

To what extent is feedback in teacher education 'for learning'?

Why students prefer internal monologue to tutor dialogue

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Abstract

Feedback for student teachers during their work-based learning in schools offers significant advantages over feedback in the university-based element of their degree programme. Students receive frequent, often immediate, feedback from an experienced teacher who sees their gradual development and has only a few students to manage. This includes formal feedback linked to assessment criteria but also opportunities for informal, verbal feedback and dialogue that supports socialisation as a colleague.

This study investigates how student teachers feel about feedback on their classroom teaching and what they do with that feedback. The study therefore asks how effective all this feedback is in terms of its impact on students' learning and on their identity as a teacher. A mixed-methods approach first used a large scale survey of student teachers to consider their response to key issues highlighted in the literature on feedback. Semi-structured interviews then focused on subtleties in how students' understanding of feedback, and their engagement with it, relates to how they see their own learning needs.

Analysis indicates an overall positive experience: students appreciate feedback from their tutors in schools. Feedback from this workplace setting could therefore be a useful model for improvement elsewhere in their programme. In particular, feedback is valued when it positions the student as a learner, but still respects their developing identity as a teacher. However, students typically adopt passive recipient roles regarding feedback. Even if feedback was prompt, detailed, personalised and frequent, its effectiveness was limited since students failed to engage with questioning or co-creating feedback to develop more sophisticated meaning. The analysis suggests that over-simplified models of teachers learning through reflection could encourage students to see learning from feedback as a mostly private activity. Improving students' use of feedback therefore requires changes in the way feedback and dialogue are conceptualised within models of teacher reflection.

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Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance, a statistical test to compare means of more than two groups.
AT	Associate tutor/Associate teacher. Mainly US. The normal teacher of a class which has been taken over by a student teacher. This person is also usually the student teacher's mentor, but not necessarily.
BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interview Method. A method of interviewing which is structured by the participant.
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (formerly Certificate in English Teaching to Adults, hence the acronym). A short course qualification, typically postgraduate, taken in one month full-time or up to one year part-time, which must include 120 contact hours and 6 hours of assessed/observed teaching.
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire, a multi-scale survey used with graduates of Australian universities.
CSV	A generic type of spreadsheet file (comma separated values).
ELT	English Language Teaching, especially as a second or additional language.
ETL	Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments, a project at the University of Edinburgh.
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage, compulsory guidance for education from 0-5 years.
HE	Higher Education.
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency.
HSD	Honest Significant Difference, a statistical test developed by John Tukey, used to find statistically significant difference in ANOVA tests.
KRG	Kelly's Repertory Grid, a method for eliciting constructs by making comparisons.
LT	Link Tutor, employed by a university to monitor and occasionally visit students on school placements.
MET	Measuring the Effectiveness of Teachers, a project of teacher evaluation funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
NSS	National Student Survey, a multi-scale survey used with graduates of UK universities.
OED	Oxford English Dictionary.

Abbreviations

OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Government inspector.
OIAHE	Office of the Independent Adjudicator in Higher Education. The UK body responsible for students' complaints in Higher Education.
PAT	Personal Academic Tutor, a mainly pastoral role performed by a university-based tutor.
PCA	Principal Component Analysis, a type of factor analysis.
PT	Personal Tutor, see PAT.
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status.
SPSS	Statistics Package for Social Sciences, software used for statistical tests.
SQL	Structured Query Language, a computer language used in maintaining databases.
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language, can refer to the practice or a generic term for the qualifications which lead to this (e.g. a CELTA is a type of TEFL certificate).
TESTA	Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment, a project to evaluate and develop interventions related to assessment and feedback.

1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of feedback in higher education in the UK, including context relevant to the type of course the sampled students are on and the institution where they are based. The chapter starts with the motivation for this thesis – some of the main problems with feedback. It then outlines some of my own background, which becomes relevant later as I try to draw out and compensate for my own assumptions and values. This builds to my general research topic, which provides a structure to the overall thesis. Important context is also given for readers with respect to organisational, policy, national and theoretical contexts relevant to this study.

1.1 Problems with feedback in higher education

From being understood simply as a technique for error detection and correction, feedback is now recognised as playing a crucial and increasingly nuanced role in learning, particularly in higher education. However, there remains great variety in how feedback is experienced to the extent that “when we refer to feedback, we need to be aware that it means different things to different people” (Carless, 2015, p. 192). In terms of format, the majority of feedback discussed in the research literature is written feedback on written assignments, since this is still the dominant assessment method for the vast majority of HE courses. However, feedback can also take many other forms. For example, it can be generated by adaptive technology, be intrinsic in the completion of a task (such as a trial and improvement task), be part of an internal reflective monologue, or be given informally through in-class discussions with peers and tutors.

As well as competing definitions, the reported experiences of feedback can vary widely and even be self-contradictory. For example, students might be seen to have an insatiable

demand for feedback whilst at the same time displaying apparent nonchalance towards it. This is indicated by regular complaints from tutors that students often fail to even collect their written feedback (Bailey & Garner, 2010; Carless, 2006), while written comments by tutors, even if read, can still be poorly used by students (Dysthe, 2011).

