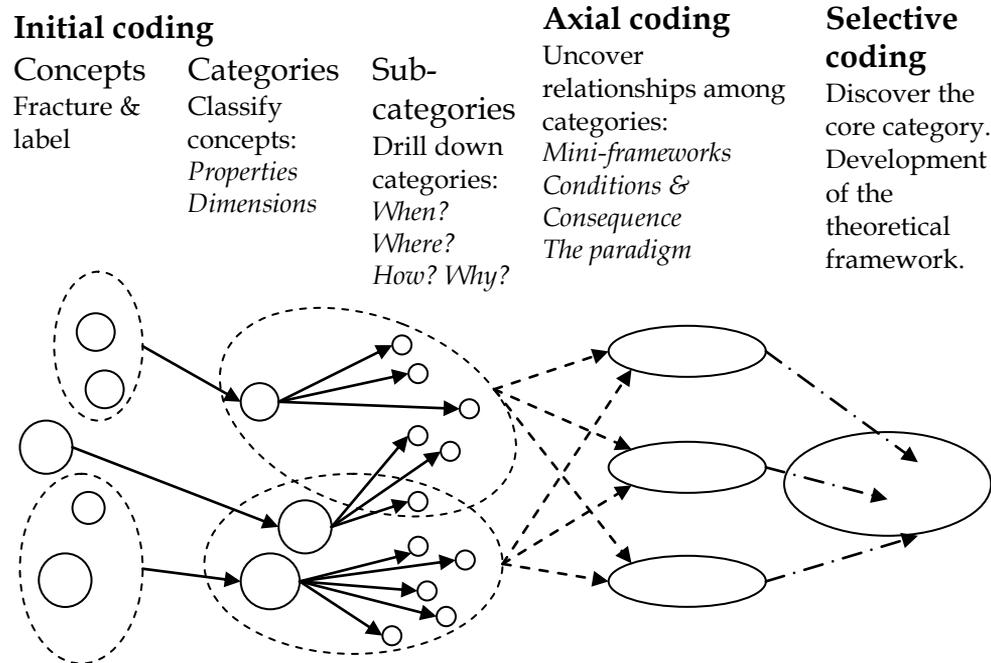


Figure 3.1 The grounded theory analytic process (adapted from Harwood, 2002 p.76)

Although the merits of grounded theory have been outlined by a number of commentators there have been criticisms. These include the possibility of large document overload and that the process may be difficult to manage in the time allocated. Charmaz (2006) points out that many researchers construct their own conceptual analysis instead of theory which is grounded in the work they are doing. Campbell et al. (2004) argue that many researchers claim to use grounded theory in their analysis, although in practice not all investigate the procedures in full. As Charmaz points out, there can be no neutral observations, and one cannot realistically set aside one's own knowledge and partial insights into data at the start of one's own research. Whatever the researcher does is possibly already embedded in some of their own knowledge structures. In terms of coding, Atkinson and Coffey (1997) make the

argument that one of the drawbacks of extensive coding is that it can break up the narrative which may flow from researched outcomes.

### **3.2 Constructing Knowledge**

Constructivist grounded theory can be distinguished from other qualitative methodologies by (i) the nature of the relationship between research respondents and the researcher and (ii) an explication of what can be known (Mills et al. 2006). For Charmaz (2008), theoretical insights developed by the approach are interpretive renderings of reality and not an objective reporting of it; and the meanings respondents have about situations are constructed through the researchers' interpretive understandings that assumes a relativist and reflexive stance towards the data (Charmaz 2009). Such an approach lies in symbolic interactionism which acknowledges that respondents' meaning of social situations are socially constructed, negotiated and change over time (Goulding 2005). Both Mills et al. (2006), and Strauss and Corbin (1994) emphasise the importance of the interplay between researched respondents and researcher and the way in which multiple realities may exist in practice, and may be modified in the light of new experiences.

To help make sense of data emerging from this study I have considered such knowledge to be constructed in terms of Guba and Lincoln's (1994) notion that

- reality is constructed by individuals or groups in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature,
- the researcher and research participants interact so findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds,

- the methodological objective is to distil a consensus construction that is more informed than any preceding constructions of the phenomenon in question.

As such, the constructivist grounded theory methodology employs a systematic set of procedures where outcomes are grounded in participants' real world practice and represents the complex nature of participants' experiences.

### **3.2.1 Inductive/Abductive Methodology**

A basic feature of grounded theory methodology is its use of concurrent data gathering and analysis to systematically generate insights into the research field. This is frequently achieved by generating and interpreting an initial set of data using research methods such as interviewing or participant observation and using outcomes from this data to inform the next stage of research (Charmaz 2006, 2009; Corbin and Strauss 2008). Successive research stages can be conducted in a similar concurrent data collection/analysis way, where the direction of each stage can be amended in the light of previously analysed outcomes. It is this inductive/abductive process which differentiates grounded theory from other methods which may encourage researchers to use self-contained data sets to test the relevance of an existing conceptual theory or hypothesis through deductive reasoning.

'Classical' grounded theory i.e that described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), involves inductively generating theory from data grounded in the research field. Inductive reasoning typically begins with observations specific to researching the phenomenon in question, and then proceeds to a generalised conclusion in the light of accumulated evidence. For Glaser and Strauss (1967) this inductive approach makes the process

faithful to the everyday realities of the substantive research field, and helps ensure insights have been carefully induced from data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe outcomes as a set of relationships that offer a plausible explanation of the phenomenon under study, and theory is grounded in data which are systematically gathered and analysed.

However, Charmaz (2006) recognises the influence previous theory and ideas may have on the generation of insights into the researched situation. For Charmaz (2006, 2009), the constructivist version of grounded theory is better described by abductive reasoning which typically begins with an incomplete set of observations and proceeds towards the likeliest explanation for a data set. Charmaz (2006), places emphasis on the way theory is developed during the research process itself, which she sees as the product of the interplay between data collection and analysis. For Morse (1994), such theoretical insights provide the best comprehensive, coherent and simplest model for linking diverse and unrelated facts in a useful and pragmatic way. Grounded theory is a process of constructing alternate explanations until a 'best fit' explaining data is obtained (Morse 1994).

Abductive reasoning is important in constructivist grounded theory research. Data is collected simultaneously with theory building implying a cyclical understanding loop between theorising and making sense of empirical elements of the work.

### **3.3 Theoretical Sampling**

Theoretical sampling relies on building interpretive theories from emerging data as the grounded theory process proceeds then, based on the analysis of previous phase

findings, selecting a new sample to examine and elaborate on if deemed necessary. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe the process as data gathering driven by concepts derived from evolving theory, and based on concepts of making comparisons, whose purpose is to go to places, people or events which maximise opportunities to discover variations amongst categories in terms of properties and dimensions. Charmaz (2006) notes that theoretical sampling is best used when some key concepts have been discovered, and initial data collection can commence with fairly random groups of people who have some experience of the phenomenon under examination.

In the context of this study, theoretical sampling was deemed suitable for exploring fresh data sources, and sampling was driven by the emergence of new insights into beginning teacher experience. The sample was built up in such a way as to increase the diversity of research understanding. As Charmaz (2006) comments, theoretical sampling helps fill out categories, discover variation within them and to define gaps between them.

Charmaz (2006), further, suggests that to begin the sampling process, sample groups, individuals, organisations or communities must be representative of the phenomenon under study. After the first analysis, the research process should aim to acquire more specific and complex meanings to the general questions or concepts which provided a focus when the field is initially entered.

### **3.4 Synchronous Data Collection and Analysis**

As discussed, grounded theory studies generally begin with opening up the subject field through an initial theoretical sample, and from this starting point the study

becomes continually directed to areas of focussed concern. Data handling consists of two main processes. Firstly, data is analysed through coding procedures to reveal 'first stage' insights into the phenomenon in question. The outcomes from this initial analysis can then be used to inform the next round of data collection. As new data sets emerge they can be compared with previous data collected in each of the theoretically sampled stages. This process allows insights into the field under scrutiny to be confirmed, enhanced or discounted as the result of new data emerging from the study.

### **3.5 Memo Writing and Coding**

Memo writing is a pivotal intermediate step between data collection and analysis and writing drafts for papers (Charmaz 2006), and prompts the researcher to analyse data and codes early in the research process. It is a fundamental part of researcher/data engagement that results in a grounded theory (Lempert 2007).

By writing memos continuously throughout the research process, the researcher explores, explicates and theorizes emerging patterns (Lempert 2007). Thus memo-writing, in the grounded theory context, is a significant tool to help analyse and refine research insights as studies unfold. In the case of this study, memoing became a key instrument in allowing fresh insights into the phenomenon being explored.

Coding is central to the process, and constantly comparing successively generated data helps formulate conceptual insights into the areas of study. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) note, synchronous data collection and analysis allows the researcher to jointly collect, code and analyse data and decide what data to collect next and where to find them. This helps develop theory as it emerges. Thus, the grounded theory process can

be seen as being dynamic in which codes and concepts can be added, amalgamated and refined as research progresses. During the process, coding activities generally go through the stages of (i) open coding: which refers to the process of generating initial concepts from data; (ii) axial coding: which is used to compare and contrast concepts emerging from successive data sets; and (iii) selective coding used to turn conceptual relationships into theoretical frameworks describing the data.

Open coding is the first step in data analysis, and is usually used to identify significant words, groups of words and/or phrase which are coded accordingly. Axial coding is the second major phase of data analysis following initial open coding. As Birk and Mills (2011) suggest, intermediate coding can be deployed in two ways: firstly, to develop fully individual categories by connecting sub-categories, and fully developing the range of properties and dimensions that describe the data field; and secondly linking categories together.

During the selective coding phase the categories and their relationships are combined to form a storyline to describe the phenomenon being studied. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define selective coding as the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.

### **3.6 Theoretical Sensitivity and Research Reflexivity**

In the grounded theory context, theoretical sensitivity relates to the personal qualities of the researcher, and their ability to give meaning to data and select relevant data from the field. Being theoretically sensitive to a data set allows the researcher to

develop a theory that is grounded and well integrated with the phenomenon in question. The main sources of sensitivity are examination of literature sources and one's own professional experience. Thus, being theoretically sensitive to data helps continually increase one's understanding of the research field through relating personal expertise to the meanings of concepts, relationships and respondents' insights. The notion of theoretical sensitivity has been defined by Glaser (1978) as the process of developing insights with which a researcher comes to the research situation. Through using such sensitivity the researcher should be able to recognise important data and formulate conceptually dense theory.

McGhee et al. (2007) view researcher reflexivity as the explicit quest to limit the researcher effects on data by the researcher's awareness of the self and how it impacts on study outcomes. Furthermore, they see this as integral to both the process of data collection and the constant comparison method.

Glaser (2012), who since grounded theory's inception has defended classical grounded theory in terms of discovery of knowledge, has argued that epistemological bias is a function of the way data is gathered in the field. For example, if data is gathered through an interview guide that forces and leads interviewees' responses then it is constructed to a degree by the interviewer's imposed interactive bias. However, with passive, non-structured interviewing or listening, constructivism bias is held to a minimum.

### **3.6.1 The Use of Literature and Theoretical Considerations in Relation to Data**

The role literature plays in informing grounded theory research has been a cause of debate since the introduction of the approach in the qualitative research field. As Glaser (1978) has acknowledged, reading literature can be problematic in ‘classic’ grounded theory because it can restrict the freedom required for theoretical discovery. According to Glaser (1978), a presupposition of an inductive approach to data generation is that the researcher has few preconceived ideas about the research phenomenon as possible, otherwise there is risk that interpretation of data may be biased if imbued with too many concepts from the literature. Thus, in ‘classical’ grounded theory the researcher is invited to set aside knowledge and experience in an attempt to reduce the influence of preconceptions on data outcomes.

However, as Charmaz (2007) has argued, the activity of suspending one’s own understanding of the research field can be problematic and, in many cases, undesirable because aspects of the field will be known and can be sensibly used to inform the study. Hallberg (2010) supports this viewpoint and documents that there is a fine line between avoiding the use literature before a study begins and being suitably informed so the study is focussed and there is adequate background information to support the work. Onions (2006), in a novel approach to making use of literature in grounded theory, suggests literature should be thought as an invaluable source of primary data rather than treating it simply as a secondary data source.

Thus, in the constructivist grounded theory context, I have made use of literature to frame and orientate initial and subsequent stages of the study (Charmaz 2006). As Onions (2006) describes this has aided;

- gathering background information about the subject so that I was more aware of possibly underlying assumptions, principles and/or theory,
- becoming more aware of the scope of previous research and detailed awareness of terminology,
- making a preliminary assessment of which research questions and hypotheses may be redundant.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness of Data**

In qualitative analysis, the concept of trustworthiness of research can be regarded as conceptual soundness from which the value of research can be judged (Marshall and Rossman 1995); a concept likened to the terms reliability and validity used in quantitative research. According to Guba (1981), trustworthiness is achieved by satisfactory attainment of four constructs that relate to research. These being

- (i) research credibility,
- (ii) dependability,
- (iii) confirmability,
- (iv) transferability.

The credibility criterion relates to the notion that results should be believable from research participants' perspectives. Since, in constructivism terms, the purpose of grounded theory research is to understand the phenomenon in question from the

participants' point of view, the participants should be the ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of outcomes.

The concept of dependability relates to the researcher's role in describing the change context in which research has taken place. In such circumstances, the researcher is responsible for describing fully the background to a particular study, and how changes that have occurred in a research setting may have affected the direction and outcomes of the study.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which results can be confirmed by other workers; whilst the term transferability denotes the degree to which results can be generalised or transferred to other contextual settings. Transferability can be enhanced by describing the research context in detail, so others wishing to transfer the results to other circumstances can make an informed judgement on how sensible the transfer might be.

Guba (1981) further suggest that all constructs must be achieved for the research to be considered trustworthy.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a general background to the constructivist grounded theory process. The work has focussed on key elements of the process, and has emphasised how the process aids systematic generation of theoretical insights into phenomenon being explored through theoretical sampling, memoing and coding and constant comparison of successive data sets. The chapter also outlined the underlying notions

of inductive/abductive reasoning, theoretical sensitivity and trustworthiness of data outcomes. The work sets the scene for chapter 4 which gives details of the constructivist methodology used specifically in this study.

## **Chapter 4 Methodological Details**

### **4.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

In this chapter I provide specific details of the grounded theory process used for the study and how these relate to the contextual setting in which research was carried out. In particular, I outline how some grounded theory principles discussed in chapter 3 were implemented, discuss research design considerations and detail data gathering and analysis methods used to generate insights into practice. In addition, I describe the field work setting and give brief details of respondents who participated in each grounded theory phase. I also discuss ethical and validity issues in relation to the study as a whole.

Research was carried out over a two year period. During this time beginning teachers' perceptions of practice were explored through four grounded theory phases using a combination of (i) field work observations of participants in their school setting (ii) post-observation discussions of classroom practice (iii) semi-structured interviews (iv) participants' reflective journal notes (v) participants' school-based report data.

At the beginning of the study, one of my concerns was the extent to which my own understanding of training practice acquired from working as programme leader should influence the direction of the work. As Charmaz (2006) suggests, the researcher should be relatively open minded about the direction research might take, and be prepared to allow research outcomes to emerge 'freely' from data sources; a notion which related to my desire to explore beginning teacher practice from a 'blank canvas' point of view.

However, the initial sensitising (to the research) activities I had carried out, i.e. examination of the literature to define the characteristics and scope of the research field, and my own reflective analysis of the substantive field in question, led to two broad issues I wished to explore in the first phase of the programme. These being, how closely the proposed symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework matched the realities of beginning teacher practice in the QTS context, and how this framework might provide a reflective tool to help beginning teachers make sense of the cultural, power and systems factors which affect practice. These initial ideas provided a starting point for further examination of practice including,

- the degree to which symbolic interactionism can illuminate aspects of beginning teacher behaviour,
- how beginning teacher behaviour can be modelled in activity theory terms with respect to the cultural, systems and hierarchical relationships which shape practice,
- how ‘fresh’ perspectives on beginning teacher practice might be revealed through memoing, diagrammatic coding, and open and axial coding methods linked to the grounded theory process.

Empirical data to support the study were gathered and/or analysed in four phases. Analysed outcomes of each phase were used to inform the aims and direction of subsequent phases in line with inductive/abductive constructivist grounded theory principles. This strategy allowed me to capture insights into participants’ practice as they emerged from each grounded theory phase.

## **4.2 Data Analysis Considerations**

Data gathered during research were analysed in two main ways. Firstly, observational, interview and textual data gathered from phases 1 and 2 were used to provide empirical evidence to support how symbolic interactionism and activity theory relate to beginning teacher practice. For this part of the work, the observational, interview and textual data were examined both within and between data sets to establish themes, occurrences and practices which could illuminate practice in symbolic interactionism/activity theory terms. The outcomes from this work are discussed in chapter 5: understanding beginning teacher behaviour through symbolic interactionism and implications for reflective practice; and chapter 6: beginning teachers' reflective understanding of school practice using activity theory. In chapter 5, I have incorporated selected quotes from data sources to help construct narratives of beginning teacher practice. Chapter 6 is supported with vignettes of beginning teacher experience.

The second method of analysis concerned generating insights into practice through memoing, graphical, open and axial coding methods (examples of which are given in sections 7.2.1 and 7.4.2) - all of which are central to grounded theory. Data analysis, in this context, made extensive use of grounded theory memoing (examples given in sections 5.3.4 and 5.4.4) which was used as a tool to examine the links, inferences and insights emerging from data sets. This allowed ideas, concepts and observations to be organised and structured into a coherent framework to provide an analytical description of the practice field. Memoing allowed labels, codes and descriptive clauses to be attached to beginning teachers' actions and perceptions so that a

grounded theory description of practice could be constructed. Outcomes from this part of the data analysis process are discussed in chapter 7: theoretical insights into practice developed from the constructivist grounded theory process; and chapter 8: developing beginning teacher practice beyond the QTS minimum competence requirements

### **4.3 Ethical Considerations for the Study**

The ethical practices for the study have been guided by the British Educational Research Association ([www.BERA.ac.uk](http://www.BERA.ac.uk)) and Social Research Association's ([www.the-sra.org.uk/ethicals.htm](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethicals.htm)) ethical guidelines. Ethical clearance to carry out the research was given by the ethics committee at the university in which the study was carried out (see appendix 3). Anonymity was a key feature of the work and care was taken to ensure that no undue pressure was exerted on the beginning teachers who took part in the research. As Murray and Lawrence (2000) stress, the interests and welfare of pupils, students and research subjects should take precedence over the self-interest of the researcher. Lankshear and Knobel (2004), also, emphasise that educational research is concerned with ensuring that the interests and well-being of participants are not harmed as a result of the work.

During the study I made every effort to ensure that ethical considerations were an integral part of the methodology and not just an afterthought. Ethical issues were considered at every stage of research design and analysis which included methods used, data gathering procedures and how the work would be written up and communicated. This ethical stance involved respecting the rights of participants and attempting to report findings in a full and honest way.

All beginning teachers taking part in the study were informed of its purpose. Prior to the start of the work, permission to carry out the research was sought from those responsible for managing training in schools, and other relevant staff were informed of the purpose of the study. The programme was also discussed with department heads so that any apprehensions about the programme could be discussed before data collection started.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and the purpose of the work was explained to beginning teachers beforehand. This was to ensure that respondents knew the purpose of the work and how findings would be disseminated. It was also made clear that work would be confidential and institutions would remain anonymous.

Particular ethical care was taken during interviewing, and the following principles were followed,

- (i) respondents were personally contacted and the purpose of the interview explained to each trainee,
- (ii) there was a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality,
- (iii) there was the promise to stop the interview at any time if the trainee thought questions were inappropriate or too taxing,
- (iv) data would not be disseminated if respondents did not wish them to be.

An important ethical consideration was that research tasks should not disturb the learning entitlement of the beginning teachers. As such, research took place during scheduled school-based training periods. Tasks were designed to fit into the training

schedule and therefore complemented trainee learning and did not distract too much from their training programme.

#### **4.4 Validity Issues**

In terms of credibility and trustworthiness of data issues discussed in section 3.7 I have tried to present, as far as possible, an honest and truthful account of research carried out. In the case of this research I feel it useful to use the notion of trustworthiness and authenticity of research, rather than trying to validate data solely in positivist terms such as reliability and validity. This stance is supported by Corbin (in Corbin and Strauss 2008) who says she is not comfortable in using the terms ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ when evaluating qualitative research, but would rather use the term ‘credibility’. Corbin regards ‘credibility’ as indicating findings are trustworthy and believable and reflect participants’ and researchers’ real life experiences. Credibility, also, acknowledges that a particular explanation of a phenomenon is only one of many possible plausible interpretations of the data. With this respect, Holliday (2007) maintains that we can only really explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality from data.

#### **4.5 Background to the PGCE Study Group**

The study was carried out with respondents from two consecutive year cohorts (beginning September 2009 and beginning September 2010) of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) secondary school beginning teachers. Each cohort was following a forty two week course which included university-based work as well as three school placements. Each school-based training period was designed to develop skills, knowledge and understand in particular areas. These being,

- school-based placement period 1: orientation, beginning planning, teaching, learning, pupil differentiation and class management;
- school-based placement period 2: developing planning, teaching, learning, differentiation and beginning assessment;
- school-based placement period 3: developing assessment practice, consolidating teaching and learning, and differentiation.

The structure of each PGCE year programme is shown in table 4.1. As indicated, school based placement period 1 took place between weeks 5 and 13 of the programme; school placement 2 between weeks 15 and 25; and school placement three between weeks 29 and 41.

<b>Week Number</b>	<b>Outline of the PGCE university and school based year.</b>
Week 1, Week 2 and Week 3	First elements of the university course including teaching skills enhancement and teacher professional development sessions.
Week 4	One week primary school placement.
Week 5 to Week 13	<b>Three day school-based teaching</b> experience (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday). Two days of professional and skills based development (Thursday and Friday).
Week 14	University based professional development week used to review beginning teachers' QTS standards attainment to date.
Week 15 to Week 25.	<b>Week long school-based placement</b> experience (completed in first of two main placement schools).

Week 26, Week 27 and Week 28.	University based professional and pedagogic developmental sessions.
Week 29 to Week 41.	<b>Second full week school-based placement</b> experience in the second of the two main practice schools.
Week 42	Pre-professional week including the beginning teachers final QTS standards review.

Table 4.1 Outline of the PGCE year indicating school-based placement periods.

Data were collected and/or analysed during four grounded theory generating phases some of which coincided with school-based placement periods. This allowed data to be gathered and examined during teaching practice and associated activities in the school situation. The relationship between the grounded theory phases and collection and analysis of data sets is given below.

Phase 1 of the grounded theory – observational, interview and reflective journal process. data collected from respondents from the 2010 (starting Sept. 2010) cohort of beginning teachers during (i) 2<sup>nd</sup> placement period (weeks 15-25) and (ii) 3<sup>rd</sup> placement period (weeks 29-41).

Phase 2 of the grounded theory – observational, interview and reflective journal process. data collected from respondents from the 2011 (starting Sept. 2011) cohort of beginning teachers during their 2<sup>nd</sup> placement period (weeks 15-25).

Phase 3 of the grounded theory – data from phase 1 work was used to provide process. material to produce sets of open coded statements which were used to provide more theoretical insights into practice experiences.

Phase 4 of the grounded theory – data from phases 1, 2 and 3 used to generate axial process. coded statements which give further theoretical insights into beginning teacher practice.

#### **4.6 Backgrounds of Beginning Teachers who Participated in the Study**

An open invitation to participate in the research was made to beginning teachers in the researched cohort. At the start of each year the study took place i.e. September 2009 and September 2010, I contacted a number of the PGCE beginning teachers inviting them to participate in the study. Details of the study were sent to the beginning teachers via email. The email outlined the nature of the research and what would be expected if they took part. Beginning teachers who expressed an interest in taking part in the study were then asked to provide a short ‘pen portrait’ of themselves in terms of their personal, previous work and academic backgrounds. My reason for having an open invitation was to enable beginning teachers to have an equal opportunity to participate in the study, and also help to gather diverse data.

<b>name</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>gender</b>	<b>brief contextual cameo of respondent</b>	<b>teaching subject</b>
Clare	24	female	Joined the PGCE cohort having gained a BA (Hons) in English. Prior to the start of the course, Clare had worked for two years as a learning support teacher in a secondary school. This role had given her an insight into some aspects of the teaching role. Her learning support role mainly entailed supporting special needs pupils in basic literacy and numeracy.	English
Anne	26	female	Anne joined the course having gained a degree in graphic design. Prior to the course Anne had worked as a self employed graphic designer. This included interior design work as well as children's fashion.	Design and technology
John	34	male	John joined the programme having gained a BSc in Product Design and Development. Prior to starting the course, John had worked as a civilian instructor with the air training corps. He also had recruitment and training experience with a company which designed and made outdoor furniture.	Design and technology.
David	41	male	David joined the course having completed a degree in business studies. David has had extensive industrial experience in the automotive industry where he eventually became project manager in a car component plant in Italy. He also had engineering experience in the food and aerospace industry	Business Studies
Jack	34	male	Jack joined the course with a BA (Hons) in Social Studies. Before the start of the course Jack was involved with the management and delivery of a young offenders' programme in North West England. The work involved working with teenager children in custody institutions. Jack had previously delivered courses on drugs, alcohol abuse and gang culture.	Geography

Julie	23	female	Had recently completed a degree BA (Hons) degree in English. Julie had worked for two years as a teaching assistant in a secondary school.	English
Dawn	27	female	Dawn has a degree in fashion and textiles design. She has worked for five years in retailing and has experience in the industrial training area.	Food technology
Paul	26	male	Paul has a degree in biological sciences. He has had some work experience during a one year gap year in Australia, and through working for twelve months in a supermarket.	Science

Table 4.2 Details of participants who took part in phase 1 data gathering and analysis activities.

Name – note actual name has been changed to preserve respondent's anonymity	Age	Brief biography of the respondent
Patricia	28	Single parent with young children; she entered teaching after working for a number of years in the retail industry. Her experience includes team leader and health and safety organiser. (science)
Dawne	24	Has four years experience working as a special needs helper in a secondary school. Has a nursery nurse qualification. (history)
Joan	19	Joined the course straight from school where she studied A level subjects. She has had a number of part-time jobs. (geography)
Peter	27	After leaving school served in the armed forces. Completed an apprenticeship and worked as a fully qualified tradesman whilst serving in the army. (design and technology)
Colin	42	Left school at sixteen. Worked in the engineering industry for a number of years as both a shop floor worker and middle manager.
Brian	20	Joined the course straight from school where he studied design and technology subjects. (design and technology)

Table 4.3 Details of participants who took part in phase 2 data gathering and analysis activities.

#### **4.7 Grounded Theory Phases – Preliminary Work**

As described in section 1.2, the early part of the research was concerned with examining literature to gain sensitising insights into beginning teacher transition e.g. coping strategies, tacit learning and hidden curriculum issues, as well as relating my own professional understanding of teacher training to the research field.

This initial work took about six months to complete. During this time I worked towards refining the symbolic interactionism/activity theory model which considered the QTS standards to be the main tool with which beginning teacher practice in England is mediated.

Also, at this time, exploratory work was carried out with beginning teachers to identify some of the concerns they had about their practice and how these related to their success on the course. These initial conversations were informal and revealed insights into how beginning teachers made use of the QTS standards to inform practice, their views on reflective practice in the learning situation and some of the difficulties they faced. These insights became the stimulus for the first phase of the grounded theory process.

As part of this preliminary work, I considered my examination of the literature and my reflective/reflexive understanding of the research field to be an integral part of the grounded theory process. In this respect, I mainly rejected Glaser and Strauss' (1967) view that one should suspend using ideas gleaned from the literature until the

grounded theory process has begun, but made use of Charmaz's (2006) suggestion that information from the literature and one's own professional experience can be useful in helping frame and direct the study. I also made use of Onion's (2006) idea that exploring the literature to gain insights into practice can be considered a fundamental feature of grounded theory as a whole. For Onions (2006), literature can be used inductively to gain fresh perspectives into the field of study, and is important in orienting research (see section 3.6.1).

#### **4.7.1 Grounded Theory Phases – Phase 1 Details**

Eight beginning teachers were selected for the first phase of the study to (i) be observed in their practice setting (ii) participate in a post lesson discussion of practice (iii) take part in an in-depth interview immediately after their school-based placement period and (iv) discuss entries in their reflective journals and school-based training data i.e. mentor feedback sheets on a beginning teacher's performance; details of which are outlined in section 4.12: training documentation.

During this part of the research I explored (i) the degree to which beginning teachers interpret aspects of practice through symbolic interactionism and (ii) began to examine data for codes and themes which could be used to provide more analytical explanation of practice in the substantive field.

For the symbolic interactionism related work, I analysed findings from observational field notes (see section 4.9), post observation discussions, transcribed interview notes

(section 4.10) and reflective journals (section 4.11) to help formulate insights into practice behaviour.

As discussed in section 4.13, memoing was used with open and thematic coding methods to help organise ideas, thoughts and insights as they emerged from the data analysis process. The outcomes from this aspect of the work allowed me to begin to ‘map out’ a first level topography of the practice field using the preliminary labels, themes and open coded statements used to define dimensions of beginning teachers’ practice.

#### **4.7.2 Grounded Theory Phases – Phase 2 Details**

In the second phase of the study I developed insights gained from the first phase of the study, and explored ways in which activity theory could model beginning teacher practice in the school situation. For this phase six beginning teachers were chosen for observation, interview and textual based research activities. During this work I focussed on how cultural and hierarchical structures in schools impacted on practice. I also sought insights into the strategies respondents used to cope with practice issues and the relationships they had with mentors, colleagues and pupils in school.

Again, I made use of memoing and coding of data (see sections 4.13, 4.14 and 4.15) to help constantly compare data both within and between the grounded theory phases i.e. constant comparison of data emerging from phase 1 with those beginning to emerge from phase 2. I used this form of analysis to search for emerging patterns in beginning teachers’ behaviours and perceptions which further developed a conceptual

understanding of practice. This understanding was developed in phases 3 and 4. Outcomes for phase 2 are discussed in vignette form in chapter 6.

#### **4.7.3 Grounded Theory Phases – Phase 3 and 4 Details**

In both the third and fourth phases of the research, I worked towards developing a more detailed analysis of practice based on insights emerging from the data. The work in both phases i.e. 3 and 4, allowed me to develop a more analytical understanding of beginning teacher experience and relate this insight to the symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework used to model the practice field. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) note, grounded theory is a useful methodology to examine the conceptual characteristics of substantive research settings. Such insights can help ‘uncover’ the norms, values, working patterns and other cultural dimensions of the group in question.

Data were explored by comparing coded outcomes gathered from grounded theory phases 1 and 2. Axial coding procedures, suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008), were used to compare outcomes from data. This allowed me to explore perceptions of the beginning teacher practice in more detail. Axial coding included mind-mapping software to help categorise links between themes and codes.

During phase 3 and 4 analysis, a number of concepts began to emerge from the memoing, coding and data comparison process. These include the notion of (i) the pre-teacher self (ii) the significance of teacher ‘voice’ in developing beginning teacher confidence (iii) feeling confident without being prompted by mentors and

other teachers (iv) feeling confident to go beyond the normal expectations of practice (v) letting go of mentor security (vi) having the confidence to follow issues through (vii) signs and symbols of approval (viii) enacting actions of confidence (ix) presentational image (x) reading cues from the learning environment and (xi) acknowledging the ‘fit’ between themselves and the teaching setting. These provide the basis for the analysis of practice in terms of three key ‘moments’ in beginning teacher training. These being,

- becoming aware of the outward ‘me’ one wants to project in teaching situations,
- developing pragmatic awareness of the contextual setting in which one works,
- working towards developing a strong sense of one’s teacher ‘voice’.

Details of the analytical insights emerging from the phase three and four analysis are discussed in chapter 7. The phases of the constructivist grounded theory methodology are outlined in figure 4.1.

Initial sensitising considerations and exploration of the research scope.

- Examination of literature
- Examining own awareness of aspects of practice

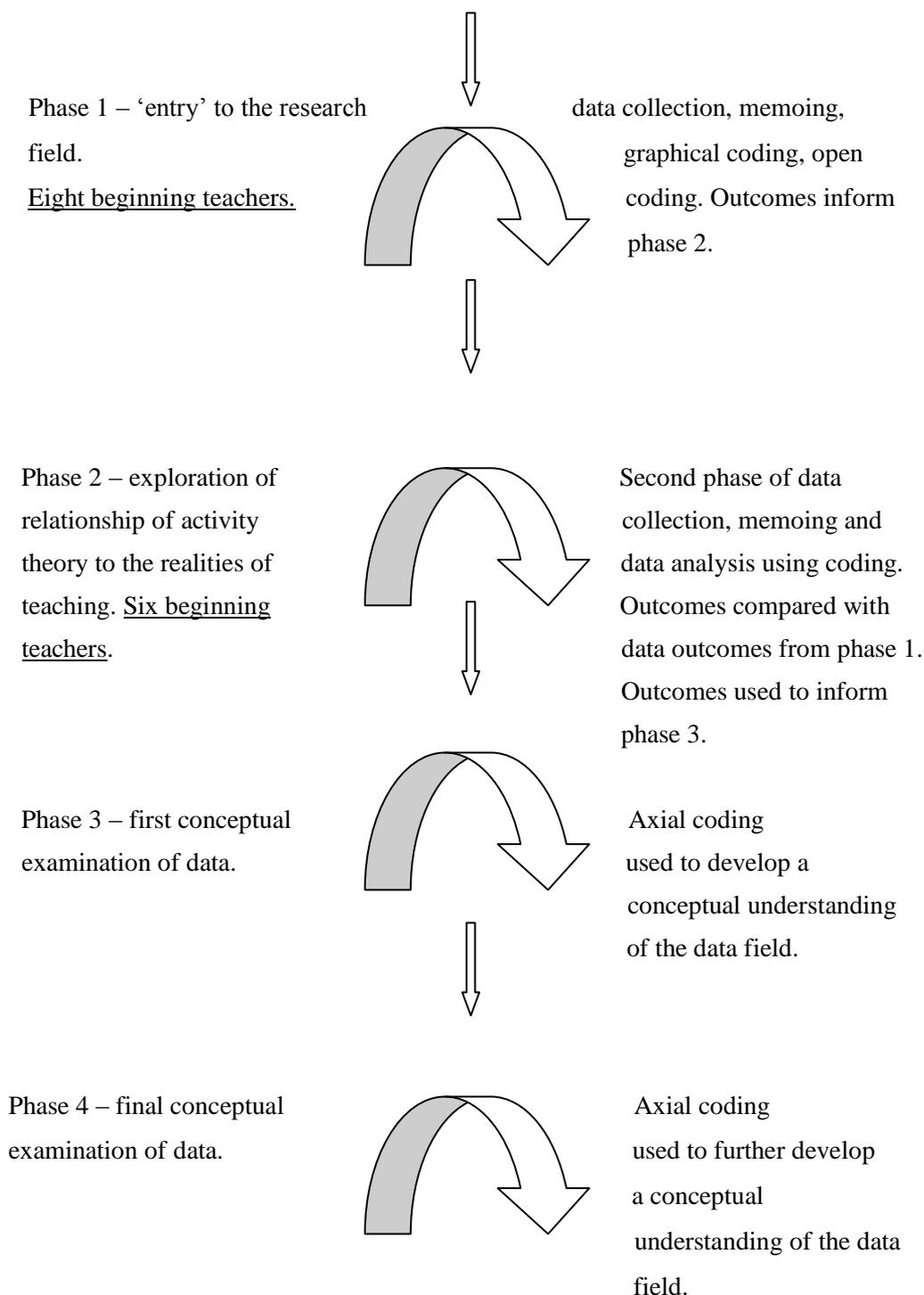


Figure 4.1 Outline of grounded theory phases and relationship to the data.

#### **4.8 Observational Fieldwork in the School Setting**

Observations of beginning teachers in their classroom settings and immediate follow up discussions of practice were carried out during the first grounded theory phase. Observational field work was designed to provide an 'in situ' understanding of symbolic interactionism and its relationship to beginning teacher practice. This allowed respondents to discuss incidents and issues relating to classroom practice when they were fresh in their minds.

Observational field work was carried out after respondents had completed at least eight weeks of their first school placement period which was twelve weeks in total. This gave time for participants to have had some experience of teaching, become familiar with the schools they were training in, and had some time to build up relationships with pupils and other teaching staff in the school. Field work comprised of two elements;

- (i) observing beginning teachers' behaviours in their classroom settings,
- (ii) post-observation discussions of practice so that a constructed understanding of beginning teachers' actions could be mutually explored.

Observing beginning teachers in their practice settings is regularly performed by university tutors and school mentors. Thus, respondents were used to being observed in the classroom and, generally, regarded the activity as part of their training entitlement. This helped me gain 'insider' access to the research field and also encouraged beginning teachers to behave as 'natural' as possible in the classroom setting.

Observations of teaching in the 'conventional' sense i.e. as part of the structured training programme generally focus on issues which relate to specific QTS standards. For example, beginning teacher's lesson planning abilities, their approaches to assessment and beginning teacher's lesson exposition.

However, the field work observations for this study were designed to have a different focus to the conventional QTS work. During this work I sought to explore symbolic interactionism in action, and ways in which beginning teachers might begin to understand how others i.e. other teachers, mentors, tutors and pupils, see them in their role. The degree to which beginning teachers are aware of their own 'persona' may be seen to have an impact on how they see themselves as confident, competent teachers. For example, those beginning teachers who have a more assured understanding of themselves in the role are more likely to adjust their behaviours in line with the expectations of the profession. In this respect, field work provided an initial grounded theory opportunity to examine related symbolic interactionism and role enactment behaviours in relation to teacher confidence.

The non-conventional (in QTS target terms) observational nature of the field work led me towards using an unstructured approach (Pretzlik 1994) to exploring beginning teachers' behaviours. As Mulhall (2003) suggests, unstructured observers usually enter the field with few preconceived notions as to the discrete behaviours they might observe. Observers may have some initial ideas as to what to observe, but these may change over time as data is gathered and experience is gained of a particular setting. This notion can be seen to be in line with constructivist grounded theory principles which acknowledge the importance of context in the construction of knowledge

between those researched and the researcher. Thus, unstructured observations were directed towards

- uncovering the meanings of beginning teacher interactions between themselves and pupils, teachers and other workers in the classroom setting,
- capturing the context and process influences of a particular situation,
- gaining ‘in situ’ cultural information about the physical and social environment in which beginning teachers operate.

During the observational process, attention was paid to recording critical incidents which may have revealed symbolic interactionism at work. Field work notes were made of activities which included notes on the structure and character of the school and the classroom setting, how the learning environment was organised and notes on critical activities which occurred during the session.

Field work notes on the selected critical actions became the stimulus for post-observation discussions. These discussions allowed me to explore ways in which beginning teachers interpret actions made during lessons, and how they formulated an understanding of how to deal with such actions. For example, taking into account mentors’ advice, interpreting the theoretical knowledge they had learnt, basing decisions on previous experiences, and reflecting on previous practice. The discussions also focussed on how beginning teachers ‘saw’ themselves as teachers, how confident they felt and their awareness of how others ‘saw’ them in particular teaching situations.

Data from the observational analysis were examined using memoing and open coding procedures to provide initial themes for the theoretical explanation of practice. The themes emerging from this phase of the study were further developed as the grounded theory process progressed in phases two, three and four.

#### **4.9 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with PGCE beginning teachers during each phase of the study. Interviews were designed to be reflective, and respondents were encouraged to reveal their true beliefs and feelings about their training experience. An interview strategy based on Bowden and Green's (2005) idea was used to direct the interview. This was;

- (i) using a limited number of 'grand tour' questions to direct research conversations,
- (ii) there were no further substantial inputs into the interview sequence except to refer to issues that respondents had introduced themselves,
- (iii) only evidence used in constructing the descriptive understanding of trainees' practice was contained in the interview transcribed materials.

The interviews were designed to gather data which could complement the materials gathered from the field work and text-based data gathering activities. Interview data allowed me to seek deeper insights into beginning teachers' practice and to elicit perceptions which may not have been obvious by the observational field work alone. By using semi-structured interviews, in addition to the other data gathering methods, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of beginning teacher's social world by

focussing on what respondents say and do (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995); and as Opie (2004) suggests, interviews are a profitable form of research for examining pedagogic practice because they belong to the individual and are the result of his or her own consciousness.

A further merit of the semi-structured approach was that it provided an opportunity to probe and expand respondents' responses. The semi-structured nature of the conversations allowed new material to be incorporated into the discussion which had not necessarily been thought out beforehand. It also gave greater scope for asking questions out of sequence and allowed information to flow freely and gave the opportunity to raise fresh questions.

Each interview lasted for about one hour and was tape recorded and transcribed. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment without the possibility of disturbance. The purpose of the exercise was explained to each respondent and care was taken to ensure that the respondents felt comfortable during the interview sessions and that they were not coerced into discussing issues they did not want to.

Written responses were read through a number of times and analysed to establish categories of experience. Care was taken to adhere strictly to the responses and not to influence the data by one's own pre-conceived ideas. Coding systems were used to seek out similarities and differences in participants' experiences. Coding consisted of identifying and labelling similar sentence responses within the transcribed work. This helped reveal common links between data which, in turn, informed the memoing and coding procedures used to construct the analytic understanding of practice as the grounded theory process unfolded.

#### 4.10 Reflective Journals

The reflective journals used in the study helped beginning teachers take ownership of their own training, and typically included a collection of notes, observations and thoughts on practice which beginning teachers built up over a period of time. Journal entries enable beginning teachers to make connections between school experience, theoretical pedagogy and wider experience. This, in turn, helps beginning teachers reflect on confusing or difficult experiences and formulate an understanding of their own practice.

The reflective insights contained in journals provided fresh insights into practice, and were a rich source of data relating to beginning teachers' personal feelings. Keeping a reflective journal can be seen to link to Kolb's notion of learning through direct participation of practice through experiential learning (Smith 2011). In many cases, the expressive mode of the journals allow beginning teachers to use them as a form of self therapy (Loughran 2002) in which they discuss their anxieties about the training experience. Thornbury (1991) has emphasised the value of journal writing in documenting beginning teachers' developing theories of teaching. Brock, Yu and Wong (1992) summarise the benefits of journal-writing activities in teacher education as;

- they provide a firsthand account of teaching and learning experiences,
- they enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns,
- they serve as a means of generating questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning processes ,

- they promote the development of reflective teaching.

Selected respondents' journal entries were discussed during interview and observation sessions, and because many of the journal entries may have contained private information, it was made clear that respondents need not reveal data if they did not want to. Journal notes were typically used to construct a researched/researcher understanding of how beginning teachers felt about a particular teaching situation.

#### **4.11 Training Documentation**

Two documents which relate to school experience were the final source of data. These were;

- (i) mentors' reports which are completed at various stages during school- based placements,
- (ii) a final triangulation report, completed at a meeting between the beginning teacher, school based mentor/s and university tutor at the end of training. This document summarises evidence beginning teachers provide to claim particular QTS standards.

Beginning teachers are graded at the end of training, and a final practice grade is formally agreed at a triangulation meeting between the beginning teacher, school mentor/s and university tutor. School experience reports provide both qualitative and quantitative data relating to a beginning teacher's performance at different times during the training process.

#### **4.12 Memoing**

Memoing was a core methodological stage in this study. Memoing allowed me to write up ideas, make theoretical connections between data sets (constant comparison), and became a useful tool for tracking ideas as they emerged from grounded theory phases. A key feature of the process was that it gave me the creative freedom to gain ‘fresh’ insights into practice by considering links between empirical data sets, my own professional insights into practice and understandings gained from the literature. Memos were typically written in ‘stream of conscious’ form which allowed ideas to flow freely without too much consideration given to grammar, sentence structure and related considerations. This helped new insights into practice to emerge freely from data, and helped construct a theoretical understanding of phenomenon embedded in the beginning teacher practice field.

#### **4.13 Diagrammatic coding**

Diagrammatic coding was used to help make sense of and look for links between elements of data. Diagrammatic maps were developed using mind mapping software to help map out interactions between aspects of practice such as participants’ personal attributes, relationships with schools mentors and confidence in teaching.

#### **4.14 Open and Axial Coding**

The textual based data sources were analysed using (i) open coding and (ii) axial coding. Open coding was used in the first two phases of the process; axial coding was used in phases three and four.

Open coding, where data is broken down into manageable, discrete parts to examine data for similarities and differences (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Saldaña 2009), was used to examine initial data sets for possible categories or themes which could reflect aspects of beginning teacher practice. Open coding allowed me to disentangle data into more manageable segments, and then classify them into units of meaning described by annotated codes. To help facilitate this I used a range of basic questions to inform the direction of the open coding process. These being;

What ideas were being mentioned and written by participants?

How aspects of practice were mentioned?

What reasons were given for explanations of practice?

Which people were influential in the training process?

What strategies were used by beginning teachers to make sense of their practice?

Open coding was followed by axial coding which allowed me to examine categories and properties in more detail as part of phase three and phase four works.

#### **4.15**

##### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed issues relating to the context of the research setting. Data gathering and analysis methods have been outlined, and reasons for using the grounded theory methodology described. Discussions were focused towards ways in which each grounded theory phase related to the data gathering process as a whole. Phase 1 was used to explore ways in which beginning teachers enact practice in terms of symbolic interactionism principles; phase 2 was concerned with examining how the

activity theory framework could model practice; phases 3 and 4 were used to analyse data to further develop emerging themes used to theoretically explain aspects of the beginning teacher transition process. Ethical and validity issues were briefly discussed in the grounded theory context.

## **Chapter 5 Understanding Beginning Teacher Behaviour Through Symbolic Interactionism and Implications for Reflective Practice**

### **5.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

In this chapter I make use of data from the first grounded theory phase to discuss how symbolic interactionism provides meaningful insights into ways beginning teachers make sense of, enact and interpret their teaching role. As I argue in chapter 1, symbolic interactionism provides a useful theoretical lens to observe elements of practice. There is also a close relationship between symbolic interactionism and some objectives of reflective practice, and enabling beginning teachers to make use of symbolic interactionism as a tool for self-reflection might be useful in their training development.

An initial idea I explored was the degree to which beginning teachers develop a sense of their own 'persona' as teachers i.e. how they think others see them in their teaching role, and how this relates to their transitional development from student to newly qualified teacher. Outcomes from this research suggest that those teachers who have a relatively secure perception of how pupils, parents, mentors and colleagues 'see' them in their role are more assured teachers than those who do not. Having a secure sense of one's own 'persona', I suggest, is important in determining how confident beginning teachers feel in their teaching environment and, as such, is a useful aspect of their reflective development.

However, having an awareness of how others 'see' them in their role is difficult for beginning teachers to achieve in practice. A sense of one's own 'persona'

can only realistically be formed from written and verbal feedback of others, and by the reflective image formed of the self in particular social situations e.g. Mead's (1967) generalised other. In the teaching practice setting, such feedback may come from written and verbal feedback from mentors, tutors, peers and other practice stakeholders; visual and behavioural cues from pupils; feedback from techniques such as videoing of teaching practice or micro-teach activities; and the 'feel' beginning teachers might have about the school climate they are working in (Deal and Peterson 1990; Steele and Jenks 1977).

In this context, enabling beginning teachers to make use of symbolic interactionism cues to help them form a firm sense of their own 'persona' would be a useful reflective tool to complement other feedback methods. As Argyris and Schön (1974), Kolb (1984) and Gibbs (1988) describe, the capacity to reflect on one's actions is central to the process of continuous professional learning; a process which often involves examining assumptions of everyday practice which tends to involve individual practitioners being self-aware and critically evaluating their own responses to practice situations. Making use of symbolic interactionism in this way could add to beginning teachers' 'professional artistry' (Schön, 1983). For Schön, professional practice is complex, unpredictable and messy and in order to cope in such situations, professionals have to be able to do more than meet basic competences such as those defined by the QTS standards. In such situations, beginning teachers often have to act intuitively, and make use of their reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action capabilities to cope with practice.

In line with some of the symbolic interactionism notions discussed, data gathering and analysis for the first research phase was directed towards seeking insights into ways beginning teachers

- (i) may be considered as pragmatic actors who continually adjust their behaviour in response to the feedback, actions and behaviours of influential ‘others’ in their training system,
- (ii) may reflect on and adjust their actions in response to the outward ‘me’ they wish to display,
- (iii) may use ‘role taking’ as a key mechanism in their teacher development.