As a result, it is “not inevitable that students will read and pay attention to feedback even when that feedback is lovingly crafted and provided promptly” (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, p. 20). What is meant by seemingly straightforward ideas as ‘good feedback’ can therefore be difficult to define. Indeed, the very idea of feedback in higher education can be in direct conflict with more passive conceptualisations of feedback which students retain from their experience of secondary education (Sambell et al., 2012). Other barriers to knowing what good feedback is include students’ misunderstanding key terms used to evaluate feedback (Mendes et al., 2011), or a fundamental difference in what the purpose of feedback is seen to be (Doan, 2013). As a result, there is significant variety in how students and tutors evaluate feedback and their intentions when using it.

Tutors can also have differing views from other tutors on what makes for good feedback. Differences in the assumed role of tutors or students, such as in Biggs and Tang (2011), can affect whether a tutor feels a need to ensure feedback is used or whether their responsibility ends when they have given their feedback. Boud and Molloy (2013), for example, include student action in their definition of feedback: if tutors do not ensure action, they are giving information, not feedback. However, this seems too extreme a position in practice. Instead, it is generally enough that tutors are open to dialogue when it is sought and make efforts to ensure their feedback is understandable and accessible, for example through using technology (Lunt & Curran, 2010; Nortcliffe & Middleton, 2011). Tutors might need to check

if their students have engaged, but the tutor's responsibility typically falls short of forcing students to engage, at least in HE.

Understanding of students' roles in feedback is similarly problematic. Two examples of tutors encouraging students to engage with feedback illustrate the very different strategies which can result from different assumptions about students. Withey (2013, p.319) describes "forcing" students to engage with feedback for their own good by assigning marks for responding to feedback. An alternative is to refuse to waste tutors' time creating feedback until students first show willingness to engage (Jones & Gorra, 2013). As well as such differences in whose responsibility it is to ensure students engage with feedback, there are differences in what counts as engagement. For example, simply accessing or reading feedback is very different from reflecting critically on that feedback. Outcome is also an unreliable measure, since a critically reflective student might legitimately reject feedback. Engagement can also relate to accessibility, questioning whether the tutor needs to make their feedback clearly understandable or whether student engagement should include a certain amount of struggling and sense-making.

One of the key issues underpinning student engagement with feedback is the relationship between feedback and assessment. If feedback is not seen to have any transferability beyond an assessment, engagement will be low. The assumption that the intention of feedback is to improve assessment performance also influences how feedback is typically evaluated: using feedback well improves grades, using it poorly does not. While this is a neat way of distinguishing effective practice from ineffective, it may make too big an assumption that assessment performance is a reliable proxy for learning. Similarly, feedback being so closely associated with assessment can blur the purposes of feedback since it may be used to explain

or justify an assessment judgement (Bloxham et al., 2011).

In addition to influencing the purpose of feedback, assessment can also affect the linguistic quality of feedback. The clearest example of this is when stock feedback phrases are designed to match with assessment rubrics, such as in the Rubryc software, where feedback phrases are generated for the tutor to personalise (Auvinen & Korhonen, 2014). The influence can be more subtle, however, such as adjectives from assessment criteria being used in feedback or feedback being structured to give equal consideration to each criterion. This might be a welcome structure. For example, Andrade (2005, p. 29) describes “rubric-referenced verbal feedback” as supporting self-assessment and peer feedback. However, these linguistic and structural influences of assessment might be more problematic when feedback is being given by an expert. Sadler (1998) describes the tacit nature of expert knowledge, likening it to connoisseurship. To extend Sadler’s analogy, assessment criteria might usefully function to give a shared vocabulary and prompt for further detail in much the same way as an aroma wheel assists a wine connoisseur by breaking ‘floral notes’ into a spectrum from ‘honeysuckle’ to ‘rose’, but this is at the expense of seeking a richer description of the personal nature of the judgement.

A related concern is that students might discuss using feedback in very narrow terms as what they do when preparing for an assessment, either failing to appreciate that feedback should have a longer-term impact or else calling this by another name such as appraisal, supervision, or reflection. Even when students do engage with feedback for longer-term learning, it might be difficult for a tutor or researcher to know that they are doing this or what support they might need. Due to the often tacit nature of knowledge at this level, it can be as difficult for the student to show engagement with feedback as it is for the tutor to express themselves

clearly.

In summary, there are three main problems addressed in this thesis attempting to evaluate how well feedback supports learning. First, feedback is not clearly defined in the literature, which adds to confusion over the role of tutors and learners in feedback practice. Second, feedback is so strongly linked to assessment that it becomes difficult to research one without researching the other. Finally, even when tutors and students are clear on their expectations for each other and how they want to use feedback to support learning, it can be very difficult to give good feedback and ensure it is used effectively.

1.2 Organisational context

This thesis samples students on undergraduate teacher training courses at two new (post-2000) universities in the UK. Similar courses are offered at many UK universities, although numbers have recently fallen as more students are recruited to shorter courses primarily based in schools. Students in this sample attend university for either three or four years full-time depending on whether they are training for the secondary or primary sectors, respectively. During this time, they are placed in schools to practice teaching, where they are observed teaching and given feedback by staff within the school (class teachers or school-based mentors) or university staff (link tutors or partnership tutors).

Regular observation of teaching contributes to a portfolio of evidence arranged around the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status. Grades are given from 1-4, with 1 typically referred to as Outstanding, 2 Good, 3 Satisfactory (sometimes 'requires improvement' if using terminology from the government inspectors, OFSTED) and 4 Unsatisfactory/no evidence. Grades 1-3 are considered passing grades, although the grade does not have any influence on

degree classification – qualified teacher status is awarded on a pass or fail basis. Similarly, a student's performance on the university modules of the course has no impact on the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) beyond pass or fail. A student failing the teaching component may still be awarded a bachelor's degree, but failing the degree element would negate the award of QTS. Similarly, even a first-class honours would not compensate for a failed teaching assessment.

Places in schools are scarce, and competition between local universities can be intense. Consequently, a common difficulty experienced by Higher Education teacher-training providers is managing the consistency of placement experience and professional relationships with partnership schools (Ellis, 2013). This can restrict the number of places a university can offer, the convenience of where schools are located, or the quality of the placement experience as universities have to place students in whichever schools offer space. As a researcher funded directly by a university in these relationships, it is therefore important to be sensitive to the risk of being seen as overly critical of school-based practice while still seeking insight into how these relationships might impact on feedback.

This research is also timely for teacher education in the UK as provision is shifting from being university-led to being school-led. This thesis might therefore be one of the last chances to evaluate how feedback is conceptualised by students who primarily belong to a university which places them in a school, as compared with students who will belong to a school which occasionally sends them to a university. It is therefore important that this thesis can illustrate how feedback is experienced in this system so that comparisons might be made once the new routes become established.

The organisational context also relates closely to the theoretical context, as many of the

suggestions for improving feedback in higher education are already in place in school-based components of teacher education, such as very prompt and specific feedback and one-on-one tutorials. Problems in this context will therefore help to inform the planning of changes to feedback in higher education more generally. For example, before universities commit to funding more one-on-one feedback, it is important to understand how students already respond to high levels of individual attention. Similarly, practices which are effective in schools might suggest where universities should focus their efforts to improve feedback at university.

Teacher education in the UK also has a specific concern that reflective practice is becoming less of a professional value and more just another assessment or compliance task (Hobbs, 2007). Student teachers therefore risk adopting increasingly techno-rational coping strategies rather than taking a slower or more reflective approach towards learning their craft (Johnston, 2010). Underlying these concerns is the risk that students retain a limited and simplistic understanding of quality based either on their experiences as pupils or imitation of mentors, particularly when a mentor is also a student's assessor (Bray & Nettleton, 2007). This is highly relevant for research into feedback in this context since feedback being used strategically risks losing its focus on learning and instead becomes part of attempting to "determine the implicit rules of the assessment game" (Entwistle et al., 1979, p. 366).

Finally, courses which blend workplace learning with HE modules seem to be increasing in popularity, so it is helpful to evaluate this fairly established example. Initiatives such as TESTA (Jessop et al., 2014) are increasingly emphasising the planning of assessment and feedback at the design stage of courses, so it is important that this planning is informed by thorough evaluations of current examples of workplace learning.

1.3 Personal professional context

Critiquing an existing system can be difficult for researchers who have been well-served by the system (Stobart, 2008). It is important therefore to remember that my own relatively straightforward teacher training experience might not be typical, and I am aware that I was fortunate to be given a good fit for both of my placement schools. However, this is balanced against a very difficult induction year, in which my performance management assessments and feedback seemed random to me, to the extent that I lost confidence self-assessing and would not know whether my observation was good or a fail. My strategy became very reactive, and I felt that I lacked any clear direction even a year later.

I also felt some sympathy for students failing placements as I tried to support my partner during a placement which she failed. She paid close attention to feedback and was eager to please, but we both felt that the feedback was overly negative and lacked focus. The result was an overwhelming list of faults which left her stressed and anxious, eventually unable to teach classes as she obsessed over planning and ran out of time. These feelings carried over into her re-submission placement, but feedback there was almost entirely positive as she effectively became a replacement for a teacher who was about to take maternity leave.

From these experiences, I felt sensitive to three problems with feedback. One was the potential of feedback to seem idiosyncratic or random, whether because it was or because I failed to understand some underlying principle. Second was the potential for unhealthy responses to feedback, particularly a need to play safe or visibly increase effort and preparation. Finally, feedback seemed scarce when teaching was going well, making it difficult to understand why some lessons went well and creating a strong association with feedback being negative or remedial: only poor teachers received detailed feedback.

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Based on these mixed experiences, I was aware of the risk of being too focused on negative experiences, particularly if students had similar features to my experiences. It was important that I try not to judge tutors too harshly, particularly as I only had the students' data to draw upon. I was also aware that my only experience of helpful feedback on my teaching was essentially being left alone, that not being given feedback should be taken as a subtle indication that I was doing fine.

My personal professional context influenced my sampling method as I sought as wide a sample as possible and tested their representativeness. I was particularly attentive to ensuring a fair representation of students who described their experiences positively. My working definition of feedback, described in the next chapter, was also careful to avoid overly criticising feedback which does not directly support learning. I therefore took care to note other worthwhile functions of feedback, such as performance management or quality control, to try and see some more charitable reasons for feedback failing to engage students as longer-term learners. This influence can be seen in the extensive use I make of work by Becker et al. (1968) and Horowitz (1988), since their work takes a broader view of how students approach university life and learning in general, whereas more contemporary work seems to focus much more on how students approach assessment. Avoiding being too critical of feedback which did not directly support learning is therefore an important aspect of this thesis since it helps to give a broader focus on learning rather than just assessment.