The work in the chapter, also, discusses the first set of open coding themes which I considered to have emerged from data sources (observational field work notes, observational follow up discussions, transcripts of semi-structured interviews and analysis of beginning teachers’ personal journal reflections). The open coded outcomes and how these informed the next phase of grounded theory process are discussed in section 5.8. To help develop the argument for using symbolic interactionism - both as a modelling tool to help understand the nature of beginning teacher behaviour in the teaching environment, and as a reflective tool which beginning teachers can use understand aspects of practice - I make use of selected extracts from data sources to discuss insights into ways beginning teachers interpret their role.

The remaining part of the chapter is divided into four sub-sections, each of which discusses particular perspectives on symbolic interactionism in the beginning teacher context. Each perspective illuminates some of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes beginning teacher respondents had towards their training experience.

Sub-section 5.2 considers ways beginning teachers develop an awareness of how they think 'others' see them in their teaching situations. Such an insight can be linked to Mead (1967) and Dewey's (1938) views that actors pragmatically adjust their behaviour in relation to the social systems they find themselves in.

Sub-section 5.6 develops this theme further and considers how, in symbolic interactionism terms, beginning teachers interpret and may make sense of the visual, language and cultural cues which characterise the teaching situation they are in. Beginning teacher's abilities to make sense of and interpret their educational environment goes some way in helping beginning teachers make sense of the mediating factors which affect their role.

Finally, sub-section 5.7 discusses ways beginning teachers 'take on the role' of significant 'others' e.g. mentors, tutors and other teachers who are influential in their understanding of practice. For Mead (1967) and other symbolic interactionism commentators, role taking is seen to be a fundamental process through which people adapt to the norms, rules and expectations of particular situations.

Sub-section 5.8 discusses the grounded theory themes which have emerged from the first phase data gathering and analysis process.

Data used in the first phase analysis were gathered from three sources.

- Field work observations of respondents in school-based classroom settings.
- One-to-one discussions with respondents carried out immediately after each school-based teaching session. The aim being to construct a researcher-respondent perspective of how beginning teachers saw themselves during the observed teaching activity.
- Respondents' semi-structured interview transcripts. In the first phase of analysis these were examined using open coding procedures to explore how beginning teachers interpret mentors and other teachers' behaviours to help them construct an understanding of the expectations of their teacher role.
- An examination of selected journal entries to gain respondents' reflected insights into aspects of practice.

## **5.2 The Significance of Beginning Teachers' Awareness of Their 'Persona' in Successful Teacher Development**

Learning to teach is a complex activity where beginning teachers have to quickly acquire a range of new skills and competences, as well as coming to terms with unfamiliar school cultural situations. In the English teacher training system this complexity is 'formally' characterised by the QTS standard's framework which outlines what beginning teachers need to know and be able to do to achieve qualified teacher status (for recent and current standards see appendices 1 and 2).

As discussed throughout this thesis, the QTS standards, in general, focus on techno-rational competences which relate to classroom procedural skills such as effective lesson planning, assessment of pupils' work, establishing a purposeful learning environment and demonstrating good curriculum and subject knowledge. As such, the QTS standards do not explicitly consider many concerns beginning teachers have about practice and how these may impact on their role. For example, how they feel about particular teaching situations; how they feel when dealing with behavioural issues; how they make sense of the cultural factors that affect their role; and how they perceive themselves as teachers in the environment in which they work.

The competence nature of the standards can be seen in its most extreme techno-rational form in the latest set of standards which came into operation in September 2012 (see appendix 2). Each standard is written in SMART (specific, meaningful, attainable, relevant and timely) target form and is prefaced by process oriented terms such as establishing; set goals for; demonstrating consistency; be accountable for; and have secure knowledge of. This has the effect of reducing aspects of the teaching role to activities which, in the context of the standards, can be easily measured and assessed.

However, learning to teach activities are far more varied, complex and inconsistent than the QTS standards suggest. This broader view of the teachers' role impacts on how mentors, tutors and other stakeholders often judge beginning teacher performance in relation to wider factors than the QTS standards alone. For example, many mentors are concerned about the 'holistic' impression beginning teachers make as teachers, if they have classroom presence, the values beginning teachers hold,

whether they fit into the culture of the school, and if they are perceived to have ‘teacher held’ qualities.

In view of the broader, often ‘impressionist’, ways in which some mentors and other teacher training practitioners judge performance, it would be useful for beginning teachers to have some insight into how they are seen by ‘others’ in the teaching situation; a notion which, very much, relates to (i) the symbolic interactionism principle of being aware of the outward looking ‘me’ one wants to project in particular social situations and (ii) the work of Warin et al. (2006) who suggest that ‘stayers’ in teaching are those teachers who have had the opportunity for developing reflective practice through collegiate relationships and continual professional development which help categorise their professional identity.

Outcomes from this study support this notion, and suggest that beginning teachers who have some awareness of their teaching ‘persona’, and are able to make adjustments to their teacher behaviour in line with the expectations of the school they were working in, are more likely to be seen by mentors, peers and colleagues as being more attuned to teaching than those who are not.

I have selected field work, interview and journal extract evidence from three first phase respondents to discuss this viewpoint. The three respondents have been chosen from the theoretically sampled data set because they illustrate ways in which beginning teachers ‘see’ themselves as teachers and how this ‘awareness’ affected their relationship with mentors and others in the school they were working in.

In line with theoretical sampling principles, suggested by grounded theory, the outcomes and insights gained from each respondent's field work and interview sessions informed the direction of data collection and analysis of subsequent respondents' research work. Thus, outcomes from the work with David, the first respondent, informed the direction of work with Anne which, in turn, informed work with Julie who was the third respondent.

The first example discusses the case of David who was considered by his mentors to be *'out of touch with teaching'* and seemed *'unaware of what was expected of him.'* The second respondent (Anne) was regarded by her mentor to have difficulty in engaging with the *'whole classes she was teaching'*. Moreover her mentor suggested she had *'little classroom presence'* and in a number of cases focussed on teaching *'a limited number of pupils in the class.'* In the context of the symbolic interactionism work I was exploring, and in the light of mentors' feedback on practice development, I felt both these beginning teachers may have had limited awareness of how 'others' saw them in their teaching role and, as such, may have found it difficult to put into practice the expectations of those responsible for their training development.

In contrast to the first two respondents, the third respondent (Julie) seemed confident in her classroom setting and had received positive feedback on practice development from her mentors and others who worked in the school. Mentors were *'pleased with her development'* and commented that she *'had a good pupil/teacher relationship...acted on mentors' advice...had good presence in the classroom...[and] was developing well as a teacher.'*

In this section I have included a more extensive analysis on one case study (David) than the other two i.e. Anne and Julie. This was for two reasons. Firstly, David was the first respondent I selected for the observational and interview work in the grounded theory sequence and I found it useful to make more use of this data set to select ideas and insights to inform the next stage of the process. Secondly, David's case illuminates some ways in which having a less secure awareness of one's own 'persona' as a teacher might impact on practice. During analysis of David's case, I began to explore the notion that having a weak understanding of how 'one is perceived by others' in the teaching context (e.g. as seen by mentors, other teachers and pupils) might be useful in helping explain reasons for a particular beginning teacher's underperformance. This point relates to the way some beginning teachers are deemed to be 'failing teachers' by mentors and others because of wider issues than not 'measuring up' to competences set out in the QTS standards alone.

### **5.3 David's Case: Exhibiting Difficulty in Articulating and Understanding the Expectations of Mentors and Others in the School Setting**

David was seen by his curriculum mentor as a beginning teacher *'who will have difficulty in becoming a teacher'*. A number of concerns had been identified by his mentor during the initial training period; the main one being that pupils were not progressing as well as they should have been during the time he had been teaching them. This was identified by David's mentor as being due to *'David not being able to get pupils on task early in the lessons'* and *'...not having a teaching and learning strategy to move pupils forward [in their learning] during sessions'*. The mentor identified further concerns such as *'lack of awareness of how to move a whole class*

*forward [in their learning]’, ‘...taking too long in sessions before teaching the main part of the lesson’, ‘...covering the work too slowly and repeating too much work that had been already covered’; issues which led to mentors’ comments on David’s ‘lack of planning for whole class engagement’ and ‘not acting on advice given to improve practice’.*

David’s case gave me the opportunity to explore the degree to which he seemed ‘aware’ of the classroom environment around him and if he had any sense of the outward looking ‘me’ he portrayed in the teaching situation. Observational, post-observation discussion and elements of the semi-structured interview work were directed towards seeking insights into such behaviour.

### **5.3.1 School Setting for Fieldwork**

The school in which the field work took place was an 11 – 16 mixed secondary school in an urban industrial setting in Lancashire, England. The school had approximately 1250 pupils and offered the full range of national curriculum subjects. David had been practising in the school for nine weeks, and had taught a range of business studies subjects to a number of year 7, 8, 9 and 10 classes. For the observational activity in question, David was teaching the basics of spreadsheets to a middle ability year 8 class of pupils. There were twenty six pupils in the class: eleven boys and fifteen girls. Two pupils in the class were designated as special needs and each had a helper in the class.

### 5.3.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting

*The class started at 9.10 am after a registration period. The pupils entered the room in an orderly fashion; some came in a few minutes late because of the relatively long distance they had to walk from their form room to the class in which the session was taking place. At this stage, David seemed reasonably well organised; took the register and effectively dealt with the pupils who came late to the lesson. The objectives of the lesson were shared with the pupils using the whiteboard, although this was rushed and not all pupils were paying attention to what was being said at the time. David, also, recapped on some work taught in the lesson before using a question and answer session with selected pupils.*

*David then started the main lesson on setting up a spread sheet which could be used for a simple costing exercise. The work attempted to cover an explanation of what spread sheets are used for in the business environment, how they are useful in a number of business applications and the idea of columns and rows in spread sheet design. David, also, began to work through the functions needed to set up a basic spread sheet.*

*However, as soon as David started the lesson it became evident that the level of language, the speed of lesson delivery and the level of work was too advanced for the pupils in the class. Many pupils seemed to have not understood the earlier objectives of the session and, as a result, were not paying, too much, attention to what was being taught. David carried on regardless of pupils' lack of engagement with the lesson and seemed not to be aware of the learning levels in the class.*

*David carried on with this aspect of the work for a further fifteen minutes, which in the context of the fifty minute lesson, seemed far too long. During the course of this initial part of the lesson, David's teaching and learning strategy had lost the interest of many pupils in the class. Furthermore, he seemed to be unaware that many pupils were not following what was being taught and seemed unable to adjust his behaviour accordingly. This, to a certain extent, matched the concerns mentors had about David's ability to 'teach whole school classes effectively.*

### 5.3.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice

Some of the observational issues identified in the field work notes set the agenda for the post-observational discussion which focussed on David's perceptions of how he thought the session went, and whether he agreed with the mentor's views of '*...lack of awareness of how to move a whole class forward*'.

As is the case with many beginning teachers when they first start teaching, David thought his lesson progressed fairly well and did not seem to have noticed that some pupils in the class were not following what was being taught and, in doing so, had lost interest. When asked how he thought the lesson went in general, David responded

*'...I felt it went fairly well...I got over [to the class] most of the techniques I wanted to...they were able to do some of the follow up work I set...'*

[post observational discussion]

responses which implied that David may have had little awareness of how all pupils in the class were learning.

This personal insight into practice in the earlier stages of teaching is not surprising. As Fuller (1969) and Katz (1972) suggest, beginning teachers are very often more concerned with issues such as having adequate subject knowledge and being able to confidently teach a class of pupils, rather than consider issues such as inclusive teaching, whole group teaching and effective formative assessment.

When questioned further as to whether he was aware that some pupils did not seem to understand some areas he was teaching, and that many pupils were not following what was being taught, David commented that

*'I thought the pupils were OK with the work they were doing...most pupils are good at computing...they do it all the time at home and are probably better than me. I had planned to go over spreadsheets with the group quickly, then give them the chance to work through some worksheet examples themselves...I thought this would be OK...I didn't think the lesson went too bad.'*

[post observational discussion]

David, further, commented that

*'They [the pupils] answered the questions I asked well. I thought this was a good bit of formative assessment...I asked questions about where you might use spreadsheets...who had heard of spreadsheets. Most of the pupils were keen to answer the questions.'*

[post observational discussion]

These, and other responses David gave in relation to the pupils' learning, led me towards two aspects of practice I sought to further examine in the post-observational discussion. These being (i) how he felt when he was teaching in front of the class and (ii) was he aware of how others 'saw' him when teaching.

However, as the discussion unfolded it became increasingly evident that David found some difficulty in describing how he felt when taking the class and how he felt

‘others’ saw him when teaching. In response to such questioning, David tended to discuss ways in which pupils behaved in the classroom, and how they responded to basic instructions; especially the question and answer sessions he had used at the beginning of the lesson. For example, David commented,

*‘I felt quite confident...I have a lot of practical experience in using spreadsheets. I used a lot when I was working...I probably know more about them than other teachers in the department...I thought I used the [interactive] whiteboard well to describe how to use them...’*

[post observational discussion]

also

*‘I thought the level of work seemed OK for the pupils...and I had discussed what I was going to teach with my mentor before the lesson...This should have made the content work I was teaching OK.’*

[post observational discussion]

Although, David had a lot of experience in other work fields and had managed a number of industrial projects, managed budgets and had worked in large industrial teams, it became evident during the discussion that David had not had to reflect on his previous practice in the way expected of him in the teacher training context. As such, much of David’s discussion on his own reflective self tended to centre on his previous working experiences. For example, David commented that

*‘I’m used to just getting on with the job. In my last job you were set targets, given a team of people to work with and did not think*

*too much about it...this is different to what you expect us to do in teaching...I just like to get on with the job...plan the lesson and pass on the knowledge that I have.'*

[semi-structured interview]

As the field work notes suggest, David seemed confident in the classroom setting, which may have resulted from his past work experiences in industry and business. However, he was less inclined to reflect on his own performance in terms of how he thought he engaged with many of his teaching and learning activities. When questioned about whether he was aware that the earlier part of the lesson seemed too long, and that many pupils had not followed what was being taught, David responded

*'I thought it did a bit, but wanted to cover all the basic work before the pupils could work on their own...the task wasn't too big in my opinion...the pupils should be able to concentrate for longer...'*

[semi-structured interview]

This seemingly lack of whole class awareness, led to further questioning in the follow up interview session as to whether David could visualise how 'others' saw him when teaching and if so would he consider adjusting his behaviour accordingly. In this context, David typically responded,

*'I have discussed these issues with my mentor and I'm aware of some of the problems...I have tried to take on board what Ian [the mentor] says... but I still have difficulty speeding up and getting through the work quickly...I often have difficulty getting pupils on track...'*

[semi-structured interview]

This form of response led towards exploring whether David had some notion how others, especially his mentors, ‘saw’ him when he was teaching. To this, David implied he was aware of mentors’ opinions to a certain extent and commented that he

*‘...tried to do what the mentors say...I have not always time to plan and take all their ideas on board.’*

[semi-structured interview]

David, further, discussed some of the difficulties he found in his teaching in terms of ‘...too much planning...a large timetable...’ how some of the pupils ‘were challenging...’ and how he needed ‘...more time to get used to the classroom situation...’ [semi-structured interview quotes]

During the post observational discussion and semi-structured interview sessions, David found it difficult to describe how he felt in front of the class and how he thought mentors and pupils ‘saw’ him as a teacher. Moreover, David found it difficult to discuss the notion of his own teacher ‘persona’ in terms of the person he wished to present to others in the teaching situation. David seemed more concerned about getting ‘*the knowledge aspects of the lesson right*’ and ‘*controlling pupils’ behaviour*’. He further commented that

*‘I think I know what my mentors and you want to see...I don’t always think too deep...I’m not too sure it’s useful when actually teaching...it seems very academic...I wonder if my mentor and the other teachers think in this way...I’m not sure it’s very useful.’*

[semi-structured interview]

These, and other, sentiments led me to examine ways in which beginning teachers, like David, might begin to appreciate how reflecting on one's 'self' image might enhance their awareness of how others 'see' them in the teaching context. An extract of the memo which explored ideas on this aspect of practice is outlined in the following section (5.3.4).

### **5.3.4 Extract on Memo on Practice**

*During the research process with David I was unsure as to how to explore symbolic interactionism processes in the modelling of practice situation. What began to emerge from discussion was that in order for trainees to have an awareness of their own 'persona' as teachers they, themselves, perhaps need to have some insights into symbolic interactionism principles so that they can discuss their own practice in terms of such a description. Symbolic interactionism could then provide a 'tool' with which beginning teachers could use to become more aware of themselves in the teaching situation. Thus, it would be useful during interview with respondents to firstly discuss the notion of symbolic interactionism so that respondents and myself had a common constructed understanding of what was entailed. This would give respondents a framework with which to explain why they had made certain decisions on classroom practice.*

*In such discussions it would be useful to outline to respondents the descriptions of teachers as 'pragmatic actors' who may adjust their behaviour in response to different situations; the way in which they may develop their teacher 'persona' by taking the role of the other; how they might respond to advice given by mentors and*

*colleagues; and how they may foreground a particular teacher 'me' in the classroom situation. This, in turn, would provide them with an awareness of questions in more detail.*

#### **5.4 Anne's Case: Little Classroom Presence and Lack of Awareness of Whole School Teaching**

Research with Anne, the second theoretically sampled respondent, was informed by insights gained from work with David. To a certain extent, some of the issues mentors' had about Anne's practice were similar to some of the mentors' concerns about David's practice. In particular, Anne was seen by her mentors to '*...have little teacher presence in the classroom...*' and seemed to be '*...unaware of pupil activities around her when she was teaching.*' This common theme between the two beginning teachers directed me to explore further ways in which beginning teachers might be aware of their own 'persona' when teaching, and how this relation to their teaching performance.

The concerns Anne's mentors had about her 'holistic' awareness of the classroom environment i.e. little classroom presence and seemingly being unaware of all pupils' learning activities is as a common issue in beginning teacher development. For example, my own experience, as a teacher trainer for a number of years, suggests that many teachers find it difficult to actively engage the whole class in their learning when they first start teaching. Under such circumstances, novice teachers often focus on just teaching a few pupils who might be situated in one part of a class and, in doing so, have limited awareness of the other pupils around them. This behaviour may be perceived by pupils as the teacher lacking confidence and not having much classroom

presence; a perception which often affects the learning commitment of all pupils in the class.

#### **5.4.1 School Setting for Fieldwork**

The school in which field work with Anne took place was a Catholic secondary school in Lancashire, England. The school was regarded as one of the higher academic achieving schools in the area, and had recently received an outstanding Ofsted grade for its overall teaching performance. There were approximately 750 pupils in the school. Teaching in the school was at a high standard, and there was a professional expectation that beginning teachers should, also, work towards the high standards set by their mentors.

Anne was a design and technology trainee, who had taken a number of practical and non-practical classes in the graphic and product design areas. Mentors' concerns mainly related to how effectively Anne taught the practical classes she had taken. For example, mentors' placement reports suggested that during practical classes, Anne seemed to '*...concentrate on teaching a small group of pupils in the class*' and many other pupils '*seemed unaware she was in the room...*' They further commented that '*...pupils' behaviour was usually satisfactory...*' because '*... mentors were in the classroom at the same time she was teaching.*'

In line with these concerns, a practical lesson had been chosen for the field work activities. The lesson was part of a six week project, and took place in a design studio in which pupils were able to move around freely to get tools and equipment and make the practical project.

#### 5.4.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting

*The classroom was a large work space with a number of work benches where pupils were able to make their design products. Tools and equipment were situated in cupboards located around the classroom. Anne had prepared a range of materials and equipment ready for the session. These were arranged ready for a demonstration at the start of the lesson.*

*Pupils entered the classroom in a relatively orderly fashion, and went to the work benches they had been assigned to in previous weeks. The aims and objectives of the lesson were, briefly, shared with the pupils, and Anne recapped on some topics covered in the previous week. She, also, discussed the purpose of the practical lesson in the context of the previous week's work.*

*At the beginning of the lesson, Anne demonstrated some of the techniques the pupils needed to know for the work they would be doing. For this, pupils gathered around the demonstration table located at the front of the classroom, and Julie spent approximately five minutes describing ways in which pupils' designs could be transferred onto the packaging products and how the product could be assembled.*

*It was during the main body of the lesson that Anne exhibited some of the 'lack of classroom awareness' issues identified by the mentors in their placement reports. Once she had finished the demonstration, and pupils were engaged in their own practical activities, Anne seemed to be an insignificant figure in the eyes of pupils in the room. Pupils were working on their projects, seemingly, regardless of her presence in the room, and did not seem to notice she was still their teacher.*

*Many of the pupils did not notice her 'presence' in the classroom because, as her mentors had commented, she tended to work with just a few pupils who were located on the bench where she gave the initial demonstration. The other pupils in the class, for much of the time, carried on with their work without any teacher intervention. For these pupils, Anne may have seemed remote and, from their perspective, may as well have not been in the room.*

#### **5.4.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice**

This, seemingly, lack of awareness of the outward 'persona' in relation to how the pupils saw her as a teacher was a theme I explored with Anne in the post observation discussion and semi-structured interview. As with David, Anne seemed relatively unaware, in symbolic interactionism terms, how she was seen by others in the classroom. Anne, particularly, intimated in her discussions she had little understanding of her outward 'self' as others saw her and, as was the case with David, expressed concerns about her difficulties in being aware of all pupils in the class and how this impacted on her practice. In this respect, typical responses to such questioning were

*'...I must admit I feel a bit uncomfortable sometimes...I find it difficult in some of the practical classes...the pupils are all around and you need eyes in the back of your head...The teachers I work with are good; they give me some sound advice on how I should handle the pupils, but I often find I haven't time to think...I do feel nervous and worry what my mentor is thinking...She's very organised and structures her lessons well...She must think I'm a bit weak and I should do more to control their behaviour sometimes.'*

[post observational discussion]

and

*'...I know I do this to a certain extent...my mentor has discussed this with me and set it as one of my targets for improvement. I am working at it though...There is so much to do that I often forget to do the things they [the mentors] have said...I think the pupils were working on their projects and did some good work...Look at the work they have done...some are really good designs...I'll have to get around the class in future and give help to others.'*

[post observational discussion]

#### **5.4.4 Memo on Observation**

*A common theme which began to emerge from exploring the first two respondents' perceptions of their classroom experiences was that it was noticeable they were able to reflect relatively easily on the QTS aspects of practice e.g. evaluating the lesson planning in relation to lesson timing, and whether their lesson aims and objectives had been achieved. However, both respondents found reflecting on the 'self', especially in terms of how others saw them, much more difficult to do.*

*In such cases, beginning teachers seem to find it easier to discuss how they 'felt' about particular teaching situations such as how they 'felt' when delivering their lesson to the class of pupils; how they felt when intervening with a pupil behavioural issue; and how they felt when making a particular decision which affected their practice.*

*A such, beginning teachers seem much more responsive to discussing 'self' issues in terms of the feelings they may have had during teaching and teacher activities, and*

*seem more able to discuss aspects of their outward 'persona' in personal 'feelings' terms.*

*Thus, encouraging beginning teachers to reflect on their outward 'self' in terms to the personal feelings they have in a particular situation would help them to engage with practice in terms of some of the symbolic interactionism principles outlined in chapter 1.*

### **5.5 Julie's Case: Displaying Secure Awareness of How Others 'See' Her in the Teaching Situation**

Julie joined the course having gained a BA (Hons) in English. Prior to the course, Julie had worked for two years as a learning support teacher in a secondary school. This role had given her an insight into ways secondary schools operate. Julie's learning support role mainly entailed her supporting special needs pupils in basic numeracy and literacy. Julie was teaching a topic on Shakespeare to a year 10 class comprising of fourteen girls and twelve boys.