1.4 Policy context

There are several feedback policies which are informal or local to these two particular universities, but which provide important context to understanding how feedback operates. Students in this sample were typically required to have at least one hour of feedback on a

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lesson they have been observed teaching for every two weeks of their school placement, including both written and oral feedback. Their written feedback should make clear references to the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status, including indicating any standards which were evidenced in the observation. The student should then have three targets for their next observation, which can either be negotiated or simply given to them. It is also very common that feedback should include some praise, which has influenced the adoption of two main techniques for giving feedback. The first is Two Stars and a Wish, adapted from feedback practice with school-aged students where two positives should be given for each negative. The other is the Feedback Sandwich, in which positive feedback should be given both before and after each negative point. Even when these structures are not used, their influence can still be seen in feedback which starts with positive comments, and official documentation typically supports this implicitly by giving larger spaces for positive comments and putting these above negative comments. Informal or local feedback policies also tend to assume the principles of reflective practice, so for example it is almost always the case that feedback will start with the student being prompted to self-evaluate.

More formal and wider adopted policies are also relevant to this study, most notably those related to student voice and student satisfaction. Students can certainly be thought of as having more power than ever before, with increased tuition fees leading to students being thought of more as customers and measures of student satisfaction being used in the national rankings of universities. Feedback is an especially important part of student satisfaction policies since feedback is consistently an area which students rate lower than any other aspects of their experience (Yorke, 2013). Policies therefore exist to ensure that feedback meets the criteria used to evaluate student satisfaction, particularly those aspects most easily

quantified such as the promptness or level of detail in feedback.

Policies related to extreme student dissatisfaction, however, suggest less interest in understanding the role of feedback in cases when students experience significant problems. For example, academic judgement is specifically excluded from the complaints policy of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for HE unless the allegation is of personal bias (OIAHE, 2013), suggesting that students cannot formally question the validity of a tutor's judgements in their feedback and assessment. Policies in school-based practice also discourage complaints since students have a small time window within which to make complaints or find alternative placements, and university tutors are reluctant to challenge schools since it is vital to keep a positive relationship with the school so that they will take another student the following year. The difficulty of finding placement schools also contributes to an opportunity cost, that a student wishing to be assessed by a different tutor will typically have to delay their graduation whilst another placement is found and therefore incur significant financial costs or even lose a job which might have been offered on the condition of being awarded QTS in time for the new academic year. Understanding students' conceptions of feedback must therefore be sensitive to the negative messages sent by policies which emphasise students' low status in their relationship with tutors, which in turn limits the potential for truly dialogic feedback.

These policies also risk sending the message that student complaints about feedback practices are too easily dismissed or discouraged. This is significant for the reporting of this research, as negative student comments might too easily be dismissed as unfounded complaints and so limit the impact of this study. It is also important to be aware of how these policies might affect the ways students conceptualise their role in feedback and the purpose

of feedback, or if this is only relevant to students who have negative experiences. It is also important to understand students' interpretations of these policies and whether this has any impact on how they rate the honesty of feedback. For example, if a student is aware that they should be given two positive comments for every negative, they might reduce the value they place on positive comments.

1.5 National context

The history of teacher education in the UK has been frequently described as being on a “swinging pendulum” between school-based apprenticeship approaches and college- or university-led approaches (Robinson, 2006, p. 20). At the time of writing, school-based approaches seem to be coming into dominance with the increased use of training schools and routes into teaching such as Teach First. These alternative training routes and increased freedom of staff selection in Academies and Free Schools have effectively removed some of the power of universities, including bypassing the requirement in the James Report of 1972 that all teachers should have undergraduate degrees.

Organisation of schools into Academy Trusts has also changed the skills required of many teachers and even the demands for educational research, with experimental approaches being used to develop teaching strategies and resources to be delivered by all teaching staff within an Academy Trust. Feedback might therefore similarly change from the dominant reflective practitioner model, typically based on Schon (1983), to a more technical or diagnostic approach. This does not seem to have affected feedback and assessment of teachers in the UK yet, but some influence can be seen in the United States with the Measuring the Effectiveness of Teachers (MET) project (2013). This uses random samples of video recordings judged by a random selection of peers (drawn nationally), so that feedback

is seen as more objective and more valid since it comes from multiple observers. This marks an interesting move away from a one-on-one apprenticeship model relying on knowledge of the school context, relying more on the impressions of a general community of peers. However, with recent changes towards performance-related pay for teachers, these methods may become more important for evaluating teachers rather than giving them feedback.

It is also important to consider the international context, with international comparisons prompting a range of policy decisions in the UK. For example, attempts to emulate the performance of Sweden, where teachers are typically educated to masters degree level, can be seen in policies such as increased bursaries for undergraduates with first-class degrees to enter teacher training. This may impact the role of feedback by increasing the expectations on student teachers' subject knowledge, or even create relationship tension in the assessment of students by increasing the number of students who hold higher level qualifications than their mentors.

1.6 Theoretical context

The way feedback is discussed in the research literature, particularly over the last ten years, is much more complex and ambitious than the everyday definition of feedback. This raises the possibility of two different activities which might both be called feedback – everyday feedback for everyday needs such as quick diagnostics or performance appraisals, and feedback for learning. Both tutors and students may fail to appreciate this difference, meaning that research into feedback must seek to both be inclusive of the plurality of possible concepts participants have of feedback whilst also taking care to give a coherent explanation of these concepts and how they relate to the existing conceptual framework.

Introduction

Feedback also needs to be considered as part of the broader theoretical discussion of assessment as, of or for learning. This focus on the intention of assessment, whether it acts as a learning event ('as' learning), is a check ('of' learning) or seeks to stimulate ('for' learning) affects the balance of assessment tasks. Race (2014) summarises the considerations of assessment neatly as validity, fairness, whodunit, transparency and real world dimensions. For example, an unseen, timed exam at the end of a course will reassure on the 'whodunit' dimension since students can easily have their identification checked, but the validity of the exam might be poor – it might disproportionately reward students who can handle time pressure or memorise quotations. Feedback will be of little value in this situation, since the course is over.

Compared to this assessment 'of' learning, assessment 'for' learning might encourage students to study over a longer period of time and get to know material in more depth. Feedback becomes an integral part of the course, developing a dialogue between students and tutors as assessment is gradually improved. Aside from the obvious time pressures, this approach can be weak in terms of fairness as some students might have greater chances to engage with their tutors. It also risks students becoming too reliant on tutors, although this can be addressed by strategies using peer or self feedback. Finally, assessment 'as' learning receives far less consideration in the literature, but is highly relevant for workplace learning since the real world dimensions can be very thorough – the task itself gives a type of intrinsic feedback, helping students to self-assess and set their own goals. These are typically much lower stakes self-assessments, and may not be graded at all.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced the key problems with feedback which this thesis attempts to

address. These are that there is too much uncertainty in how feedback is understood or what its objectives are, the roles of learners and tutors are unclear, and that all of these problems can be exacerbated by the influence of assessment. This can be summarised as the central research concern reflected in the title of this thesis: is feedback in teacher education 'for learning'? In addition to outlining researcher reflexivity, the key contexts for this study have been described. This is intended to assist readers unfamiliar with these contexts, but can also be seen to help refine this central research concern into the following research questions:

1. How do students see feedback relating to their learning and assessment needs?
2. How do students see different intentions of feedback?
3. How do students see their own roles and the roles of their tutor in feedback?

Questions one and two consider how learning (or assessment) goals are reflected in feedback, which is then developed in question three to consider the roles students see themselves as fulfilling, which is in part defined by the role they assign to their tutor. Answering this question allows a more general consideration of how students broadly conceptualise feedback in practice, which may help to explain some points raised by the previous research questions.

Taken together, evaluating the extent to which feedback in teacher education is for learning will consist of understanding students' conceptions of learning in this context, the way they see themselves and others as needing to function within a feedback relationship, and how students evaluate their success in meeting these goals. The study therefore makes an important contribution not only to how feedback is evaluated in teacher education, but how understanding feedback more generally might rely on understanding of students' expectations concerning their roles, the roles of their tutors, and the nature of their assessments and factors such as students' learning goals and conceptions of learning.

2 Literature review

The introduction chapter added some context to the general question of the extent to which teacher education is 'for learning'. In this chapter, the 'for learning' part of this question is explained in relationship to the research literature, including how it relates to similar terms such as assessment for learning, formative feedback, and dialogic feedback. This literature review also starts to refine the research question as gaps in the literature are exposed, first considering Higher Education students more generally before just looking at student teachers.

In addition to a general overview of the literature, seven key studies are analysed in greater detail. Each of these gives focused insight into particular aspects of students' experiences of feedback relevant to my research context, which helps lead to methodological decisions which focus my research questions even further.

2.1 Defining feedback

Feedback is understood fairly easily in everyday language, and has only come to be used with academic precision in the last 25 years. It is therefore easy to overlook significant differences in how the term is used and how meaning has shifted in different contexts. These shifts in meaning often mask important and differing assumptions about the role of the learner, so a clear working definition is vital to understand how phrases such as 'feedback for learning' or 'feedforward' relate to each other. Some work has already been done in this area, tracing feedback from its origins in engineering and then following its etymology. One of the more detailed contributions to this literature is Long (2013), who adds some precision by drawing on cybernetics. However, I believe that current explanations of the developing meaning of feedback missed a crucial development in the 1950s which laid the foundation for Sadler's (1989) seminal work and the incorporation of feedback into a constructivist framework. My

attempt to remedy this gap is published as Carver (2016a) and is summarised here.

The Oxford English Dictionary records the first use of feedback as a term in 1920, in the field of engineering. Feedback described the “return of a fraction of the output signal from one stage...to the input of the same or a preceding stage” (OED Online, 2015). The direction of information flow is emphatically backwards and reactive, with any required changes being implemented either immediately or prior to a repeat performance. The data is also incidental to the task, since feedback is a return of a part of the output signal. Simple examples might be moderating the volume of a speaker or the temperature of a radiator, but feedback might also be more complex or diagnostic such as allowing an engineer to check at what volume the speaker becomes distorted under different situations or with different inputs.