#### **5.5.1 School Setting for Fieldwork**

The school in which the observational field work took place was an 11-16 age range school situated in Merseyside, England. The school had recently been rebuilt as part of the government's building schools for the future scheme (details found in <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools> accessed 3/2/2012). This involved combining two previously separate schools into one institution. The school's catchment area was largely urban, and the school had a mix of pupils from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### **5.5.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting**

*Julie seemed to be really comfortable in her teaching role, and had teacher 'presence' right from the start of her session. At the beginning of the session she confidently lined the pupils up outside the classroom, and instructed them to go to their designated work tables and get prepared for the lesson. The pupils did this quickly, quietly and without much fuss. Julie seemed very confident in her new role. She seemed, right from the onset of the lesson, to project a purposeful and self-assured outward looking 'me' where she displayed teacher presence. As observer, I felt that she had a strong sense of her own 'persona' as a teacher and had a strong sense of teacher 'voice' i.e. self-efficacy and confidence in her own actions. Julie, also, demonstrated good subject knowledge during the session.*

*During the session the pupils engaged well with their learning and seemed to be enjoying what was being taught. Julie made the topics relevant to current issues by relating work to pupils' experiences. This involved a sustained level of question and answer sessions throughout the lesson where Julie had to be confident and busy to engage all pupils in the class. She seemed to manage these aspects of the lesson well, and 'drew out' a number of issues to, further, discuss with the group.*

*This teacher self-efficacy was an area I targeted for the post-observation discussion and questioning in the follow up semi-structured interview session. In Bandura's (1997) terms, Julie seemed to display the belief that she had the capability to succeed which was demonstrated during her teaching. In view of this, I aimed to explore the following aspects of Julie's practice (i) what she 'felt' gave her confidence in her*

*teaching role (ii) whether she had any notion of the outward looking ‘me’ she wished to portray during her teaching.*

### **5.5.3 Post-observational Insights into Practice**

Julie’s case, and one which was mirrored by a number of other respondents in the researched cohort, is one which reflects the beginning teachers relative confidence in the classroom. When questioned about where she thought these attributes may have derived from, she suggested the *‘first class support she had received from her mentor...’* who *‘...had given her plenty of confidence...’* and *‘...the experience I had working as a support assistant.’*

For example, Julie

*‘I had a fantastic mentor who was very professional...Although we had our [official] meeting each week; she said anything I want to talk about, I could do so...She worked hard to keep me on track; like wanting my lesson plans a week in advance during the first two or three weeks I was teaching. Once she was happy with my progress, she would let me carry on without looking at them, but she would always check to see what you were doing. If she didn’t think something would work, she would say so. She was great like that, because I’d have time to then go away and change it...Because she was head of department as well she was very busy; but there was never a moment where she did not make you feel like I could approach her.’*

[post observational discussion]

Julie, further, commented that

*'I thought I had really high standards, and then I saw my curriculum mentor teach, and her standards are brilliant; they seem very high compared with other peoples. For example she would not let them in the room with their coat on...her management behaviour was very structured compared with many of the other teachers. Pupils would say [for example] "what do I have to take my coat off for? Other teachers don't make us do this..." For me, you have to have a standard policy. The pupils have to know where you are coming from...They need to know you basic standards. They need to know who's in charge...I feel my standards and confidence have gone up since I've been working with her [mentor]...And it's good for the kids because when they see both of us the standards are going to be the same...it's not like we've got different standards.'*

[post observational discussion]

As suggested by the comments, Julie's confidence in the role has, to a certain degree, come from the support she received from her curriculum mentor. As described her mentor was very supportive of her actions, gave consistent critical advice and once satisfied with Julie's progress allowed her to teach her lesson without overdue direct control. This seems to have given Julie the ability to work relatively freely without being prompted by her mentor leading towards self-efficacy in her practice.

Julie's also attributed her 'self' awareness and apparent confidence as a teacher to her experiences as a teaching assistant in her previous secondary school.

*'I learnt such a lot as a TA [teaching assistant]...I learnt a lot about teachers and what the role's like. I learnt about pupils...especially real issues you have to deal with when kids have problems. I found that many teachers became set in their ways and that's something I didn't what to do...I wan't to keep evolving if possible.*

[semi-structured interview]

Julie was keen to stress that how she began to become assured and aware of her self-efficacy 'voice'.

*Well for me that personally started... [in] the special school I was in because...the teachers were known as Mr so and so and Mrs so and so, the TAs were known by their first name. Now I personally think... from my upbringing and background... that's wrong... I believe there's a line, and by calling the TAs by their first name you are breaking down that line. So the structure...is starting to be broken down, and I think pupils like that need a lot of structure because they don't have it in their home life a lot or all. So a lot of the time the TAs there were known by their first name. I always insisted they called me Miss. And I know the kids used to laugh at me; and I know a lot of the staff used think who*

*does she think she is; but to me that created that line. And they [the pupils] knew that if they crossed that line there was a consequence from it. So I made that mind set change when I was a TA. When I went to do the cover supervisor's job there was another lady employed with me at the time and she was quite happy to be called by her first name. Again I said no. Because ...for children to have respect for me they need to see me in more of a teacher role as opposed to just their friend. Because I am not their friend at the end of the day and I have to go in [the class] and give them out the work the teacher set for them. And they should hopefully achieve something at the end of that lesson. And complete some of the work set. And I felt that if they were on a more friendly par with me that wouldn't happen. So I made up my mind to change.*

[semi-structured interview]

Julie further commented that

*'I think thinking like a teacher helps in your own mind as well because you might be going into classes where you don't know what you are going into half the time. You don't know seating plans...you don't know that this pupils shouldn't sit next to this one because they might interrupt the lesson...but if you go into the class with the mindset that I'm the teacher they see you as*

*that and they take that on board and that they go along with it...I thought myself as the teacher. Because, again, I think it's that perception how children perceive you. If you go in there [the class] with that I'm a teacher mindset it gives you confidence, and they respond to it...and that's how I've done this and that has given me confidence...When I go into the class I give the pupils clear instructions...I'm a full believer in 'this is my stall'; I've laid it out. These are my rules and if you follow them we'll [the teacher and pupils] will get on brilliantly. If you don't you are going to find it difficult.'*

[semi-structured interview]

## **5.6 Making Sense of the Cultural Cues That Define the Beginning Teacher Environment**

Making pragmatic adjustments to one's behaviour in line with the expectations of the school culture in which one works has been suggested by many commentators to be a key feature of the teacher socialisation process. Jones (2006), for example, has reported how teachers make adjustments to their pupil-teacher relationships and often have to reconcile their own values with those of the school to help them cope with their own teacher development. In symbolic interactionism terms, operating pragmatically entails the beginning teacher being aware of the signs and signals of the culture they are working in so they can make informed choices to change their behaviour in line with the way a school may be run.

Thus, being able to interpret and reflect on such situational cues may be useful for beginning teachers in their school practice development. For example, it may be the case that beginning teachers who are able to act positively on mentors' advice and can work towards adjusting their behaviour in line the expectations of the school are seen by mentors and others to be meeting the professional requirements of training.

In many cases such cues are relatively straightforward to interpret, and may come from mentors and other teachers' written and verbal feedback on how beginning teachers are meeting particular QTS standards. However, many cues are much more tacit (see for example Elliot et al. 2011) in character and may, also, be linked to the hidden curriculum (Cornbleth 1990; Margolis 2001) behaviour of pupils. Such signs and cues are often embedded in the cultural features of the school and difficult for beginning teachers to come to terms with during their early experiences of teaching.

The way in which a beginning teacher may make sense of a cue which helps define an aspect of practice is set out in the following case of Paul who was a science trainee practising in a school in Lancashire, England.

### **5.6.1 School Setting for Fieldwork**

The school in which the observational work was carried out was a large comprehensive school (approximately 1800 pupils) in a urban area in Lancashire. The school had a science school status, and had a large department which covered physics, chemistry and biology as well as general science. The respondent (Paul) was teaching a biological topic to a year 8 group when observed. There were twenty seven pupils in the class.

### **5.6.2 Selected Field Work Notes of Observations in the Classroom Setting**

*The case concerned Paul's involvement with teaching an Asperger's pupil who was new to the school. It was Paul's first time teaching the class and he was asked to teach a topic on environmental issues. Paul had received details of the pupils who were in the class the day before. He had noted their level of learning, learning abilities and special needs requirements. Paul had not met an Asperger's child before, and had confided to me that he had very limited knowledge as to what to expect.*

*As the lesson progressed it became evident that he became increasingly apprehensive about the whole situation. In his reflective journal, he had noted that he ought to do more research about the Asperger's learner, and how he might deal with such pupils in the whole class setting. His journal reflections, also, described some of the difficulties he might face when teaching the class with the Asperger's child in it and how these might prevent him from meeting certain QTS standards. As he commented during the observation 'it wouldn't have been much easier if I hadn't had to deal with such issues so early in my teaching'.*

### **5.6.3 Post Observation Insights into Practice**

Such personal expressions of doubt and abilities to cope with a particular situation was reflected on how his mentors and other teachers in the school viewed him as a teacher. In this case mentors thought that he should be more sympathetic to these issues and, as a teacher, be able to cope with many of the special needs issues which

come up during her teaching and learning activities.

For the beginning teacher concerned, this was an incident which had an immediate effect on his practice, both in terms of considering his own ability to cope with practice, and how he had formed an outward impression of his 'self' to other practitioners.

### **5.7 Interpreting the Role of the 'Other' in Beginning Teacher Development**

Many beginning teachers model their practice on how they others in the school. Many teachers when asked who have influenced them in developing their teaching styles will cite some of the good teachers they had when they were pupils of the outstanding teachers they have worked with and observed during their school placement periods. Some beginning teachers also cite other people they have worked with in previous jobs, such as managers, mentors at work and other professionals.

A common way beginning teachers incorporate the actions of others into their own practice is by interpreting how colleagues deal with factors such as discipline issues, how other teachers relate to pupils and how other teachers approach, plan and deliver lessons. Most respondents, when interviewed, discussed ways in which they made use of experiences gained from observing other teachers to inform their own practice. However, some respondents made it clear that although they would use some peoples' ideas and methods to inform their practice they also wished to incorporate their own personality into their teaching delivery.

Personal made adjustments to the role can also be considered in terms of potential tensions between what Stronach et al. (2002) term as ‘economy of performance’ and ‘ecology of practice’. In the case of teaching ‘economies of performance’ may be shaped by the organisational structure of the school and the effect this can have on working practices, the need to meet examination performance targets and the requirements of Ofsted. This may lead to teachers making adjustments to the way they engage with teaching to meet particular institutional requirements. ‘Economies of performance’ can be seen to be at odds with ‘ecologies of practice’, typically built up over a number of years, which is defined by Stronach et al. as the accumulation of individual and collective experiences through which professionalism is developed. For teachers this might be the collective experience gained in the classroom, commonly held staff beliefs, the range of institutional policies guiding practice and commitments to particular pedagogic practices and what is considered to be ‘good’ teaching.

This the role of the ‘other’, and seeing one’s self as an ‘object’ in itself i.e. being able to project an image of one’s self in terms of how you wish others to see you, is a key symbolic interactionism perspective. In such a way teachers can be seen to pragmatically adjust their behaviour in relation to the expectations, norms and values of the school environment in which they work. Interpreting and, where applicable, acting on the role of the other is a central feature of development and one that may help beginning teachers engage with practice in a positive way.

## 5.8 Themes Developed from the First Phase Analysis

In addition to the work which explored the ways symbolic interactionism can model beginning teacher behaviour and in, so doing, provide a reflective tool to help their practice development, I sought initial coded themes which could provide a theoretical explanation of practice in the substantive field in question. These and the further developed themes are discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

The themes were developed with the aid of diagrammatic coding and memoing through which I examined phase 1 empirical data in the light of insights gained from the literature and my own sensitising experiences gained from the teacher training field.

Themes which began to emerge were in response to exploring respondents' perceptions, behaviours and attitudes to practice both within and between data sets.

Emerging themes were labelled as follows;

Beginning teacher personal attributes

- concerns
- relationships
- confidence in teaching
- pre-teacher self
- feeling confident without being prompted by mentors
- enacting on the signs and symbols of approval
- reading cues from the learning environment.

## 5.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed findings from the first grounded theory phase in relation to ways symbolic interactionism can model beginning teacher behaviour. The work suggests that symbolic interactionism would be a useful tool which could be used by beginning teachers to examine their own behaviour in terms of wider (than QTS) aspects of practice. In this respect, it would be useful for beginning teachers to examine their practice in terms of the interpreting the signs and signals of the teaching environment, interpreting the role of the 'other' in the development of practice, and having a more secure understanding of their own 'persona' in the teaching context. In addition to these insights, a number of themes were developed through coded data analysis which formed the basis of a more theoretical understanding of practice in the substantive field. A topology of practice is described in figure 5.1.

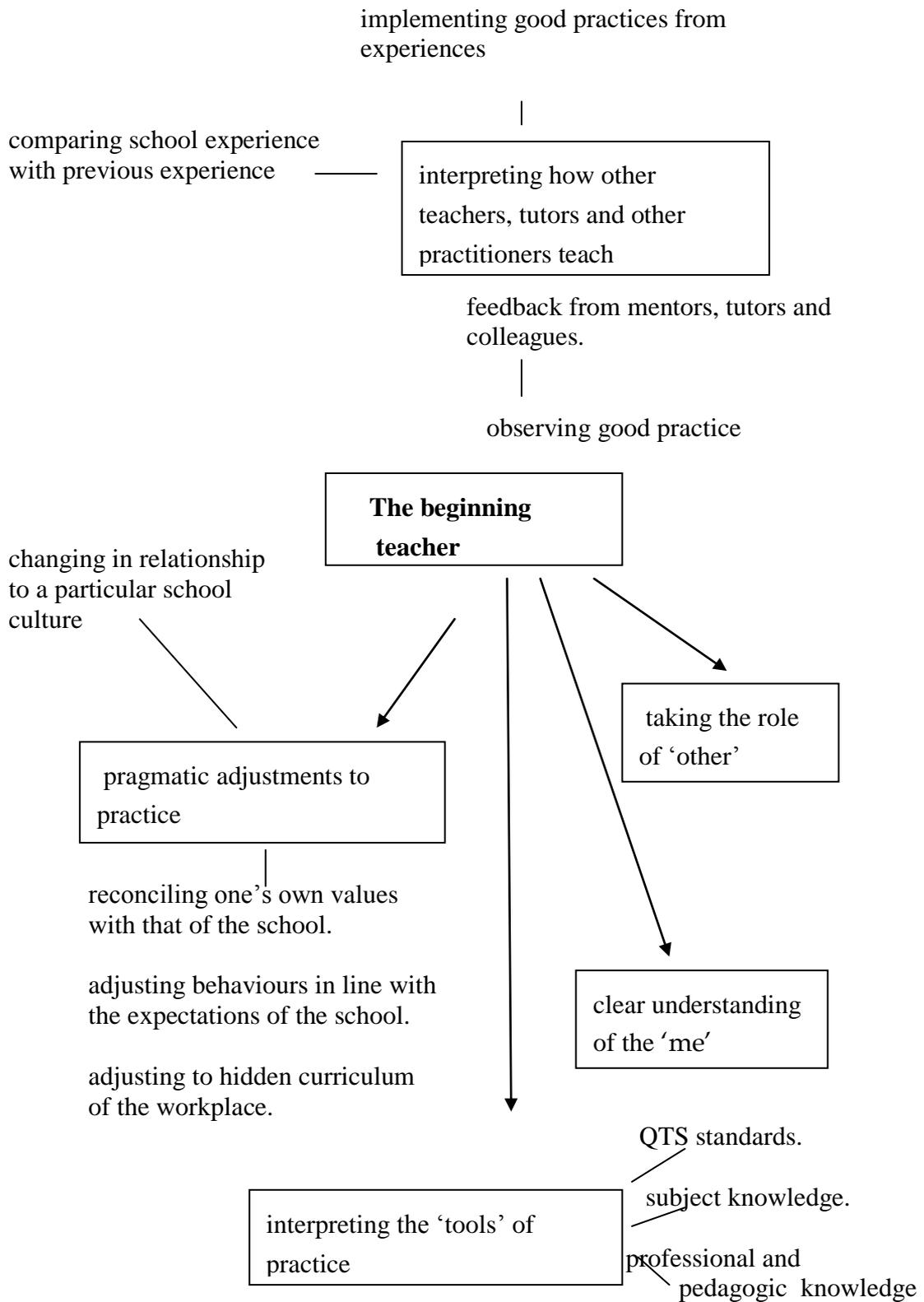


Figure 5.1 symbolic interactionism map of beginning teacher interpretive behaviours

## **Chapter 6 Beginning Teachers' Reflective Understanding of School Practice Using Activity Theory**

### **6.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

This chapter makes use of empirical outcomes from the second grounded theory phase to explore the use of cultural historical activity theory as an instrument to enhance beginning teachers' reflective capabilities in the practice situation. Findings take the form of four vignettes, each of which were selected to give insights into how beginning teachers can make use of activity theory to examine and reflect on aspects of practice e.g. dealing with conflicting situations between beginning teachers and mentors, or understanding the normative aspects of school life. Selected interview and reflective journal dialogue have been incorporated into each vignette to add detail to the work. The work supports the view that activity theory is a useful instrument to aid beginning teachers' understanding of the cultural characteristics of their working environment.

### **6.2 Background to Reflective Practice Issues**

As literature suggests, beginning teachers find it difficult to reflect on many features of professional and pedagogic practice (Griffiths and Tann 1992; Jay and Johnson 2002) and may be unsure as to how they develop their reflective skills (Kurtts and Levin 2000; Bollough and Gitlin 1989) without contextual stimuli as a starting point (Clarke 1995; Boud 2001). In addition, some commentators have suggested (see for example Harrison 2007) that the teaching standards alone are not always effective in improving beginning teachers' reflective skills (Arthur et al. 2005; Winter 2000),

especially where beginning teachers are required to reflect on broader features of their training experience. Cultural historical activity theory provides an avenue for exploring such issues.

As outlined in chapter 1, the significance of activity theory in the reflective practice context lies in its ability to help beginning teachers analyse the interactions and dynamics of their training experience; an assertion being that beginning teachers' progress will be mediated by the collective activities of all actors within the school and not just the classroom relationships which occupy most of the beginning teachers' time. Using Engeström's (1999, 2001) description of activity theory, the training process may be interpreted through a culturally oriented framework which includes an objective focus, tool mediation, a hierarchical structure of activity and continuous personal development.

Data for this phase of the grounded theory process were gathered from semi-structured interviews, beginning teachers' learning diary comments and beginning teachers' placement reports.

To simplify analysis, and to help focus on what might be considered to be the salient features of their practice, I have not considered all the cultural dimensions of the school environment but have identified a number of aspects. These being,

- (i) the assumption that (in the case of the England teacher training system) the QTS standard's framework is the main mediating tool through which training is achieved,

- (ii) beginning teachers operate within a hierarchical, division of labour structure which has an influence on beginning teacher training experience.
- (iii) there are explicit institutional rules that shape training,
- (iv) teachers work within an environment which is characterised by ‘tacit’ norms and values which may not be easily identified by those who work within the school system.

### **6.3 Activity Theory Framework**

As Engeström suggests, the unit of analysis for a more complete and dynamic understanding of beginning teachers’ practice should be the collective, artefact and object oriented system in which beginning teachers practice (Engeström 2001). This provides a context for the actions the learner undertakes and will result in new learning over time; not only is new knowledge acquired, but existing knowledge may be restructured through actions with other actors within the system.

In the case of teacher training, the object of the activity may be seen to be the development of beginning teachers’ reflective capabilities which are mediated through instruments and tools. These include the instruments, tools, concepts and language available to the beginning teacher; the rules and conventions that contribute to the school culture; and the divisions of labour and power relationships that operate within the school.

Beginning teachers thus work within school cultures that are negotiated and dynamic and in which beliefs, values, norms and customs have been historically and ideologically constituted. In this respect, it seems reasonable to assume that critical examination of teaching should not focus exclusively on the QTS standards, but should be understood in terms of broader interactions between the individual and the organisational structure in which they work.

In this way, I assume, along with a number of other commentators (Eynon and Wall 2002; Storey 2007; Martin and Cloke 2000), that the techno-rational format of the QTS standards provide a limited description of teachers' training experience. Although some competences address whole school issues and aspects of wider professional interest e.g. standards Q1 and Q2 (see appendix 1) the greatest number refer to a unit of analysis characterised by the more limited teacher/pupil learning environment.

Figure 6.1 represents the beginning teachers' school-based activity in the context of the explicit rules, divisions of labour and normative nature of the school environment. The object of the activity - to enable beginning teachers to become competent reflective practitioners - is mediated by the linguistic, theoretical and pedagogic tools that the beginning teacher encounters and works with. The school community will impose rules, strategies and specific ways of working on the beginning teacher who, in turn, have responsibilities, in line with the rest of the community, to achieve the school's organisational goals. These are generally realised through the divisions of labour that exist within the school community.



#### **6.4.1 Vignette 1: Dealing With Interpersonal Conflict through Understanding the Nature of the Object-Community-Division of Labour Dynamic**

Patricia, a twenty eight year old science beginning teacher, completed her placement in a secondary school in Merseyside. During this time she worked in the school's Natural Science Department teaching biology and physics at Key Stages 3 and 4. Patricia's time in school was spent teaching, lesson planning, assessing pupils' work and meeting with mentors, other colleagues and university tutors to discuss progress.

Prior to joining the course, Patricia had worked as a manager in the retail industry where she was responsible for leading a small team of workers to achieve production targets. She was also responsible for health and safety training.

One of Patricia's concerns during her placement was that she thought colleagues felt she was unable to take constructive criticism. Her reflective diary notes revealed that this made her feel an outsider and mentors' comments tended to undermine her confidence. Furthermore, Patricia believed that the other teachers thought she had inferior knowledge to them and that she would not be confident to teach some of the work given to her. This proved an irritation to Patricia who commented that;

*“...They [the mentors] often see me as a hindrance...It may be because I've worked before. You know, they may be unsure of me because of my management experience...they don't always like this...I think all they have done is work in schools.*

*They're good; but it's all they know.*" [semi-structured interview]

Meetings between Patricia and her mentors often resulted in disagreements and ended prematurely without all issues being resolved. Mentors' main concerns were that Patricia seemed to find it difficult to critically reflect on aspects of her practice and was not meeting all the requirements of the National Teaching Standards. Field work observations of the interpersonal interactions between mentors and Patricia suggested that she found criticism a threat to her teacher identity rather than viewing it as a tool with which to reflect on and develop practice. Mentors, for example, remarked that Patricia did not reflectively examine her classroom practice, was often too harsh when dealing with pupils and her planning was incomplete.

Conflict situations between beginning teachers and others within the school system were discussed during the semi-structured interview session. This took place immediately after the beginning teachers' initial school experience. Other beginning teachers also found criticism of their professional abilities difficult to come to terms with and tended to take criticism personally. This was often de-motivating and made them insecure in their training role.

These sentiments were reinforced by Patricia who commented during her semi-structured interview that;

*"I found it difficult to understand what she [the mentor] wanted me to do...she talked about me having to be much*

*more focussed on my lesson planning and I wasn't doing enough preparation...but she was very confusing...I didn't always understand what she meant. I'm sure she used to talk behind my back to the others and thought I was not good...I used to worry about the meetings I had with her..."*

[semi-structured interview]

When she was further asked why this was the case, Patricia explained that;

*"...Jean [the mentor] uses quite a lot of technical jargon...I'm sure she does this to make herself feel good and superior...she talked about things like kinaesthetic learning and how this fitted into the way I teach...I found this very confusing and thought she was trying to belittle me with the language she used. I got frustrated a couple of times, switched off and started to take no notice of her...I even said this was a waste of time a couple of times. She didn't like that..."*

[semi-structured interview]

It seemed from the observational analysis and interview outcomes that Patricia did not always see the point of the meetings and advice she was given by other teachers. She seemed reluctant to work through some of the problems and shied away from many issues that would help her develop as a teacher. Patricia wanted straightforward answers to help her overcome many day-to-day problems. She claimed that her

mentors did not always do the things they wanted her to do and argued that they should “*lead by example.*” For example, her mentors did not always use lesson plans and were invariably late when marking pupils’ work.

*“I find it difficult to complete all my lesson plans on time. The teachers expect me to spend ages planning for every lesson...then they pull my work apart...I find that hard to take, especially when I know for a fact they don’t do any themselves...”* [semi-structured interview]

For Patricia the conflict between herself and the mentor had caused a number of problems during her placement. Her mentors described her attitude as, often, unprofessional and that she was not a team player. Furthermore, she did not reflect on advice given. This was a skill that mentors and other colleagues regarded as being essential for her professional development.

A barrier to Patricia’s acceptance of advice given seemed to relate to her past experience as a team leader in the retail industry. Patricia described this role as being in control of her working situation and that it allowed her to give instructions to colleagues without prior discussion;

*“...I’m used to being in control much more...when I was in charge of others in the shop the others came to me for advice...I told them what to do and they got on with it...I was in charge of budgets and organising things like the rotas...I*

*was only working with a small group of people, but they seemed to like the way I did things...*" [semi-structured interview]

The issues that Patricia had with her mentors can be seen in the context of the activity theory framework. The framework can be used to examine how and why these interpersonal conflicts may have occurred and how Patricia could make more sense of the teaching situation she was in. For instance, tensions and dissidence can be viewed in the context of the object-community-division of labour element of the activity system (see figure 6.2).

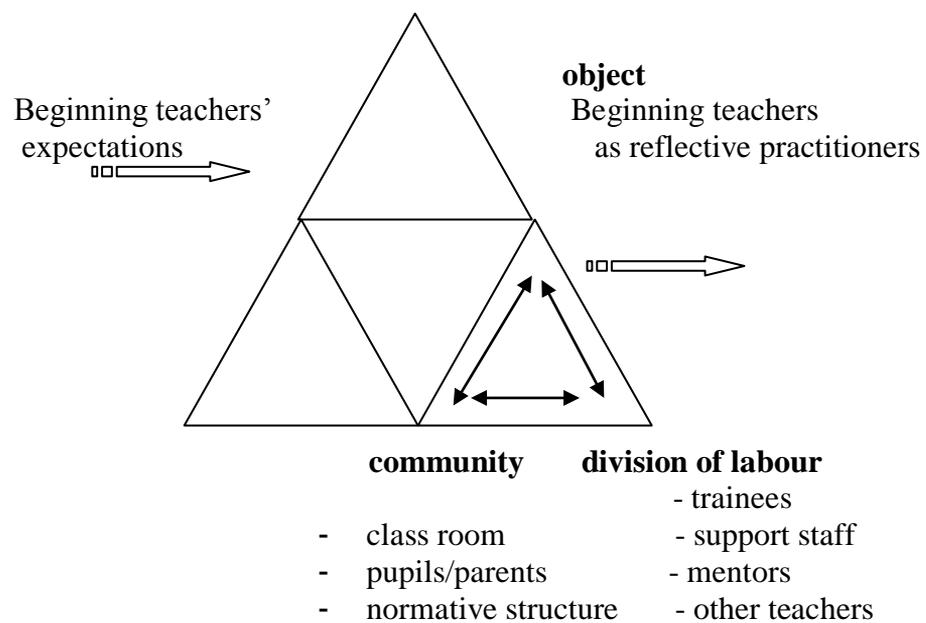


Figure 6.2 Working with the object-community-division of labour framework.

Patricia, for example, worked within a system characterised by a hierarchy of workers who have competing interests with the school environment. Patricia's particular division of labour system within the Natural Sciences Department included pupils, mentors, support staff and other teacher colleagues; a structure which was embedded within the cultural dimensions of the school characterised by its organisational norms and rules. In such cases, it is useful for beginning teachers to understand these structures and be able to engage reflectively within them. However, for many beginning teachers this may be difficult, as in the case of Patricia;

*“Schools are different to the places I’ve worked before...There are some similarities; there’s a lot of paperwork... you are always rushed off your feet...but you have to be careful about who you speak to...my mentor liked to show she was in charge...and liked people to look up to her...I had to get used to that quickly.”* [semi-structured interview]

Conceptualising the nature of critical dialogue in terms of the object-community-division of labour activity framework may have enabled Patricia to begin to come to terms with the conflict aspects of her training process. In this case it is suggested that the dialectical nature of the beginning teachers' learning experience happens as a consequence of experienced dissidence whereby the learner is challenged to review their notion of being a teacher in the light of ideas presented by others. This structure creates dialectical exchange between theory and practice

as well as emanating from the learning histories of those involved in the learning exchange.

#### 6.4.2 Vignette 2: Dealing with the Normative Aspects of School Culture: Understanding the Subject-Community-Object Activity Interactions

The way in which the relationship between the beginning teacher as the subject, the school community and the object of the teacher training process can be modelled using the activity theory framework as illustrated in figure 6.3.

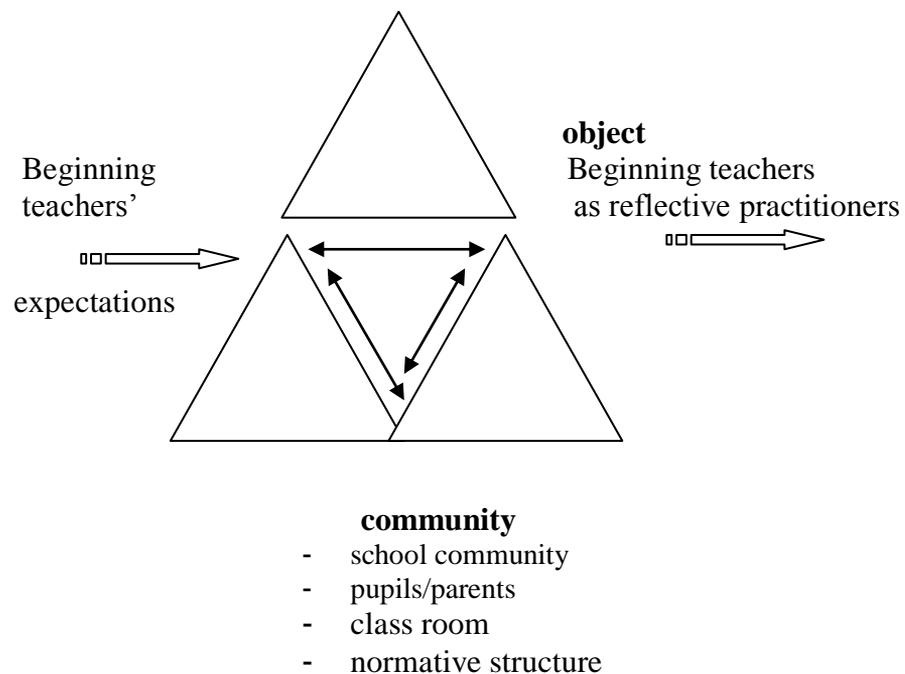


Figure 6.3 Working with the subject-community-object framework

Peter joined the design and technology teacher training course after serving in the Royal Air Force. He had spent the previous seven years working as a mechanic

responsible for aircraft maintenance. By his own admission (reflective diary notes) the RAF was a relatively closed community;

*“...with its own rules, regimented structure...in which you carried out instructions without asking too many questions...each day I expected order to my daily life...”*

[Reflective journal notes]

One of Peter’s predicaments during his placement was that he tended to view most issues, dilemmas and decisions as having only right or wrong answers. He expected mentors and university tutors to give him specified ways of dealing with day-to-day situations and thought there was no need to reflect on teaching matters and to just get on with the job. This point of view was expressed in some of Peter’s interview dialogue;

*“I don’t really need to think about the way I do things or about my teaching skills...I’ve a lot of experience in dealing with others in the RAF...this has given me an insight into how people should behave at work...I don’t think that social background should be an excuse for pupil bad behaviour...they should know the difference between right and wrong...there’s no need to be too reflective on these sorts of things.”* [semi-structured interview]

Peter found that the type of culture he was immersed in was alien to him. For example, he was not used to the discursive ways in which decisions tended to be made, and thought departmental and other meetings a waste of time.

*“...very often we just talk about things which could be easily solved in a few minutes...the head of department ought to make most of the decisions...this would save a lot of time and allow the rest of the team to get on with the important parts of the job teaching and marking...”* [semi-structured interview]

Peter further commented that;

*“...some of the meetings in which small decisions are made are slow and take up too much time. This time would be better spent on something else...marking work or preparing worksheets...there seems a lot of unnecessary talk...I feel out of it when I attend. I also feel that the others don't take any notice of me and don't take what I say seriously.”* [semi-structured interview]

During his placement, Peter had not always understood the normative character of the school environment and tended to conduct himself in a similar way to his previous military role.

*“I like to compare what I’m doing with how I was taught during my time in the RAF...we got on with the job and we were given a really good grounding in the things we had to do...the forces did things really well and I still use what I learnt in the classroom.” [semi-structured interview]*

To help Peter understand these organisational differences it would have been useful to introduce activity theory as an instrument with which to explore the normative nature of the school culture in which he worked.

*“Teaching is something special...before I didn’t have to bother too much what I said to my mates...we were all in it together...mind you we did have to be careful what we said when officers were around...I’ve started to think about how I speak and communicate with people...you know parents, other teachers...I’m sure parents and other people see me as a person who has to behave properly all the while...I need to think about this all the while...I need to think where I’m going in the future...” [semi-structured interview]*

This may have given Peter a greater insight into the ways school culture impacted on his practice and ways other people might see him as a teacher.

*“I now know how much parents look up to me...they expect me to know all about their child...and expect me to be very professional in the way I speak to them. All teachers in the school acted very responsibly...they had high standards...I have a lot to live up to.”* [semi-structured interview]

Peter further remarked that he was beginning to explore the way other teachers in the school interacted with each other. He noted in his reflective diary how he found the teachers tended to treat each other with respect and seemed to have ‘tacit’ codes which governed interpersonal engagement;

*“...I now have an idea how the teachers act in a professional way. They take time to listen to each other and have ways in which they conduct their business...They very rarely lose their temper or shout to staff in the way they might deal with pupils...if they’ve anything to say it’s normally done in private. Others don’t get to hear what’s said...This is a different to what I came across in the RAF...everybody knew if you’d made a mistake.”* [reflective journal notes]

### **6.4.3 Vignette 3: Expansive Learning through a Deeper Understanding of the Use of Mediating Tools**

This vignette focuses on the QTS standards and their importance in defining the beginning teachers’ training experience. Over the last decade the QTS standards have been central in setting the agenda for teacher training in England and have shaped the

nature of beginning teachers' role in schools. The standards have influenced how beginning teachers act out their practice, how mentors perceive the training process and how schools implement training programmes.

In practice beginning teachers may engage with the standards on a number of levels. At a basic level, beginning teachers may take each competence statement on its face value and use them to get through each training stage in an instrumental fashion. Reflection may be sporadic and generally results in simply evaluating classroom practice. Beginning teachers may not examine their role in the context of wider school policy.

At a higher level, beginning teachers may make use of the standards in a more holistic manner and examine their own identity within the school in a more thorough and meaningful way. For example, beginning teachers may explore in some depth what it means to recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and well-being of children and young people and to raising their levels of attainment.

Beginning teachers often need contextual stimuli to help them reflectively engage with the teaching standards in a deeper fashion. Beginning teachers, for example, often enter teaching straight from school and may not have much previous work experience to help them make sense of their new 'teaching world'. This notion was reinforced in this study. Beginning teachers' reflective outcomes revealed that they were often confused about the nature and use of the QTS standards in school situations and were unsure about what evidence they might use to support each

standard. Furthermore, beginning teachers, mentors and other training stakeholders often regarded the standards as a piecemeal instrument rather than viewing them as a holistic framework to help beginning teachers become professional teachers in the wider cultural context.

*“I only look at the standards when I need to...At the end of the week or longer than that I’ll set out my list of things to fill in...I’ll look at what I’ve done and then I’ll tick them off. I find some of them useful...but I find it difficult to cover everything the standards says...I just use them to gain my placement pass...”* [Joan: semi-structured interview]

Joan is typical of a young beginning teacher who joined the undergraduate cohort straight from school. She achieved good A levels and was encouraged to enter the profession by a teacher in her school. The initial school placement was Joan’s first continuous period of work in a professional environment. Joan commented in her journal notes that;

*“I sometimes find it difficult to see myself as a teacher. I’m virtually as old as the pupils and can remember what it was like to play up the teachers...Most of the other teachers are older than me and I have to try very hard to put myself in the role of a teacher...I worry that pupils think I’m not the real thing.”* [Joan: semi-structured interview]

During her placement Joan had started to engage with some of the teaching standards. She tended to focus purely on classroom competences and rarely examined other elements of her practice. This was reflected in her experience of school life;

*“I didn’t go to the staffroom very much. I was happy to keep myself in the science classroom...the other staff [science] were nice, and we got on well...I didn’t really get involved with extra-curricular activities or other work.”* [Joan: semi-structured interview]

A reflective challenge for Joan was for her to view her practice as a more expansive activity i.e. in terms of a subject-tool-object activity theory lens (see figure 6.4).

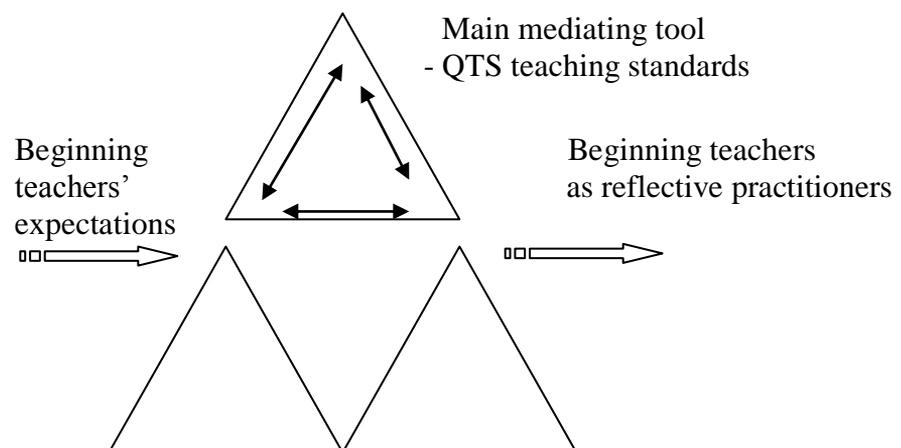


Figure 6.4 Expanding trainees’ learning through the subject-tool-object framework.

Joan began to explore what it was like to be a beginning teacher with a broader reflective outlook. Rather than just using the QTS standards as a list of competences that need to be “ticked off one by one”, Joan viewed them as a more expansive

instrument with which to enhance her reflective abilities. Joan emphasised, during her semi-structured interview, that;

*“I am now thinking about each standard and looking for some links with others...I’m also looking at what we did in university in PPD [professional values and practice] and try to use it to help me understand what I’m trying to do better..I’ve found this a good way of working...it’s helped in the school.”* [Joan: semi-structured interview]

For Engestrom (2001), such an expansive outlook helps the practitioner interpret and respond to aspects of their practice in increasingly enriching ways. Expansive learning involves the creation of new knowledge and new practices emanating from a newly emerging activity focus. Such a transformation may be triggered by the introduction of new ways of understanding tools in use, and may take place when existing knowledge is deployed in new activity settings. In Joan’s case, new knowledge can be seen to be constructed through experimentation and reflection within her established activity system.

#### **6.4.4 Vignette 4: Illuminating Procedures and Rules Embedded Within School Culture: the Subject-Community-Rules/Procedures Activity Element**

Many beginning teachers find their first experience in schools a complex personal challenge in which they have to quickly come to terms with new competences and practice. However, what they are expected to know is not always made explicit by

those they work with, and beginning teachers are often unsure about the significance of the rules, systems and codes that are embedded in the school culture. This can be a source of anxiety and frustration for some beginning teachers.

In some cases this may lead to a misunderstanding between the beginning teachers and what is expected of them which, in turn, can give the impression that the beginning teacher is not fulfilling all their professional duties.

Colin who is a 42 year old ex industrial engineer was in the middle of his first placement when mentors began to express concerns about whether he fully understood all aspects of his teaching role. He was planning and delivering lessons to an acceptable standard, but mentors thought that he was not always following school procedures. Mentors had discussed these issues a number of times with Colin, but commented that *“he didn’t always listen”* and *“didn’t always take the advice he was given on board.”* Such comments are commonplace in the teacher training field due to beginning teachers being overawed with the amount of work they are expected to do. They rarely have the time, skills or experience to deal with all the issues they are confronted with during their time in school.

In the case of Colin, his first interview discussion indicated that he was unsure about the role systems played in school life and how to deal with all the issues that he encountered. He felt that these had not been fully explained to him and that he hadn’t been in the school long enough to understand them effectively;

*“The school was a large one and had lots of procedures in place for things like pupils’ attendance, behaviour and dealing with parents...There were quite a lot of them and I didn’t use them all the while...towards the end of my placement I started to understand what most were for...my professional mentor was good he did a session on them each week...though I wasn’t able to get used to them all. At first I used to do my own thing...once I kept two pupils behind after school because they hadn’t tidied up when I’d asked them to without informing the Head of Year. This caused some trouble in the school and my mentor wasn’t too pleased...she kept more of an eye on me after that.” [semi-structured interview]*

When this issue was discussed further during the interview it became evident that Colin had not fully understood the significance that systems played in the culture make up of the school. Within this context Colin was asked to think about his practice in terms of the tacit, normative aspects of the school which are embedded within a formal rule based culture (figure 6.5).

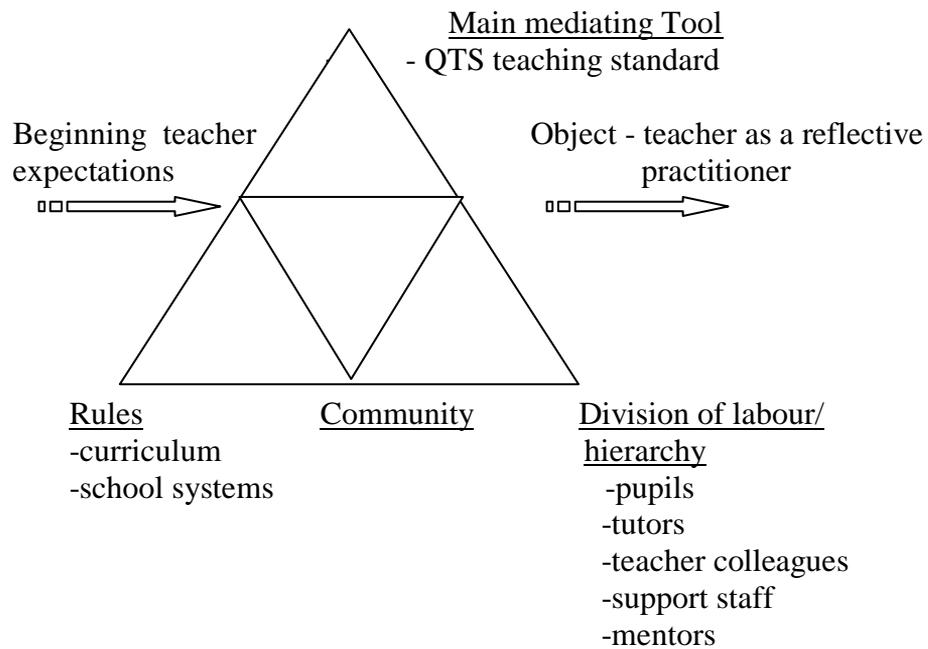


Figure 6.5 Beginning teachers' rules and systems framework.

Colin made use of this notion to explore the role explicit rules played in his practice and how these might relate to the hidden curriculum aspects of his practice. He particularly explored the nature of the beliefs and values and understandings that are passed on to the beginning teacher in an educational institution, not through formal teaching but tacitly through what the school implicitly expects of the beginning teacher.

### 6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter suggests how cultural historical activity theory may be used by beginning teachers, mentors and tutors to model, make sense of and reconcile some of the division of labour, school system and cultural issues which occur during training. The activity theory framework may be used as a tool to characterise the expansive

nature of school systems and, as such, help identify particular organisational factors which might affect practice. For example, beginning teachers can make use of the activity theory framework to identify 'sites' of potential tensions and conflict which may occur during practice.

## **Chapter 7 Theoretical Insights into Practice Developed from the Constructivist Grounded Theory Process**

### **7.1 Introduction to the Chapter**

This chapter sets out and discusses theoretical insights into practice which I consider to have evolved from the grounded theory data gathering and analysis process. The description of practice which emerged from this part of the study relates to and complements the work on symbolic interactionism and activity theory discussed in chapters 5 and 6 respectively. Together, these insights into practice i.e. symbolic interactionism, activity theory and the theoretical insights discussed in this chapter help to provide a comprehensive understanding of beginning teacher experience in the substantive field in question.

The outcomes discussed in this chapter are the result of ‘theorising into practice’ activities I carried out during the grounded theory process. During the process, observational, semi-structured interview and reflective journal data were analysed, both within and between data sets, to produce a hierarchy of theoretically generated themes which, together, characterise ways beginning teachers make sense of and enact practice during their transition from student to newly qualified teacher.

‘Theorising into practice’ activities were carried out as the grounded theory process progressed. During the early periods of the work (carried out mainly in phase 1 and some work in phase 2) open codes were attached to respondents’ perceptions, insights and feelings to help characterise the personal meaning of teaching for participants involved in the study. In many ways, the codes selected relate to symbolic

interactionism interpretations of practice in that they seek to describe how beginning teachers make sense of practice from their own situational point of view.

During initial analysis periods, I began to inspect data on a line by line basis as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008). This involved closely examining lines of data to identify particular words and short segments of dialogue which could be coded to reflect actions and perceptions I deemed significant in respondents' descriptions of practice. Corbin and Strauss regard this form of coding to be a convenient way of becoming familiar with detail in the data, and useful in generating initial codes which are grounded in respondents' view of practice.

However, as analysis progressed, I found this line by line approach too specific for the insights into practice I was seeking. I became more concerned about capturing respondents' broader explanations of practice and how these relate to a 'holistic' understanding of beginning teacher experience. I thus began to adopt a more thematic approach to coding data. For this, I attached coding labels to phrases, segments of text and paragraphs in the data sets to make connections between broader events and the open codes used to describe practice.

Many of the codes which emerged from the initial phases of the work related to concerns and issues respondents had about practice. Other codes were linked to phenomena such as respondents' personal attributes and other factors which affected the way they engaged with the culture of the school they were working in. The initial codes, also, took into account participants' past experiences and how these informed their first encounters with teaching. In this respect, the codes which emerged from the

first phases of the work can be considered to provide the basis for a ‘first level’ topography of practice seen from the beginning teachers’ point of view. Such codes include pre-teacher self, personal attributes, concerns and confidence. The coded variables which emerged from the work are discussed in more detail in section 7.3.

The first stage codes provided the springboard for extending the ‘theorising into practice’ work. During phases 3 and 4, I sought further theoretical descriptions of practice by examining data from a more analytical standpoint. To facilitate this, I made use of axial coding, memoing and my own ‘sensitising to the data’ understanding of practice, through exploring the literature and using my own professional experience, to generate codes that could provide ‘higher level’ theoretical insights into practice. As such, the range of ‘theorising into practice’ activities carried out throughout the grounded theory process worked towards providing a theoretical description of practice which was in line with constructivist grounded theory thinking suggested by Charmaz (2006) and others e.g. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) .

The ‘theorising into to practice’ activities resulted in identifying three key ‘moments’ of practice which beginning teachers should aim towards during their transition from student to newly qualified teacher. These I describe as

- (i) becoming aware of one’s own teacher oriented ‘me’ with respect to the educational setting in which one works,
- (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field,

(iii) working towards a strong sense of teacher ‘voice’.

As I discuss more fully in chapter 8, providing the opportunity for beginning teachers to attain such moments during their professional development would help them engage with practice beyond the minimum requirements of the current QTS standard’s ([www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)) requirements. In this respect, a main aim of the data coding activities was to seek out suitable descriptions of practice which could complement the symbolic interactionism/activity theory model I have used as the basis for understanding beginning teacher experience in the practice field.

The way in which ‘theorising into practice’ moved from the initial open codes generated in phases 1 and 2 to the three key moments of practice which, I suggest, beginning teachers should aim to achieve during training is illustrated in figure 7.1. During the first two phases of the grounded theory process open codes were generated to give initial insights into practice. The open codes which emerged from the analysis formed the basis for the second tier, axial coding process. For this work, constant comparison techniques were used to develop theoretical descriptions of practice from the beginning teacher point of view. The third level analysis carried out in phase 4 allowed higher descriptions of practice to emerge from the grounded theory work.