Adapting this earlier definition to an educational context matches the way that part of a student’s efforts (e.g. a draft assignment or an observation of one in a series of lessons) is used to make decisions which help the student to either revise that attempt or make changes to future attempts. This can be seen to underpin what Long (2013) describes as a behaviourist approach or what Askew and Lodge (2000) call a receptive-transmission model, in which feedback is given by an expert to the learner as a gift. The validity of the feedback is not questioned, and the learner is required to implement the changes, possibly with another task allowing the expert to check the effectiveness of the change. It is also important to note that the task upon which feedback is based is a genuine attempt at the final task rather than something deliberately created to generate feedback. Feedback from this perspective is therefore closely linked to the repetition of similar tasks.

Defining feedback becomes more problematic when the learner is given a more active role, or the expert/learner relationship is seen through a constructivist lens. It is therefore difficult

to find a clear etymological path to terms such as dialogic feedback (Nicol, 2010) or sustainable feedback (Boud, 2000). Long (2013) makes a valuable attempt to bridge the gap by drawing on Wiener's (1954) description of two different uses of feedback. The first of these uses was feedback used "as numerical data for the criticism of the system and its regulation" (Wiener, 1954, p. 61). Here a performance is altered and feedback sought until actual performance satisfactorily closes the gap with desired performance. However, Weiner notes an alternative use if feedback "proceeds backward from the performance [and] is able to change the general method and pattern of performance" (Wiener, 1954, p. 61). In Weiner's definition we can start to see a focus on the intent of feedback, whether it is to improve a particular performance or to make general improvements. Wiener also seems to imply that it is only suitable to use feedback as numerical data when the intention is regulation, that improving general performances will require engaging with a more complex or qualitative understanding of feedback.

An example from *The Times* in 1955 shows feedback starting to be discussed outside of engineering, in which "constant" feedback is argued as the only way that a speaker "can ascertain how far a message has been understood rightly" (OED Online, 2015). This retains the simple idea of using feedback to regulate performance, which could range from simple changes such as the volume or pace of speech or result in more significant changes like the speaker changing their vocabulary or returning to explain key points. It also emphasises that responses to feedback should be constant, with small changes happening quickly rather than waiting until the output is complete.

However, an important shift in this example is that the speaker is generating feedback for their own use, so they are the judge of their own performance. The speaker may be limited

by their own observation skills, choose to ignore certain types of feedback, or misunderstand the data. There is no separate expert role in this example, and the data source has also changed – the speaker is not gaining feedback from a return of their output, but by a wide range of sources depending on whatever they are attuned to, for example the audience's body language, eye contact, applause, or note-taking habits. Accepting a plurality of possible data sources marks an important change in how feedback is understood, expanding the learner's role to include self-evaluation and allowing for skill and judgement in the generation and use of feedback data.

A similar example, this time specifically in education, comes from an early teaching guide (Quirk & Smith, 1959), that in a lecture “the live speaker has a reaction, a ‘feed-back’ from the listeners” (OED Online, 2015). This still follows the idea of using feedback to moderate performance, but it also has the speaker seeking feedback and using their own judgement rather than relying on an expert. There is also a shift from simple numerical feedback data, with “reaction” allowing for a wide range of possible interpretations. This reaction might be a return of the fraction of the output since the audience's reaction is something naturally occurring during the natural performance of a task - they will react regardless of whether those reactions are acted upon by the speaker. However, the speaker is also seeking to use whatever data they are given rather than relying on a simple return of their output, which helps the definition of feedback to move beyond simple numerical data and consider a much wider range of information. It is this shift in usage which I believe has so far been overlooked, and which helps to explain how the standard dictionary definition stabilised from this point, while the research literature developed its own use of the phrase.

Having stabilised in common usage, the everyday definition of feedback seems quite

straightforward: essentially something either created by or responding to an action which is then used to evaluate or modify that action with the intention of reaching a desired result (OED Online, 2015). The issue of who generates or judges this data, or ensures and evaluates its effective use, is left vague. In everyday language this seems not to have been addressed over the last 50 years, but in the research literature it is picked up in the shift from behaviourist to constructivist theories of learning. Sadler (1989) is instrumental in this shift, although it should be noted that despite widespread support for ideals such as active learners “feedback practices enacted on the ground still tend to pull heavily on behaviourist views of feedback” (Molloy et al., 2013, p. 52). It is therefore worth pointing out that despite the seminal nature of Sadler’s work and frequent citations, the everyday definition of feedback is still common in education, and it cannot be assumed that educators referring to feedback (or even citing Sadler’s work) are aware of this distinction.

Sadler’s use of the term ‘feedback’ helped move the definition forwards by rejecting some behaviours from the definition. He asserted that if feedback did not improve learning in a formative sense then it could not be called feedback at all. This effectively excluded many practices which fit under the everyday definition of feedback, demanding a more involved role for the learner and a longer-term impact from the feedback. This attention on formative improvement took the concept of feedback away from performance improvement and firmly into learning by focussing on “pupil’s learning strategies or understanding [being] formed into a more developed stage than they were prior to the particular assessment being made” (Hargreaves et al., 2000, p. 21).