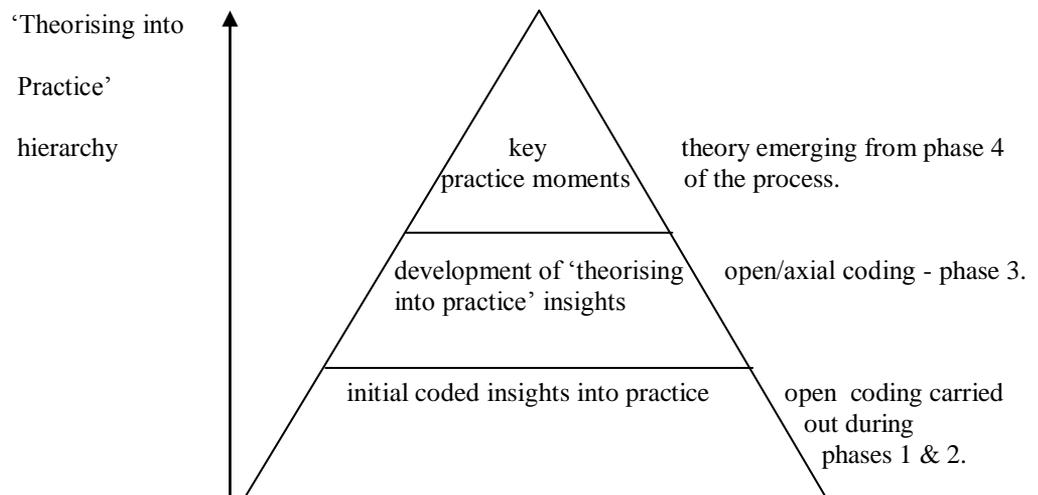


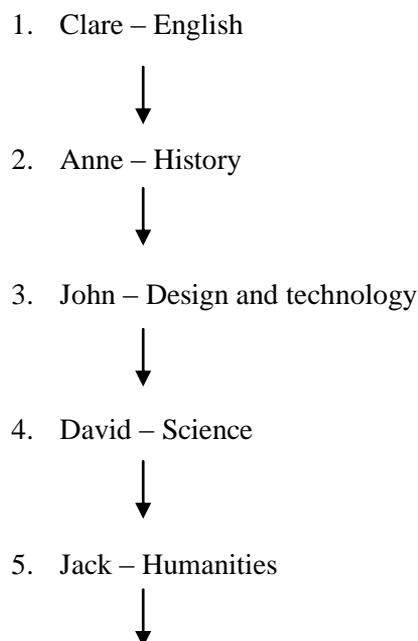
Figure 7.1 – Theory generating analysis carried out at each phase of the process.

## 7.2 Variables Emerging from the Phase 1 Data

During this phase I worked towards identifying a range of core variables which I suggest are useful in characterising beginning teachers' feelings, insights and perceptions of practice. Observational, interview and textual data were analysed both within and between data sets to establish thematic codes which provided descriptions of practice from the beginning teachers' point of view. The open coded descriptions of practice which emerged from this phase formed the basis for further theoretical analysis in phases 3 and 4 of the grounded theory process. Data analysis in phase 1 was conducted using two methods (i) examining data sets for common themes and occurrences to which appropriate codes could be attached (ii) the use of mind-mapping diagrams to help provide a visual structure to themes which characterised respondents' experience of practice.

Following the theoretical sampling principles of grounded theory, I initially analysed data outcomes from the first respondent (in this case Clare) and coded key insights into practice accordingly. These outcomes provided an initial set of coded themes which were then compared with coded outcomes from the second respondent's e.g. Anne's data set. This involved examining whether additional codes emerging from the second set could be added to those which resulted from the previous respondent analysis. This theoretical sampling approach was continued for each respondent data set, and worked towards capturing a broad range of open coded themes which could describe practice prior to data saturation.

Figure 7.2 outlines the respondent theoretical sampling sequence. As discussed, outcomes from each respondent's data set were compared with subsequent participants' researched responses to provide a range of codes which relate to the experiences of all participants in the field. Background information for each stage 1 participant is given in section 4.7.



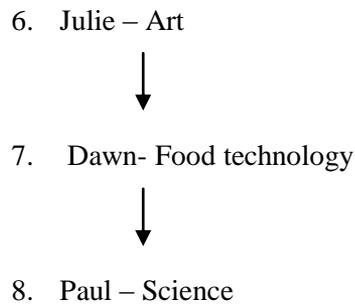


Figure 7.2 Theoretical sampling sequence of participants in stage 1 of the coding process.

An example of how some codes selected relate to themes embedded in respondents’ data sets are given below. The extracts are based on outcomes from selected respondents’ transcribed interview data. As the example shows, I coded data in relation to themes embedded in the participant’s view of practice. A complete list of data themes which emerged from the first stage grounded theory analysis as a whole is given in table 7.1.

**Example of respondents’ perceptions of experience**

**notes**

*I was worried about the length of time I’d been out of education – that it was 18 years since I did my degree, so I was worried about my subject knowledge when I came for the interview; but that was one of the first things you picked up on wasn’t*

**thematic coding**

**Concerns**

*Concerned about having inadequate subject knowledge and whether able to use existing subject knowledge in the classroom situation.*

*it I wasn't too worried about my teaching because I had worked as a teaching assistant before shop, but history may be different and I wanted a refresher before I started the course just to give me confidence with the rest of the students. (Clare – semi-structured interview).*

*When I started the course I hadn't taught at all. I had no experience of teaching at all and although in my working life I've spoken to people and I've trained people, the thought of teaching kids frightened me and I wanted some kind of training. I know when you said at the interview you're not going to be taught how to teach, but I wanted a little bit of that. I wanted someone to sit down and show me what is the right way to do it before I went into a classroom. I didn't feel out my depth, but going into my first placement, which was so early on in the course, I just felt really vulnerable. I watched what the teachers did and I thought, yeah I can do that, that's fine, but I felt really vulnerable standing up for my first class - never ever done it before, only watching someone do it - and if I'd had a bit more support... because I felt*

**Concerns**

*Had self doubts about teaching.*

**Concerns**

*Needs more guidance on how to teach and how to handle particular teaching situations.*

**Confidence**

*Lacks confidence in the teaching situation.*

*so scared about teaching when I started the course, I just needed someone to really, well, to say this is the right way to do it or this is my technique, this is what I do. I've said in some of my assignments that I've found out I'm a kinaesthetic learner – I need to see things and do things; I need to feel comfortable in my learning and it didn't feel as if I was getting proper training at the time because I needed to do that before I went into that classroom.*(John – semi-structured interview).

**Concerns**

*Needs as much information as possible before having the confidence to make decisions.*

**Personal attributes**

*Needs reassurance in the role.*

*I do for myself to show me what I've done and it does allow you to reflect because when I started my first placement I did a reflective diary every day...I have had to reflect on what I have done and how I've changed things.* (Clare – semi-structured interview).

**Personal attributes**

*Values reflective practice, and identifies the need for individualised teacher training plans.*

*Yes, I'm quite a strict teacher. Sometimes it doesn't work well with some kids and it's made me stop and think how best to motivate them. Sometimes I have to do things that go against the way I am in*

**Values**

*Clear set of values in terms of behaviour management.*

*order to motivate them. I go against the way that I think I should be with disruptive kids, it's made me stop and think how to get the best out of them. It's made me stop and not look at the way I'm teaching but that they're getting out of the lesson. . (Clare – semi-structured interview).*

I also made use of mind-mapping diagrams to help provide a visual structure to the themes which characterised respondents' experience of practice. This helped me organise responses into thematic groups which captured the essence of practice from the beginning teachers' point of view. An example of a completed mind map is shown below in figure 7.3

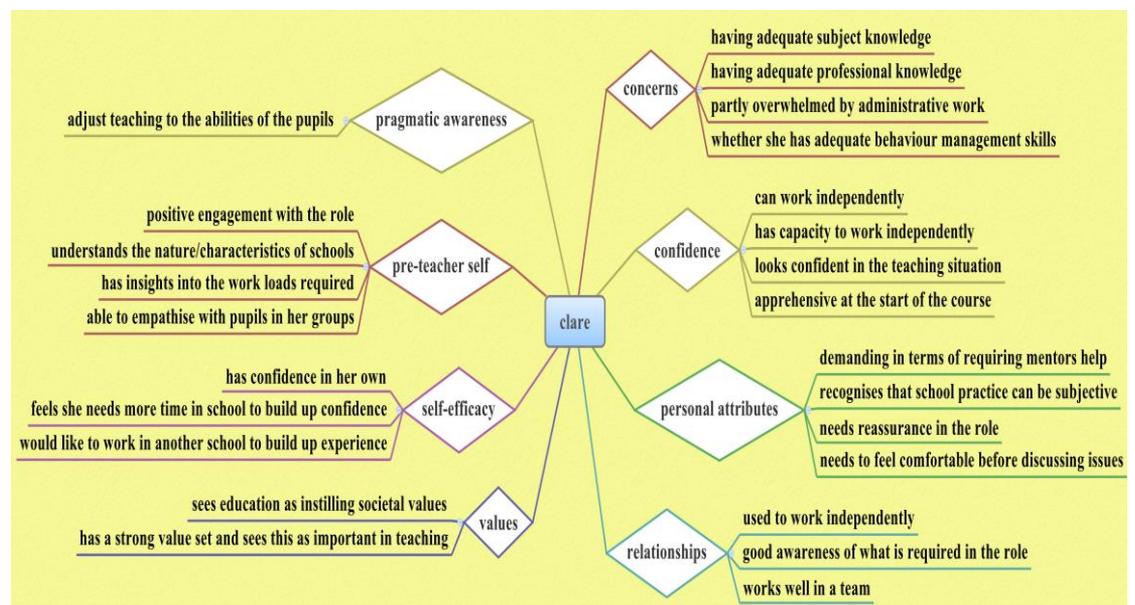


Figure 7.3 Example of mind map topology of a respondent's perceptions of practice.

Eight variable categories, which I considered characterised the relationship respondents had with their practice, emerged from the first phase analysis. These being

<u>Variable code</u>		<u>description of phenomenon</u>
Pre-teacher self		The influence of the pre-teacher self issues on beginning teacher engagement with practice.
Personal attributes	-	Beginning teachers' personal attributes and how they relate to practice.
Concerns	-	The concerns beginning teachers have about teaching, and how these affect their transition from student to newly qualified teacher.
Confidence	-	The impact beginning teachers' confidence has on their success as teachers.
Self efficacy	-	The ability of the beginning teacher to succeed in a particular situation.
Values	-	The value position the beginning teacher holds and how this relates to the value position of the school they are working in.
Relationships	-	The ability of the beginning teachers to form positive relationships with mentors, pupils and others in the schools they are working in.
School placement	-	Pragmatic awareness of the issues within the school they are working in.

## 7.2.1 Summary of Themes and Related Variable Codes Resulting From Coding Phase 1 Data

The table below summarises the relationships between the themes emerging from the data sets and the thematic codes assigned to particular aspects of practice from the respondents' point of view. The themes which emerged from the data sets are listed in the *compendium of themes emerging from the data* column. These themes e.g. demanding in terms of requiring help from school mentors, requires a lot of attention and looks to be organised, were grouped together under a thematic code heading e.g. personal attributes. Each theme is linked to the behaviour and experiences of each respondent who took part in the first stage of the analysis. Thus, the themes and associated variable codes capture the broad set of perceptions respondents' had about their practice. The themes and codes listed in table 7.1 provide an initial open coded insight into the beginning teacher experience.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Compendium of themes considered to have emerged from initial data analysis.</b>	<b>Thematic variable code assigned to respondents' engagement with practice.</b>
John, Dave, Jack.	<i>Uses previous work experience to inform practice.</i>	<b>Pre-teacher self</b>
Jack, John.	<i>Used to working with clients and others in work situations.</i>	
Dawn.	<i>Has a firm sense of what is expected of one's self in the teaching situation.</i>	
Clare.	<i>Has Previous school-based experience.</i>	

Dawn, Julie, Jack, Dave, John.	<i>Worked in business or industry.</i>	
Clare, Anne	<i>Demanding in the terms of the requiring help from school mentors; requires a lot of personal attention.</i>	<b>Personal attributes</b>
Clare	<i>Recognises that school practice can be subjective.</i>	
John, Anne, David, Paul	<i>Looks to be organised.</i>	
John	<i>Needs reassurance in the role.</i>	
John, Dawn	<i>Has a calming influence on the pupils he/she teaches.</i>	
David	<i>Needs to feel comfortable before discussing issues with mentors and tutors.</i>	
Jack	<i>Finds it difficult to be open when reflecting about practice.</i>	
David	<i>Values honesty when discussing training issues with mentors and other professionals.</i>	
David	<i>Takes time to build up the trust of others.</i>	
John	<i>Feels as though he has low self esteem when compared with other teachers in the school.</i>	
Jack	<i>Needs to be directed.</i>	

Jack, David, Anne	<i>Has difficulty in identifying professional needs in terms of the QTS standards.</i>
Clare	<i>Has prior experience in working with children in a teaching assistant's role.</i>
Jack	<i>Has a defensive attitude to others.</i>
Jack, Julie	<i>Finds personal reflection difficult at times.</i>
Anne, Julie	<i>Seeks guidance.</i>
Anne, Jack, Julie	<i>Determined to succeed in the role.</i>
Julie, David	<i>Very committed to the role.</i>
David, Julie, Clare.	<i>Grasps the opportunities set by the mentors.</i>
Dawn.	<i>A mature student with a wide range of work experience.</i>
Anne, Dawn, Jack.	<i>A sense of duty; feels he/she has a trusting personality.</i>
Clare, Anne, Julie.	<i>Very committed to the role.</i>
Anne.	<i>Values reflective practice, and identifies the need for individualised teacher training plans.</i>
Anne.	<i>Very demanding and wanted a personal university based training programme to help her development.</i>

Anne.	<i>Determined to succeed.</i>	
Anne, Dawn, Jack.	<i>Serious.</i>	
Dawn, Jack, Paul.	<i>Single minded and wants to succeed in her profession.</i>	
Clare, Anne.	<i>Accepts responsibility.</i>	
John, Paul.	<i>Engages well with extra-curricular activities.</i>	
Anne.	<i>Plans work early and does not leave administrative work to the last minute.</i>	
Anne.	<i>Has high expectations of pupils and mentors.</i>	
Anne	<i>Enthusiastic.</i>	
Clare, Anne, John, Jack, Julie.	<i>Concerned about having inadequate subject knowledge and whether able to use existing subject knowledge in the classroom situation.</i>	<b>Concerns</b>
Clare, Anne, John.	<i>Concerned about the amount of administrative, marking and preparation work associated with the job and whether would be able to cope with the amount of 'paperwork'.</i>	
Clare, Anne, David.	<i>Concerned about whether he/she would be able to make use of the professional knowledge.</i>	
Anne.	<i>Concerned about whether or not she has the expertise in behaviour management to control the classes she is taking.</i>	

Julie.	<i>Expressed worries about returning to learning after a number of years not studying in a formal setting.</i>	
Julie.	<i>How to manage reflective journal and teaching file.</i>	
Clare, John.	<i>Finds administrative and assignment deadlines often difficult to meet because of the amount of the workload.</i>	
Dawn.	<i>Needs to feel comfortable before discussing issue with mentors and tutors.</i>	
Dawn.	<i>Finds it difficult to be open when reflecting about practice.</i>	
Clare, John.	<i>Values honesty when discussing training issues with mentors and other professionals.</i>	
Anne.	<i>Takes time to build up the trust of others.</i>	
Julie.	<i>Overwhelmed by the amount of administration in the teaching role.</i>	
Jack.	<i>Needs as much information as possible before having the confidence to make decisions.</i>	
David.	<i>Needs a lot more guidance with professional development assignment work.</i>	
David, Julie.	<i>Concerned about securing a post after training.</i>	
Paul.	<i>Needs more support with professional development work and how this applies to teaching.</i>	

Paul.	<i>Concerned he was not doing enough on the course and school based placement.</i>	
Jack.	<i>Needed more guidance on how to teach and how to handle particular teaching situations.</i>	
Julie.	<i>Working with others who may not be as serious as herself.</i>	
Clare, Dawn.	<i>Has the capacity to work independently.</i>	<b>Confidence</b>
Clare.	<i>Overwhelmed by the amount of administration in the teaching role.</i>	
Clare, Anne.	<i>Not confident about fully understanding the systems in the school she is working in.</i>	
Anne.	<i>How to manage reflective journal and teaching file.</i>	
John, Anne, David.	<i>Finds administrative and assignment deadlines often difficult to meet because of the amount of the workload.</i>	
Anne, Jack.	<i>Lacks confidence in the teaching situation.</i>	
Jack, David.	<i>Lacks confidence in ability to plan effectively for the classes she takes.</i>	
Jack.	<i>Had the feeling that there was an overall 'formula' for teaching and that professional sessions should be able to outline this formulaic toolbox of techniques.</i>	
Clare, John.	<i>Extremely confident in the role.</i>	
Clare.	<i>Can work independently.</i>	

<p>Julie, Jack, Anne, Dawn, Paul.</p> <p>Dawn.</p> <p>David, Jack.</p>	<p><i>Apprehensive at the start of the course.</i></p> <p><i>Needed to compare own stage of development with others in the training cohort.</i></p> <p><i>Recognises to develop confidence and believe in his own teaching ability.</i></p>	
<p>Clare, Julie.</p> <p>Anne, Clare, Julie.</p> <p>Anne, Clare, Julie.</p> <p>Anne.</p> <p>Anne, Clare, Dawn, Julie.</p> <p>Clare, Anne.</p> <p>Clare, Anne, Julie.</p>	<p><i>clear sense of the self in the teaching situation.</i></p> <p><i>looks to be confident when teaching.</i></p> <p><i>discusses issues confidently.</i></p> <p><i>has a firm sense of what is expected of them in the teaching situation.</i></p> <p><i>good professional relationships with mentors and others in the school.</i></p> <p><i>works in a confident manner when working with others.</i></p> <p><i>confident in their own ability when working with pupils.</i></p>	<b>Self efficacy</b>
<p>Clare, Anne.</p> <p>Julie, Jack, Clare.</p>	<p><i>relates values in terms of knowing why she wants to teach.</i></p> <p><i>relates values to classroom behaviour expectation.</i></p>	<b>Values</b>

Clare.	<i>has a clear value set in relation to what they believe education should involve.</i>	
Julie, Anne.	<i>has a strong sense of 'personal philosophy in teaching'.</i>	
Julie, Anne.	<i>beginning teachers' value set matches that of the school.</i>	
Anne.	<i>Conflicting interests between training and family commitments.</i>	<b>Relationships</b>
Clare, Anne, Paul, David.	<i>Quick to build professional relationships in the school setting.</i>	
Julie.	<i>Considered the school she was working in to be a successful community of practice.</i>	
Anne.	<i>In previous job in business has worked with people of all ages.</i>	
Paul.	<i>Values peer support.</i>	
Clare, Anne, John.	<i>Supports work colleagues.</i>	
Dawn.	<i>Seen by mentors to not always fully participate in school life.</i>	<b>School placement</b>
Anne.	<i>Felt she had little guidance from mentors and others in the school.</i>	
Jack.	<i>Mentors have questioned his commitment to teaching.</i>	
Jack.	<i>Mentors have expressed the view that trainee does not always see the link between professional development work and teaching practice.</i>	
Anne, Clare, Paul.	<i>Values feedback on practice from mentors.</i>	

Clare, Anne, John.	<i>Seeks guidance from mentors and others in the school system.</i>
Anne, Julie, Paul.	<i>Valued classroom observational sessions as part of training development.</i>
Jack.	<i>Felt a lot of pressure in the school situation, especially when being observed.</i>
Anne, Clare.	<i>Felt that good mentor and tutor feedback gave her confidence.</i>
Paul.	<i>Tended to focus on negative aspects of the teaching role.</i>
Paul.	<i>Quite nervous in the school situation.</i>
Paul.	<i>Felt isolated from college support.</i>
Paul.	<i>Had lack of trust in the mentor.</i>
Paul.	<i>Felt he was finding out about the teaching role solely by herself.</i>
John, David.	<i>Listens to advice.</i>
John.	<i>Seeks guidance.</i>
John.	<i>Collaborates with colleagues.</i>
Dawn.	<i>Strained communication between herself and her curriculum mentor.</i>
John.	<i>Can work independently in the school situation.</i>

Table 7.1 Coded themes and sub-themes emerging from the stage 1 grounded theory process.

### **7.3 Discussion of First Stage Variables Which Emerged from the Grounded Theory process, and How These Relate to Beginning Teacher Practice**

#### **7.3.1 Pre-Teacher Self**

A factor I thought important in influencing the way a beginning teacher might engage with practice was their previous work experience. For example, I would have considered those respondents who had previously worked in business or industry to have a more secure understanding of what was required of them in the practice situation and a more secure sense of their own teacher 'persona'.

However, outcomes from this study indicate that previous work experience, in other than teacher related fields, did not necessarily make the individual a better teacher in the practice situation. Clare, for example, exhibited a strong sense of what was expected of her, was confident and self-assured when teaching; attributes which were mainly gained from her previous experiences as a special needs assistant in a secondary school. Her previous teaching related experience gave her confidence in teaching situations and helped her cope with a range of placement difficulties. Having previous insights into how a school functions seems to have given her the ability to adjust relatively easily to how a particular school operates. Clare was seen by mentors and others as being self-assured and confident.

However, some beginning teachers who had extensive work experience in other fields e.g. David, Patricia and Peter did not fare so well during initial training. These participants seemed to find the school culture they were working in markedly

different to what they had experienced before, and had difficulties in adjusting to the cultural needs of the school they were operating in.

### **7.3.2 Personal Attributes**

In terms of the confidence beginning teachers have about teaching, and how they settle in to the teaching role, the personal attributes they bring to the role is a key variable emerging from the analysis. For example, many respondents were well organised, committed to the profession and were able to work well with mentors and colleagues. Such beginning teachers were often seen by mentors to be good practitioners and were seen to be progressing well in their training development. Moreover, having good feedback from mentors, and being able to read the signs and cues of approval had a positive impact on the ‘self’ image respondents had about themselves.

### **7.3.3 Concerns**

A common theme emerging from the work was the concerns beginning teachers had about aspects of practice. The main concern related to class management practices and how beginning teachers might develop effective strategies to deal with behavioural issues in the schools they were working in. In this respect, many respondents felt unprepared to deal with such issues when on placement. A number of respondents indicated that they had concerns about how to motivate their pupils when teaching, how to plan for and organise creative lessons and how to deal with behavioural issues as they arose. A further concern related to the way some beginning teachers expressed feelings of inadequacy due to their mentors having high expectations of their teaching abilities when on placement; an issue which led some

beginning teachers to doubt whether they had the ability to become an effective independent teacher. These and other concerns worked towards some beginning teachers having a sense of anxiety and stress during their placement periods.

### **7.3.4 Confidence**

Outcomes from this work suggest that those respondents who seemed to be more confident in their own teaching abilities had a more secure awareness of the teacher 'persona' they wished to portray, had good feedback from mentors about their teaching abilities, and seemed more comfortable in their teaching role.

### **7.3.5 Self-efficacy**

Respondents who displayed relatively high self-efficacy tended to be self confident, well organised and viewed themselves as good teachers. This seems to be related to ways they had learned to view themselves in terms of how others saw them. Such beginning teachers seemed to be 'on task' in training development and were more persistent and positive in their attitude towards their training role.

### **7.3.6 Values**

Education is, very much, a value laden profession (Kansanen 1999; Halstead 1996), and values play an important part in forming beginning teachers' implicit theories about the teaching role. The set of values a beginning teacher might hold often relates to their cultural experiences and the social situations they have encountered in previous circumstances. Many of the values beginning teachers hold can be considered to be 'low level values' and relate to ways they approach teaching at the classroom level. These may include the expectations a beginning teacher may have

about pupils' discipline, how they expect pupils to learn, uniform policies and ways they expect pupils to address members of staff. In some cases the set of values a beginning teacher might personally hold might be at odds with those of the school they are working in. This can entail the beginning teacher coming to terms with 'the often painful process of reappraising their personal values and beliefs and modifying their idealistic assumptions' (Jones 2003: 398). In this respect, those teachers whose value perspectives are 'in line' with the value expectations of the school are more likely to be seen as 'good' and conforming teachers than those who are not by mentors and others. This, in turn, may affect their training success.