In addition to the requirements for more sustained development in the learner, Sadler also clarified conditions for the role of the learner – that they understand for themselves the

required standard, make a comparison between that and their performance, and engage in action to close that gap (Sadler, 1989). Some form of self-evaluation was now an integral part of the feedback process, as was a notion of sustainability in that the learner should gradually become less reliant on their teacher.

As well as outlining these increased demands for feedback, Sadler acknowledged difficulties teachers have in making their knowledge explicit, that teachers' "conceptions of quality are typically held, largely in unarticulated form, inside their heads as tacit knowledge" (Sadler, 1989, p. 126). More recently, Sadler (2009) has linked this to requiring the learner to develop their own understanding of tacit knowledge. This further stresses the central role of feedback in helping the learner develop their own understanding.

Bodman (2007) explains the contribution of Sadler's (1989) paper as moving attention from the information provided in feedback to a focus instead on the effect of that feedback. Sadler's strict criteria also allowed other researchers to argue that much of what is called feedback simply is not, with his term "dangling data" (Sadler, 1989, p. 121) being powerfully employed by Boud and Molloy (2013). As well as helping to distinguish feedback in education from its everyday definition, Sadler located his discussion in a constructivist framework by emphasising how feedback must develop new understanding or critical reflection in the learner (Sadler, 1998).

Sadler's work also coincides with a significant increase in educational research using feedback as a keyword. With information from 1969 to the present day, the Web of Science database indicates that publications mentioning both "feedback" and "students" saw a sharp increase from 1990, and then again from 2000, shown in the graph below. Whilst much of this can be explained by an increase in educational research output more generally, there is still a strong

Literature review

indication that feedback as a term in educational research has only recently become popular and owes much to Sadler's definition.

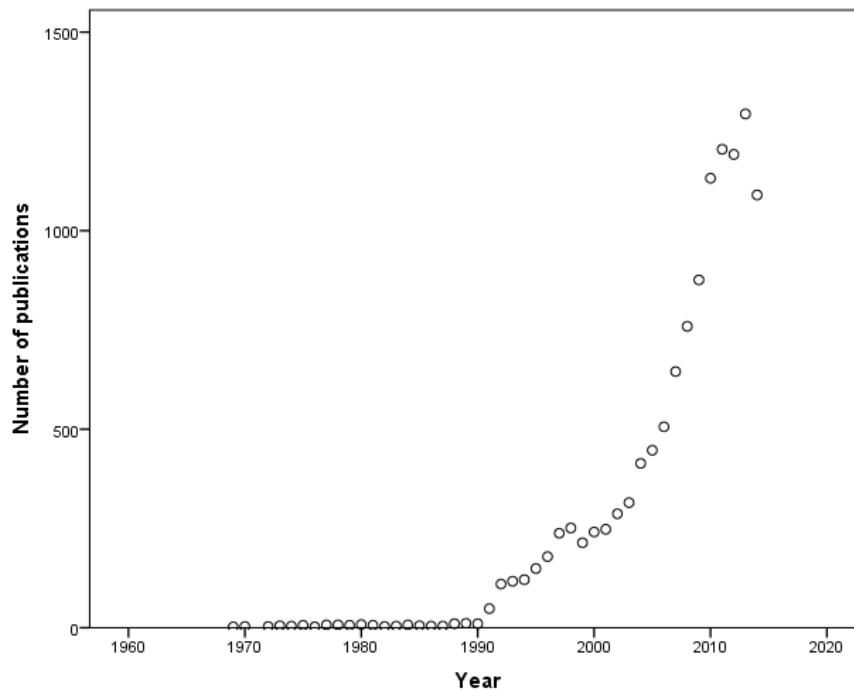


Figure 1 Web of Knowledge citations by year for 'students' and 'feedback'

More recent definitions of feedback have continued to distance themselves from the everyday use of the term, although in doing so they risk expanding the definition too far. For example, the openly broad working definition offered in Askew and Lodge (2000, p. 1) "includes all dialogue to support learning in both formal and informal situations". This definition clearly distinguishes learner agency by specifying dialogue (rather than information) and intent by specifying the support of learning (rather than improving performance). However, it is difficult to imagine any constructivist model of learning that does not arise from a similar process, particularly if dialogue is taken to include self-reflection. In this way, the feedback *is* learning because there is little that could be called learning that does not come from such a broad definition.

In seeking a working definition of feedback, it is therefore important not only to reject what is falsely labelled feedback but also to clearly delineate feedback from learning. Gravett and Petersen (2002) take their definition of feedback from the learner's perspective and distinguish between learning which is teacher-led and independent learning. In this way, feedback is defined as structured dialogue which enables learners and teachers to "inquire together" (Gravett & Petersen, 2002, p. 281). A similar approach emphasising the process rather than product of feedback is evident in the working definition offered in Carless (2015, p. 192), where feedback is "a dialogic process in which learners make sense of information from varied sources and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies". Utilising feedback from peers and even technology is included in this definition by the concept of "internal feedback" (Carless, 2015, p. 190), which emphasises the learner's central role since the teacher becomes just one source of feedback.