### **7.3.7 Relationships**

The relationships beginning teachers have with mentors, colleagues, pupils and other stakeholders are a key to their success on their teaching placement. Teaching is a collegiate profession, and being able to work with others, particularly in a team work situation, is seen by many teaching professionals as being an essential feature of practice.

### **7.3.8 School Placement**

As this research suggests, the school setting and culture in which beginning teachers work will have a marked effect on their training experience. Competency based teacher education systems aim to set common standards for teaching in all state schools in England, but they may be criticised for their inability to accommodate differences in beginning teachers personal philosophies about practice. Moreover, the generic list of competences applies to all teachers and are independent of teaching stages e.g. primary, secondary and post sixteen provision. It further implies it can be applied to all settings, all levels and all modes of teaching. For effective training,

beginning teachers have to be able to pragmatically engage with different school cultural situations, and being able to do this can markedly enhance their ability to cope with practice situations.

#### **7.4 Developing the Model: Key Concepts and Themes Emerging from Practice**

During phases 3 and 4, I made use of axial coding, memoing and sensitising to the research insights to develop further a range of extended codes which could be used to describe aspects of practice. These codes were to be more descriptively theoretical than the initial open codes and were designed to capture the essence of practice from a beginning teacher behavioural point of view.

##### **7.4.1 Codes Emerging from Phase 3 of the Theoretical Analysis**

During Phase 3 I sought to construct, further, theoretical descriptions of practice which would help explain ways in which beginning teachers made sense of and enacted practice. In this respect, I became concerned about how some beginning teachers were more successful in understanding and carrying out the expectations of their role than others. For example, how beginning teachers were seen by mentors and colleagues as being confident, competent teachers successfully working beyond the minimum requirements of the QTS standards.

This phase of analysis consisted of identifying a set of 'higher order' themes which I considered captured ways in which beginning teachers made sense of the degree to which they engaged with their training experience. To facilitate this, data sets from phases 1 and 2 were further explored for ways in which participants were encouraged to become more confident in their teaching abilities, and how this manifested in their

outward behaviour as teachers e.g. the impression they made to mentors and pupils in the classroom. Three ‘theorising in practice’ themes emerged from this analysis (i) strategies for developing confidence in teaching (ii) engaging with the challenge of teaching (iii) interpreting the meaning of teaching situations.

Table 7.2 sets out the themes and sub-themes which I considered resulted from the further level of data analysis. During this phase, I aimed to synthesise thoughts, ideas and concepts emerging from the data sets with my own understanding of practice gained through the literature and professional experience and memoing activities. The insights that have resulted from this analysis provide a clearer and broader understanding of ways beginning teachers perceive aspects of training in the substantive field.

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
Confidence when teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feeling confident without being prompted by mentors or others.</li> <li>- beginning to let go of the security of mentors and others.</li> <li>- having the confidence to deliver creative lessons.</li> <li>- having the confidence to follow classroom and other school issues through.</li> </ul>

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
Engaging with the challenge of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enjoying the challenge of teaching.</li> <li>- prepared to reflect and learn by one's own mistakes.</li> <li>- secure in the use of subject, pedagogic and curriculum knowledge and how these relate to practice.</li> <li>- being able to reflect on personal issues.</li> <li>- positively acting on feedback given by mentors and others who judge a beginning teacher's performance.</li> </ul>

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
Interpreting the meaning of teaching situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interpreting the cues and signs of approval.</li> <li>- positively interpreting the meaning of the situation.</li> <li>- positively interpreting mentors and others' feedback.</li> <li>- adapting teaching styles to work towards delivering competent lessons.</li> <li>- modelling teaching on the good practice of mentors and others.</li> </ul>

Table 7.2 Themes and sub-themes emerging from the second stage of the analysis.

#### **7.4.2 Strategies for Developing Confidence in Teaching**

A reoccurring theme which emerged in the analysis of successful beginning teacher engagement with practice was how confident they looked and felt in their teaching situation. As previously discussed, those beginning teachers who looked to be confident tended to be regarded by mentors and others as being competent and capable in their role. The positive support they may have received from their mentors and other colleagues was a key factor in underpinning beginning teacher confidence, and the ability of beginning teachers to act on such signs and symbols of approval, further, enhanced their levels of confidence.

A number of sub-themes emerged from this aspect of the work including beginning teachers' ability to feel confident without being prompted by mentors and others; the ability to let go of the security of mentors and others in the early stages of practice; having the confidence to deliver creative lessons and not be too concerned about executing exactly the same lessons as others in the school they are working in; having the confidence to follow classroom and other school-based issues through. In this way, those beginning teachers who engaged with such aspects during training were working towards developing their own teacher voice i.e. developing the sense they were becoming confident, competent teachers, taking full responsibility for the classes they taught. In terms of transitional development, being confident in the teaching situation can be viewed as an important step in developing their 'persona' as teachers.

### **7.4.3 Engaging with the Challenge of Teaching**

Teaching has been described as a challenging profession (Gratch 1966), and beginning teachers have to adapt to the complexity of the role. Those beginning teachers who are organised, committed to the role and can take on high levels of responsibility are more likely to succeed in the role than those who cannot. The ability to reflect on aspects of practice, also, emerged from this study as being a central activity for those beginning teachers who were seen to be engaging successfully with the training process. Sub-themes that relate to the ways in which beginning teachers' accepted the challenge of teaching were (i) engaging the challenge of teacher (ii) prepared to reflect and learn by one's mistakes (iii) sense in the use of subject, pedagogic and curriculum knowledge when teaching (iv) being able to reflect on personal issues and how these relate to practice and (v) positively acting on advice given by mentors and others who judge beginning teacher performance. Those beginning teachers who were able to embrace such issues were, in general, seen by mentors, tutors and others to be developing well in the training situation.

### **7.4.4 Interpreting the Meaning of Teaching Situations**

In terms of the symbolic interactionism interpretations of practice, and ways in which beginning teachers make sense of their teaching role, the ability of beginning teachers to interpret the meaning of particular situations can be considered to be an important aspect of their development. Those beginning teachers who can interpret the signs and symbols of the situation to their own advantage would seem better placed to understand the situation they are in than those who do not. Such themes which, I suggest, relate to ways in which beginning teachers make sense of and interpret the teaching environment around them, include interpreting the cues and signs of

approval; positively interpreting the meaning of the teaching situation; positively interpreting mentors and others' feedback; adapting teaching styles to work towards delivering competent lessons; and modelling teaching on the good practice of mentors and others.

### **7.5 Insights Emerging from Phase 4 of the Grounded Theory Process**

Three key 'moments' of practice which beginning teachers should aim to achieve emerged from the final stage of analysis (i) becoming aware of one's own teacher oriented 'me' with respect to the educational setting in which one works (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field (iii) working towards a strong sense of teacher 'voice'. Figure 7.4 illustrates the way in which grounded theory 'theorising into practice' activities resulted in a coded thematic topography which can be used to describe beginning teacher experience. As illustrated by diagram 7.4, descriptions of practice emerged from data analysis at three levels. During phases 1 and 2, open codes were generated to give first level descriptions of practice. These first level codes provided a basis for phase 3 of the grounded theory process in which data sets were used to provide axial codes to help describe the meaning of practice from the beginning teacher's point of view. The 'three moments of practice' concepts were generated from data analysis during phase 4 of the grounded theory process.

**Phases 1 & 2 – open codes describing the meaning of practice beginning teachers’ meaning of practice**

- |  |
|--|
| i) Pre-teacher self (ii) Personal attributes (iii) Concerns (iv) Confidence<br>(v) Self efficacy (vi) Values (vii) Relationships (viii) School placement |
|--|

**Phase 3 – ‘theorising into practice’ codes describing beginning teachers’ meaning of practice.**

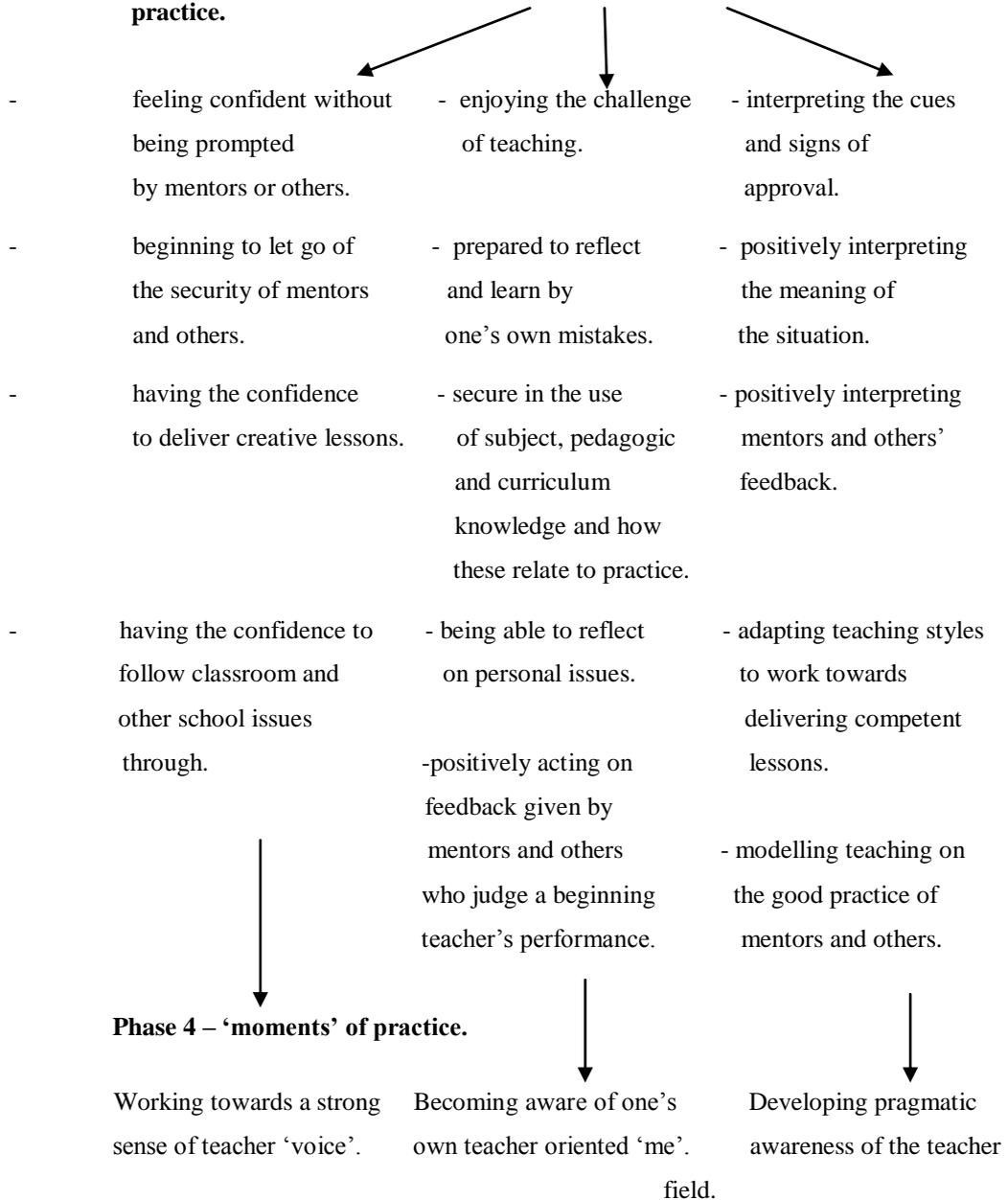


Figure 7.4 ‘Topology’ of practice emerging from the grounded theory process.

### **7.5.1 Becoming More Aware of the Outward ‘me’ One Wants to Project in Particular Teaching Situations**

As outcomes from this study suggest, beginning teachers find it difficult to describe how they think they appear to others (e.g. pupils and teachers) in teaching situations. However, the beginning teachers in this study found it convenient to discuss their perception of themselves as teachers in relation to how they felt about a particular situation, and in terms of the body image they wished to project.

There are a number of ways to help beginning teachers become more aware of the image they present to others in practice. These include, written and verbal feedback from mentors, tutors and peers; video evidence of practice; micro-teach activities in which beginning teachers take part. However, these only provide limited feedback for beginning teachers to gain a understanding on their practice self in a particular time, place and context.

As I suggest in this work, developing beginning teachers’ abilities to reflect on the ‘me’ they wish to project, and how this relates to their outward image as teachers is a useful process in beginning teacher development. The ‘me’, often described as the accumulated understanding of the generalised other, allows the individual to enact their role in ways they perceive others will see them. Thus, the ‘me’ is the social ‘self’ formed through an individual’s own reflective commentary and taking into consideration the views and opinions of others.

Those who have a more secure image of their teacher oriented 'me' and can reflectively relate this image to contextual situations they find themselves in, I argue, are more likely to be successful teachers. Those who are less aware of how others see them in the role may be less successful because they do not always interpret the meaning of the situation in positive terms. Thus, working towards beginning teachers having a more secure sense of the 'me' they wish to project, and how this relates to the expectations of the role is a useful factor in beginning teacher development.

Working towards teacher training achievement in purely QTS standard's terms may not necessarily achieve this aim. The competence nature of the QTS standards which mainly focus of issues of planning, assessment and managing classroom behaviour may not necessarily get beginning teachers to reflect on 'holistic' issues.

However, although this might be difficult in practice, encouraging beginning teachers to reflect on and become securely aware of the 'me' they project in the classroom can be seen as a key moment in teacher development.

### **7.5.2 Developing One's Own Pragmatic Awareness of the Contextual Setting in Which One Works**

Pragmatically adjusting how one teaches in relation to the classroom and whole school setting in which one finds oneself may be seen as a central feature of beginning teacher behaviour. Jones (2003) for example, has described how teachers often pragmatically adjust their behaviour in relation to their teaching situation. Pragmatism is also a central principle of symbolic interactionism and one that can be seen to relate closely to what teachers do in practice. For example, teachers reflect on

and adjust pedagogic practices in line with the levels of pupils they are teaching, the types of schools they are in and the types of pupils they are teaching e.g. special needs. Furthermore, teachers consider aspects of inclusivity, gender and ethnicity when planning and delivering lessons. Such adjustments to the environment can be seen to require teachers to interpret the meaning of the teaching situations they are in so that they can make the pragmatic adjustments necessary for effective lesson delivery.

At the whole school level having a perceptive awareness of the school they are working in, systems and hierarchical structures, and being able to make one's own pragmatic adjustments to the school environment is a useful insight of practice to have.

Putting in place developmental systems to help beginning teachers understand their position in the culture of the school, and make rational pragmatic adjustments to their behaviour in line with the expectations of the school can be seen as being useful for beginning teachers' development.

### **7.5.3 Working Towards Developing a Strong Sense of Teacher 'Voice'**

The third key moment to emerge from the grounded theory process is beginning teachers' attainment of a strong sense of teacher 'voice'. 'Voice', in this sense, refers to the sense that teachers feel they have become teachers which, in turn, gives them a sense of self security as teachers, and confidence and presence in the classroom. As the grounded theory analysis suggests, a strong sense of voice comes from how beginning teachers interpret the cues and signs from their teaching environment

including positive feedback from mentors and pupils, how pupils respond to actions and the support they get from colleagues in the school system. Facilitating beginning teachers in their training programme can be seen as an important episode in beginning teachers' development.

The stage at which beginning teachers feel they have attained their 'voice', invariably, depends on the factors such as the personality of the teacher, how their background history prepares them for the profession, the nature of the school they are working in, and the support they get on their training programme. For example, many beginning teachers exhibit a confident personality and this is reflected in how quickly they might attain 'voice' in a particular school situation. Other beginning teachers may not be so self assured and confident about their teaching abilities which be revealed in the way they see themselves as low esteem teachers.

Outcomes from this study suggest that a strong sense of 'voice' is related to beginning teachers being able to

- feel confident about the teaching situation without being prompted by mentors and others in the school,
- letting go of the security of mentors and others responsible for training development,
- feeling confident enough to try out things beyond normal situations,
- being confident enough to be creative and/or innovative in a particular teaching situation,
- have the confidence to follow things through.

## 7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined outcomes emerging from the grounded theory process. The work from this part of the study complements outcomes from the symbolic interactionism and activity theory work carried out in phases 1 and 2. The chapter has discussed the range of open and axial thematic codes and sub-themes which have emerged from the grounded theory activity, and relates these to a topography of beginning teacher practice. Three key moments of practice which beginning teachers should aim to achieve during their training have been identified through the analysis. These being (i) becoming aware of one's own teacher oriented 'me' with respect to the educational setting in which one works (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field (iii) working towards a strong sense of teacher 'voice'.

## **Chapter 8 Developing Beginning Teacher Practice Beyond the QTS Minimum Standards Competence Requirements**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter draws together the main findings in relation to how the QTS standards were used by respondents in both the classroom and wider teaching situations. It is important to emphasise that suggested outcomes from this research are primarily concerned with a small group of beginning teachers who were training in a particular partnership setting. This setting will have particular features relating to the type of schools participating in the study, the teaching and learning methods used by the lead training institution and the cultural features of schools in which training took place. However, the outcomes may be of interest to teacher trainers, mentors and other practitioners working in similar training organisations. In this respect the discussion focuses on how the suggested symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework provides a useful tool for the beginning teachers in question to reflect on and model practice at three levels of professional engagement: the classroom level, the whole school level and wider educational level. The work further integrates three key ‘moments’ of beginning teacher development which emerged from the axial coding stages of the grounded theory process into with the symbolic interactionism/activity theory model. As discussed in chapter 7, I describe these moments as (i) becoming aware of one’s teacher oriented ‘me’ with respect to the educational setting in which one works (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field (iii) working towards developing a strong sense of teacher ‘voice’. Outcomes from this field of work seem to suggest that beginning teachers who work towards such ‘moments’ are more likely to be successful, critically reflective, teachers than those who do not.

Providing training opportunities for beginning teachers to attain such ‘moments’ e.g. as part of professional and pedagogic development programmes, I suggest, are useful in helping beginning teachers gain wider, than in purely QTS standards terms, insights into their role. As I argue, throughout this thesis, the QTS standards provide a limited view of practice and may be considered as being merely a ‘tick box’ list which beginning teachers have to meet and may not necessarily aid beginning teachers’ understanding of many of the culturally oriented factors which influence their role. In doing so, they may provide a limited view of the teacher’s world.

Although, there has been a large amount of research carried out in relation to beginning teacher development over the last few years, literature suggests that there is a relatively small amount of work which specifically examines training issues with respect to the QTS standards. Moreover, even though such work describes phases and experiences beginning teachers may go through during training e.g. coping with practice models, they do not necessarily suggest practice approaches which integrate basic competence factors with broader cultural and system issues embedded in activity theory.

Based on the outcomes of this research, I suggest the proposed symbolic interactionism/activity theory model provides an appropriate description of the training process in the school-based partnership in question. I suggest that in this context the model provides a working framework which the beginning teachers working in this particular setting can use to explore some of the broader features of

school experience, particularly in relation to the cultural, systems and hierarchical mediated settings in which training is carried out.

## **8.2 Using the Symbolic Interactionism/Activity Theory Model to Help Beginning Teachers Understanding Wider Aspects of Practice**

The structural characteristics of the symbolic interactionism/activity theory model allow beginning teachers to reflect on and gain insights into the practice at three levels;

- (i) the classroom level,
- (ii) the whole school level,
- (iii) the wider educational environmental level.

In doing so the model provides beginning teachers and those responsible for teacher training with a useful theoretical lens with which to (i) understand the complexities of the beginning teacher educational environment, and (ii) as a tool which beginning teachers can use to help them critically reflect on and enact practice at each level beyond the minimum requirements of the QTS standards.

### **8.2.1 Classroom Level Understanding**

The most immediate concerns many beginning teachers have in relation to their practice are those which relate to day to day experiences in the classroom setting. For example, many beginning teachers worry about how to cope with challenging behaviour in the classroom (Fuller and Brown 1975), how to plan meaningful and creative learning activities, and how to make sure they have adequate subject knowledge to teach at the required learning level (Troman 2000). Also, they are

often concerned about the amount of work they have to do in the early stages of training (Conway and Clarke 2003), and if they will be able to ‘survive’ in the classroom setting (Burden 1980).

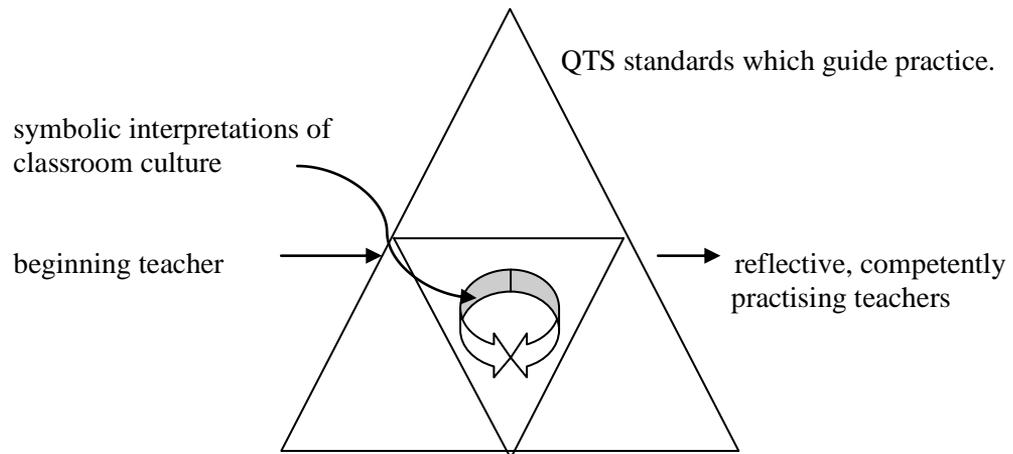
As suggested by a number of commentators (see for example Enyon and Wall 2002; Storey 2007) the QTS standards provide a base-line competence framework which beginning teachers have to meet to be awarded qualified teacher status. This mainly relates to skills needed for effective lesson delivery e.g. lesson planning, assessment methods and organising the learning environment. However, sensitising to the research activities carried out in the early stages of the grounded theory process suggested that those beginning teachers who have a more expansive understanding of practice are more likely to be successful teachers than those who do not. For example, beginning teachers who find it difficult to reflect and act on some of the broader aspects of practice are often seen by mentors as not performing as well as they should be even though they are achieving the QTS standards targets set for them. In many cases, mentors see them as ‘failing’ beginning teachers because they are not, in their view, addressing some of the wider expectations of the role. For example, not exhibiting ‘teacher presence’ in the classroom; having little understanding of the value oriented expectations of the role; and having little empathy with the social needs of pupils in the classroom.

Classrooms are complex cultural environments which are characterised by formal dimensions of the school environment such as behaviour policies, codes of conduct and pupil/teacher learning contracts, as well as informal aspects of classroom culture e.g. normative dimensions, tacit influences and ‘hidden curriculum’ issues. In

practice, 'hidden curriculum' aspects of the classroom culture can be seen to have a significant influence on the social dynamics of the classroom (Cornbleth 1990); especially in describing classroom interactions from pupils' points of view. This can include ways in which pupils relate to each other, the level and type of language used and the power relationships that may exist between groups of pupils who make up the classroom environment. In addition, classrooms invariably consist of pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds who have different learning needs. These all contribute towards the hierarchical structure that exists between pupils, teachers and others who make up the classroom system.

It is within such culturally mediated environments that teachers and pupils construct shared understandings of a particular learning environment. Thus, having a deeper insight into the cultural characteristics of classroom settings can help beginning teachers make more sense of the field they are working in.

The way in which the classroom can be modelled in symbolic interactionism/activity theory terms is illustrated in figure 8.1. As the diagram indicates, beginning teachers' practice is mediated by the systems which relate to practice, the cultural factors which make up the classroom environment e.g. the hidden curriculum and the norms of the classroom, and the 'divisions of labour' structures that exist between the beginning teachers, pupils, mentors and others in the classroom setting.



The systems which relate to practice.	classroom cultural makeup - the 'hidden curriculum' - classroom norms - tacit issues - formal aspects of culture	hierarchical structure between beginning teachers, pupils and others in the classroom.
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Figure 8.1. Modelling classroom interaction using activity theory

Some factors associated with an activity theory understanding of practice are more easily applied to classroom situations than others. For example, it may be relatively easy for beginning teachers to reflect on and evaluate how they make use of school's system policies e.g. school behavioural policies, to help deal with particular classroom issues. For example, beginning teachers can reflect on why a particular policy was applied, how it was applied and what affect it had on pupils' behaviour. Reflecting-on-action (Kolb 1984) in this way can help beginning teachers become more competent in dealing with the day to day situations they find themselves in. In addition, beginning teachers may find reflecting and acting on issues relating to QTS standards a relatively straightforward thing to do. The criterion nature of the QTS standards allow beginning teachers to work towards achieving targets set for them by

mentors and university tutors and then reflect on the outcomes to inform future practice.

However, other factors associated with an activity theory understanding of practice may not be so clearly defined. For example, beginning teachers may not recognise 'tacit' ways experienced staff may carry out their role. The beginning teacher may not recognise different ways departments in the same school operate, the 'unofficial' organisation of the staffroom, the influence some staff may have on a school's 'pecking order' and the informal structures which exist in terms of age and informal teaching 'seniority'. Such 'tacit' behaviours contribute to normative dimensions of the classroom environment. As research suggests, normative aspects of school life contribute to its climate (Steele and Jenks 1977) and the informal aspects of the organisation are not easily identified by those who work in them.

The 'hidden curriculum' too may not be as explicit as some of the formal policies, procedures and espoused features of a school's culture. The 'hidden curriculum' typically resides in the pupils' 'classroom world'; the outcomes of which may not be instantly recognised by the teacher in the classroom. However, a 'hidden curriculum' exists and operates in addition to the formal curriculum delivered by the teacher. The 'hidden curriculum' typically reflects ways pupils work and communicate with other pupils, strategies they may adopt to help them 'survive' school life, how they form relationships within the school, and how they engage with informal rules, norms and ways of doing things embedded in a particular school culture.

### **8.2.2 Whole School Level Understanding**

In addition to the cultural classroom environment, the beginning teacher is also part of the 'whole school' culture which includes the mix of teachers and other workers in the work environment. As research suggests, schools have individual cultural characteristics which may be described in climate or 'feeling' terms (Steele and Jenks 1977), or by the formal and informal levels of culture they display. Carr (2006), for example, describes the character of schools in terms of knowledge based, duty and virtuous norms which he suggests is the essence of school culture.

The different cultural forms that exist in schools can be seen, to some extent, to be related to the type and function of the school in question. For example, many schools cater primarily for special needs students and have environments which facilitate such learning. Other schools are deemed high achieving and expect beginning teachers to motivate pupils to get good examination grades. In addition, the English school system incorporates a range of academy schools, grammar schools, comprehensive schools, independent schools and a number of other religious based and denomination schools, all of which may present particular cultural, hierarchical and systems forms for those who work in them.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) have shown how group culture is the single most important cultural factor in institutions. Its key dimensions are the values, rites and rituals and the network of informal communication systems. These can hide the real power that lies within a school. In this way, the norms and attitudes of a teaching environment can arise from a sense of shared history. As discussed in chapter 2, culture can be seen to exist at two levels: the formal and informal. The formal structure includes the visible signs and systems of the school which includes its

structures, procedures and rules. The formal structure is more easily identified and controllable.

However, the informal structure is hidden and is often more difficult for beginning teachers to gain an understanding of how it works within the school. Furthermore, culture is not always rational and many schools can have many sub-cultures. Schein (1992) sees the culture of a group as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group has learned together.

### **8.2.3 Wider Educational Level**

In addition to direct classroom experiences and belonging to a whole school community, beginning teachers are part of a wider educational system which is markedly influenced by wider external factors such as new governmental trends and initiatives and Ofsted directives. In the current economic climate which impacts on educational change, teachers often have to change and adapt their teaching and learning approaches in line with new educational policies. Such policies can have a marked effect on how beginning teachers experience and cope with practice, and how they perform in the classroom. Education in England is very much target driven and teachers have to provide data to show how pupils they teach are progressing in terms of educational achievement. In this way, their teaching is often subjected to close scrutiny by school managers and other bodies.

### **8.3 Expanding the Model: Key Moments in Beginning Teacher Development**

The aim of the grounded theory open and axially generated coding process was to generate conceptual insights which could illuminate ‘fresh insights’ into the

substantive practice field. As described in chapter 7, data coding was carried out at each grounded theory phase so that descriptions of practice could emerge from each phase. Together, these insights worked towards building up a coherent understanding of practice from the beginning teachers' point of view. As such, emerging codes were constructively grounded in beginning teachers' perceptions and experiences of practice, and directed towards understanding how they felt about particular school situations.

Theoretical insights into practice were developed to help trainee teachers consider their role above and beyond the minimum requirements of the QTS standards. As discussed the symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework provides a good description of the practice setting. However, further refinement of the model is useful.

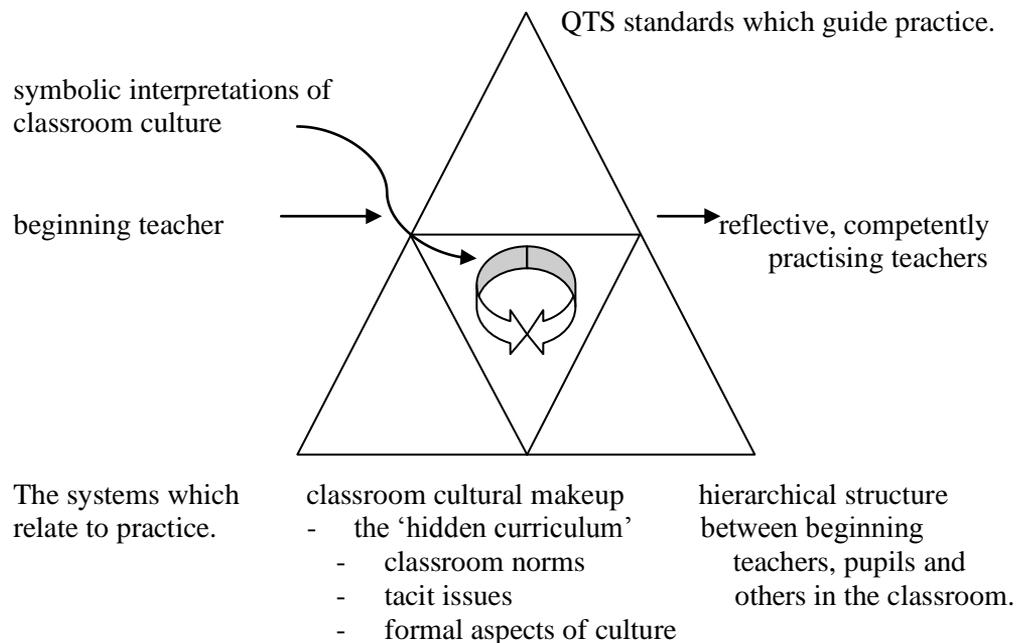
The grounded theory which emerged from the study has led to my suggestion that beginning teachers need to come to terms, address and reflect on three key moments during their transition from student to newly qualified teacher to help them gain a better understanding of the self in relation to their beginning teacher role.

The three key moments are;

Moment 1 - becoming more aware of the outward 'me' one wants to project in particular teaching situations.

Moment 2 – developing pragmatic awareness of the contextual setting in which one works.

Moment 3 – working towards developing a strong sense on one’s teacher ‘voice’.



Key moments of practice (i) becoming more aware of the outward ‘me’ one wants to project in particular teaching situations (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the contextual setting in which one works (iii) working towards developing a strong sense on one’s teacher ‘voice’.



Figure 8.2 Activity theory model with three key moments of practice.

Figure 8.2 makes use of the activity theory framework with the three moments of practice included in the model. As the model suggests, the beginning teacher training process is mediated through use of the QTS standards and influenced by the systems, cultural, and division of labour factors which affect practice. The three moments of

practice suggest the key learning aims beginning teachers should achieve during their transition from student to newly qualified teacher.

Developing beginning teachers' awareness of such issues should be embedded in their professional development programmes, and should complement work linked to the QTS standards. Enabling beginning teachers to view their practice in symbolic interactionism terms e.g. understanding the effects of their own 'persona' in the teaching field, and having an awareness of practice in activity theory terms would be a useful approach to deepening their understanding of practice. Moreover, enabling beginning teachers to attain the three moments of practice which emerged from the grounded theory work (i.e. (i) becoming more aware of the outward 'me' one wants to project in particular teaching situations; (ii) developing pragmatic awareness of the contextual setting in which one works; and (iii) working towards developing a strong sense on one's teacher 'voice') would be a key factor in enhancing their abilities to successfully engage and cope with practice; issues which are further discussed in Chapter 9: Recommendations for further work and relationship to beginning teacher reflective practice.

## **Chapter 9 Recommendations for Further Work and Relationship to Beginning Teacher Reflective Practice**

The research that has been undertaken for this thesis has highlighted a number of topics on which further research would be beneficial. In the context of the study, the symbolic interactionism/activity theory framework has been shown to be useful to gain insights into beginning teacher behaviour, and model training practice. This research, however, was carried out with a relatively small number of participants who were training in one training institution and a small number of partnership schools. As such, it would be useful to extend the research study to other training providers and associated partnership schools to gather further insights into beginning teacher behaviour in the QTS training context.

Moreover, the work in this study has given a broad insight into practice where outcomes and associated discussions covered a wide range of experiences from the beginning teachers' point of view. In view of this, it would be useful to examine some ways in which symbolic interactionism principles relate to beginning teacher behaviour in more detail. This is especially the case in seeking more data to gain an understanding of how beginning teachers reflectively make use of the signs and symbols which shape practice, and how they pragmatically make decisions in the teaching settings they are working in.

Such insights into practice would be useful in the development of professional practice study materials to help beginning teachers gain a better understanding

of the complexities of their role and how this relates to their own 'persona' in the teaching situation.

As this study suggests, having a secure awareness of their own 'persona' and 'teacher voice' seems to be a key factor in developing beginning teachers' confidence in the teaching situation; an aspect of practice which very much relates to the way mentors and others perceive them as successfully developing in their role. Thus, further work in ways beginning teachers perceive themselves as teachers would be a useful research area to pursue.

Further work could also explore in more detail the 'first level' coded themes which emerged from the grounded theory process. For example, the emergent codes could be used as variable categories in studies which examine the relationships between particular themes e.g. between pre-teacher self and level of concerns. Such an examination of teachers' perceptions could form the basis of a questionnaire study which makes use of a larger sample (than used for this study) to gain further insights into practice from the beginning teacher's point of view.

In terms of beginning teachers' professional development, the outcomes from the study have provided insights which enable beginning teachers to reflect on actions beyond the minimum requirements of the QTS standards. Outcomes are thus useful for the development of reflective tools and activities which can enhance beginning teachers' understanding of aspects of practice in the schools they work in. For example, having some understanding of symbolic interactionism principles, e.g. how they may take on the role of significant others or being aware of the persona they

project whilst teaching, can be useful in helping beginning teachers ‘see’ how others view them in the teaching situation. In addition, utilising activity theory as a tool to aid a beginning teachers’ ‘holistic’ understanding of transition issues e.g. the cultural, systems and power relationships they may encounter in schools, can help beginning teachers reflect on some of the more complex issues they face when teaching.

In addition to these practice tools, providing professional development opportunities to help beginning teachers work towards attaining the three moments of practice which, I suggest, are important in training development i.e. becoming aware of one’s own teacher oriented ‘me’ with respect to the educational setting in which one works; developing pragmatic awareness of the teaching field; and working towards a strong sense of teacher ‘voice’ would be useful in developing beginning teacher confidence and competence in teaching situations.

Such professional development opportunities would perhaps be useful in helping those beginning teachers deemed to be failing because of they are seen by mentors as *not being cut out to teach or they have not got teaching in them*; sentiments which often seem to judge beginning teacher abilities in non-QTS standard terms. Enabling such beginning teachers to reflect on and engage with the essence of the three moments could be a key factor in helping them succeed in their teacher development.

In this respect, and in the context of school-based partnership provision, a further recommendation is that the activity theory framework developed in this study could provide the basis for aspects of training and continual professional development of mentors in schools. As such, the framework could provide a stimulus ‘tool’ to help

mentors gain insights into how the cultural and QTS standards aspects of practice impact on beginning teacher experience, and how some training practices could help beginning teachers work towards achieving the three key moments of practice suggested in this study.

## Appendix One

### Appendix 1 QTS standards (TDA 2007, TDA 2008)

#### Professional attributes

Professional attributes	
Those recommended for the award of QTS (Q) should:	
Relationships with children and young people	
Q1	Have high expectations of children and young people including a commitment to ensuring that they can achieve their full educational potential and to establishing fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with them.
Q2	Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from children and young people.
Frameworks	
Q3a	Be aware of the professional duties of teachers and the statutory framework within which they work.
Q3b	Be aware of the policies and practices of the workplace and share in collective responsibility for their implementation.
Communicating and working with others	
Q4	Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers.

Q5	Recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and well-being of children and young people, and to raising their levels of attainment.
Q6	Have a commitment to collaboration and co-operative working.
Q7a	Reflect on and improve their practice, and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs.
Q7b	Identify priorities for their early professional development in the context of induction.
Q8	Have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified.
Q9	Act upon advice and feedback and be open to coaching and mentoring.
Team working and collaboration	
Q32	Work as a team member and identify opportunities for working with colleagues, sharing the development of effective practice with them.
Q33	Ensure that colleagues working with them are appropriately involved in supporting learning and understand the roles they are expected to fulfil.

## Professional Knowledge and Understanding

Professional knowledge and understanding	
Those recommended for the award of QTS (Q) should:	
Teaching and learning	
Q10	Have a knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning and provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.
Assessment and monitoring	
Q11	Know the assessment requirements and arrangements for the subjects/curriculum areas they are trained to teach, including those relating to public examinations and qualifications.
Q12	Know a range of approaches to assessment, including the importance of formative assessment.
Q13	Know how to use local and national statistical information to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching, to monitor the progress of those they teach and to raise levels of attainment.
Subjects and curriculum	

Q14	Have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they are trained.
Q15	Know and understand the relevant statutory and non-statutory curricula and frameworks, including those provided through the National Strategies, for their subjects/curriculum areas, and other relevant initiatives applicable to the age and ability range for which they are trained.
Literacy, numeracy and ICT	
Q17	Know how to use skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT to support their teaching and wider professional activities.
Achievement and diversity	
Q18	Understand how children and young people develop and that the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences.
Q19	Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.
Q20	Know and understand the roles of colleagues with specific responsibilities, including those with responsibility for learners with special educational needs and disabilities and other individual learning needs.

Health and well-being	
Q21a	Be aware of the current legal requirements, national policies and guidance on the safeguarding and promotion of the well-being of children and young people.
Q21b	Know how to identify and support children and young people whose progress, development or well-being is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances, and when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support.

Professional skills: Planning.

Professional skills	
Those recommended for the award of QTS (Q) should:	
Planning	
Q22	Plan for progression across the age and ability range for which they are trained, designing effective learning sequences within lessons and across series of lessons and demonstrating secure subject/curriculum knowledge.
Q23	Design opportunities for learners to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
Q24	Plan homework or other out-of-class work to sustain learners' progress and to extend and consolidate their learning.
Reviewing teaching and learning	

Q29	Evaluate the impact of their teaching on the progress of all learners, and modify their planning and classroom practice where necessary.
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Professional skills: Teaching and the learning environment

Professional skills	
Those recommended for the award of QTS (Q) should:	
Teaching: Teach lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range for which they are trained in which they:	
Q25a	use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion
Q25b	build on prior knowledge, develop concepts and processes, enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills and meet learning objectives
Q25c	adapt their language to suit the learners they teach, introducing new ideas and concepts clearly, and using explanations, questions, discussions and plenaries effectively
Q25d	demonstrate the ability to manage the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes, modifying their teaching to suit the stage of the lesson.
Team working and collaboration	
Q30	Work as a team member and identify opportunities for working with colleagues, sharing the development of effective practice with them.

Q31	Ensure that colleagues working with them are appropriately involved in supporting learning and understand the roles they are expected to fulfil.
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Professional skills: Assessing, monitoring and reviewing

Professional skills	
Those recommended for the award of QTS (Q) should:	
Teaching: Assessing, monitoring and giving feedback	
Q26a	use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion
Q26b	build on prior knowledge, develop concepts and processes, enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills and meet learning objectives
Q27	Provide timely, accurate and constructive feedback on learners' attainment, progress and areas for development.
Q28	Support and guide learners to reflect on their learning, identify the progress they have made and identify their emerging learning needs.

## **Appendix Two**

### **Teachers' Standards from September 2012**

#### **Part one: Teaching**

##### **A teacher must:**

#### **1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils**

- establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils, rooted in mutual respect
- set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions
- demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils.

#### **2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils**

- be accountable for pupils' attainment, progress and outcomes
- be aware of pupils' capabilities and their prior knowledge, and plan teaching to build on these
- guide pupils to reflect on the progress they have made and their emerging needs
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and how this impacts on teaching
- encourage pupils to take a responsible and conscientious attitude to their own work and study

#### **3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge**

- have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings
- demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship
- demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject

- if teaching early reading, demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics
- if teaching early mathematics, demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate teaching strategies

#### **4. Plan and teach well structured lessons**

- impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time
- promote a love of learning and children's intellectual curiosity
- set homework and plan other out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired
- reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching
- contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum within the relevant subject area(s)

#### **5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils**

- know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively
- have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these
- demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development
- have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them

#### **6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment**

- know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements
- make use of formative and summative assessment to secure pupils' progress
- use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan subsequent lessons
- give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and

encourage pupils to respond to the feedback

**7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment**

- have clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and take responsibility for promoting good and courteous behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy
- have high expectations of behaviour, and establish a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly
- manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs in order to involve and motivate them
- maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary

**8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities**

- make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school
- develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support
- deploy support staff effectively
- take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding

## Appendix Three

### Ethical approval

#### Application for Registration and Ethical Approval of Research Project

All research projects must be registered with the Faculty Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee (FRKTC). Ethical approval must be given before any field work can start.

This form should be used for the registration and approval of individual projects by staff or students at le 7 or above. Application for approval of undergraduate projects at module level may be made by module leaders using form EA1B.

The completed form should normally be returned to the Faculty Research Administrator, Nicola Leslie for consideration at the next meeting of FRKTC. If your project has an urgent timescale, please mark it for chair's action.  
Nicola.leslie@edgehill.ac.uk

Name of lead researcher:	Christopher Hughes
Title of Project:	From student to newly qualified teacher: a grounded theory study of the beginning teacher learning environment.
Funding Source:	non funded. PhD study (Lancaster University).
Anticipated start date for field work	September 2010
Duration	From: 20 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2010 To: March 2012
Names of any other collaborating researchers	none
Names of any collaborating HEIs	none
Names of any collaborating partners/stakeholders/clients	Partnership schools - to be identified as study unfolds/progresses.

### **Non-technical summary of project.**

This research will explore the structural and cultural characteristics of the beginning teacher learning environment during their transition from student to newly qualified teacher. The research field and the actors within it include Edge Hill's Faculty of Education, a number Edge Hill partnership schools, school-based mentors, university tutors and trainee teachers. Although not the direct focus of this study, school children may also feature in this work when gathering observational data in the school setting or through trainee interview responses about their classroom experience.

The aim of the research is examine ways in which beginning teachers make sense of the environment in which they operate. In particular (i) the characteristics of the learning experience and the meaning these have for the novice teachers and other actors in the training system (ii) exploring the interplay between the development of trainees as reflective practitioners and the prescriptive, competency based structure that defines the teacher training curriculum in England and (iii) exploring symbolic interaction strategies that beginning teachers use to shape and define their beginning teacher world.

A grounded theory methodology will be used to generate and analyse data during the research programme time frame; the length of which will be determined by the time it takes for conceptual generation and analysis to reach saturation (a term used to define when 'discovered' theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon can be seen to have emerged from the data set). A constructivist approach (see for example Charmaz (2000), Charmaz (2006), Schawdt (1998), and Bryant (2002)) in which knowledge is seen to be constructed between the researcher and those being researched will be adopted. This grounded theory methodology takes into account the reflexive and biographical stance of the researcher and acknowledges that contextual factors contribute to the way in which social knowledge can be described. Grounded theory is an inductive research approach in which theory is generated from data embedded in the social group under investigation. Theoretical sampling is the preferred method of generating the data set and the subsequent research phases. These include the generation of analytical concepts within the data, constantly comparing concepts to examine links between data sets, generating theoretical constructs that describe and characterise elements of the data and 'discovering' analytical theories that

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**Data sensitivity.** Please refer to paragraph 2.3 of Faculty of Education: Governance of Research and use these descriptors to self-assess the level of data sensitivity: **1 / 2 / 3**

It is envisaged that the ethical 'risk' relates to level **2** sensitivity. Therefore data should be regarded as moderately sensitive. For example, there is no research where children are 'direct' respondents. However, beginning teachers may discuss their work with children in the classrooms when being interviewed, or children may be observed as part of class room based field work. In most cases, anonymity of such children would be preserved. However, trainee (or other) respondents would be briefed prior to research activities that all discussions or observations relating to children would have to fall within the Every Child Counts agenda i.e. if data revealed issues that related to child protection issues then this would have to be revealed to the appropriate sources.

Data are to be collected using the following methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with beginning teachers;
- observational 'field notes' of trainees' activities in the classroom and other school settings;
- school-based mentor semi-structured interviews;

- trainee portfolios of professional development (text analysis work informing the grounded theory);
- trainee learning journals (text analysis work informing the grounded theory).

### Compliance with BERA Guidelines

Voluntary Informed Consent	All participants will be informed as clearly as possible of the purpose of the research, its aims, the stages in data collection and how data are to be analysed. Taking part in the programme will be voluntary, and respondents will be able to withdraw from the process at any time. Participants will not be put under any duress to take part in the programme.
Avoidance of Deception	Deception or subterfuge is not a methodological requirement for this study. Moreover, the author regards such approaches as unethical even in ethnographic style studies.
Right to withdraw	All respondents will be given the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Respondents will be informed that any data they offer may form part of a PhD thesis, be incorporated in journal papers, reports or conference deliveries/papers. Any written text will be shown respondents prior to data analysis and respondents will have the right to withdraw information from such outcomes.
Use of incentives	There will be no use of incentives to facilitate this work.
Possible detriment	The research ethos for this study is one of openness and good working relationships between the researcher and all who take part in the work. It is envisaged that the outcomes of the work will enhance teacher trainees' learning experiences through a better understanding of the social structures and processes that affect their learning journey. In the light of this underlying 'philosophy' there is no foreseen detriment to the participants or the organisations in which the research will take place.
Privacy/anonymity	Anonymity of all respondents will be preserved throughout the course of the study. Pseudonyms will be

	used for institutions and participants to preserve anonymity. Actors, stakeholders and others involved in the research programme will have the right to withhold information if they feel it to be detrimental to them personally or the organisation in which they work. However, privacy is subject to the caveat discussed below.
Disclosure of illegal behaviour	All respondents will be informed that any illegal behaviour may not necessarily be 'covered' by the anonymity/privacy conditions shown above. For example, there may be cases where the researcher for child protection matters may be obliged to break an anonymity 'code of conduct.' However, it is envisaged that there is an extremely remote chance of this happening.
<sup>1</sup> The particular interests of children or other vulnerable groups (if applicable)	Where necessary all Every Child Matters issues will be addressed, school contact protocols will be observed and all trainees and researchers engaged in the school aspects of the study will have positive CRB checks.
Minimisation of the burden on schools	A number of schools are to be used as settings for field studies. Most observational studies will be part of the lead researchers ongoing school-based liaison work and, as such, will not be an undue burden on schools surveyed. Due to the constraints of the grounded theory methodology the research time in schools will depend upon the extent of the theory generating process. However, time in schools will be kept to a minimum to reduce the need for excessive staff involvement with the project. Observational research for this study can be considered as part of the normal training schedule for the schools in question and there will be no disruption to pupils' learning or curriculum activities.

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<sup>1</sup> It is preferred that children are party to the process of informed consent at a level appropriate to their age and understanding. They should not be treated as chattels. See UN Convention Articles 3 and 12 as described in BERA Guidelines.

**Please sign to indicate agreement with the following statements:**

I confirm that I have studied the BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research during the process of designing this research project

I confirm that I am committed to the implementation of the following key ethical values throughout the duration of the project and beyond in any publication or dissemination activity arising: - *respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research, academic freedom.*

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