The inclusion of improving learning strategies also helps to reduce the emphasis on just assessing feedback by its effect on performance. This is helpful in considering the longer-term impacts of feedback. For example, prior to Carless' definition, it would be problematic to consider a learner whose grades dropped while they changed to a better overall approach – would such a learner be judged as having used feedback effectively, or even received effective feedback?

One of the main problems of feedback drawing so heavily on constructivist principles is that it becomes difficult to talk about feedback in a behaviourist environment. One key difference is that the notion of expert judgement is absent from all three of the post-2000 definitions above, implied only by the result that the learner actually does improve. This makes it difficult if a learner draws on a range of sources of feedback, engages in dialogue, but then makes

poor decisions which fail to improve either their work or their learning strategies. Depending on the definition of feedback used, the learner might be responsible for their own shortcomings or could equally feel aggrieved that they were given poor feedback or poor coaching in using feedback.

To summarise, feedback as it is understood in everyday language is significantly behind how the term is used in the research literature. The main developments include a more constructivist approach to learning and deemphasising of the role of the expert. These developments to the definition mean that the role of the learner is central, and the effect of feedback should not just be looked for in performance – indeed, performance might get worse as a learner gradually integrates and refines their use of feedback. I will return to this when outlining my working definition of feedback, but first it is important to review some recent feedback literature which introduces new terms to the discussion.

2.2 Coining new terms to explain feedback

An alternative to the redefining work led by Boud, Molloy, and Carless is an attempt to create new terms rather than fighting to clarify what is understood by feedback. One attempt to clarify the purpose of feedback is the concept of feedforward, emphasising the vital requirement that feedback must lead to specific future actions (Duncan, 2007). Irons (2010) uses feedforward to explain the difference in expectations between tutors and students: tutors expected that students would have the skills to take their feedback forwards, whereas students expected their feedback to tell them everything they needed to know. In this case, feedforward as a concept helped to avoid the complexity of defining feedback in this situation and focus on the support students needed. Similarly, Price et al. (2010) describe feedforward as including teachers helping learners to develop slowly learnt literacies (Knight & Yorke,

2004) in order to make good use of their feedback. This allows 'feedback' to simply refer to information which is used as part of feedforward.

New terms have also been formed by adding descriptive labels, most significantly 'sustainable' and 'dialogic', but there is also some crossover from similar debates in the assessment literature, resulting in 'formative' and 'for learning'. Like feedforward, the extra description helps to distance each term from the everyday definition of feedback. Some of these descriptive labels also suggest criticism of the standard model of feedback. For example, while Carless (2015) contrasts 'sustainable' with the fairly neutral term 'conventional', there is still the hint of sustainable feedback being better, either through the pejorative sense of conventional or the implied antonym 'unsustainable'.

Similarly, feedback which is either aligned to 'learning-oriented assessment' or is 'for learning' suggests that other feedback is not addressing this basic goal of feedback. Even 'dialogic' suggests a value judgement in an environment where student voice is highly valued. Each term therefore seeks to not only describe a more nuanced type of feedback, but to promote itself as superior to the everyday definition of feedback. This self-promotion goal helps to explain why 'formative feedback' failed to become widespread, since students saw formative assessment as less important, so 'formative feedback' invited similarly negative connotations (Carless, 2015) in the sense that it was less valuable than feedback 'for assessment', with a similar effect likely in 'feedback for learning'.

Sustainable and dialogic feedback both share an intention to improve the learner's general approach, not just their performance, and that the learner be actively engaged in this process. This relates back to Wiener's (1954) idea that more complex feedback would inform general ways of operating, contrasted against simple feedback which only affected performance, but

adds that the learner must become expert in their own self-evaluation. Sustainable feedback can therefore be seen as an overall approach defined by its aims, whereas dialogic feedback and feedforward are most distinguished by their techniques.

Dialogic feedback has strong roots in tutors attempting to get students to engage with their feedback. For example, the feedback activities in Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) present students reading and thinking about their feedback as the starting point for student engagement and something they need to do before their tutor will engage in discussion. Similarly, students might be required to start the dialogue by stating their requirements. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) describe a two-margin approach where students give a running commentary alongside their assignment to indicate what they were thinking or trying to do. In this way, the learner is given more agency because “the feedback given supports the student in what they are trying to achieve, rather than as a transmission of feedback given by an ‘expert’ on what the student *should* have done” (McGinty, 2007, p. 149). This marks an important power shift, since feedback is tailored to what students want rather than what their tutor or an assessment says they need. A tutor may well diagnose a need to change their student’s desires, but this too can be seen as part of a dialogic learning process as the tutor attempts to convince the student.

Dialogic feedback can also be seen in the apprenticeship model in workplace learning. The highly influential Schon (1987) describes the qualities of a coach in forming a dialogic relationship, supporting a model of reflective practice (Schon, 1983). In teacher education more specifically, Graham (2006, p. 1126) reports a group of teacher mentors expecting that their student teachers would “identify areas of strength and weakness that they would explore together”. Both of these examples focus on the learner determining what they want

from feedback, although there is a risk that this does not lead to genuine engagement but rather the learner trying to get maximum return for minimum effort. In either case, the concept of dialogic feedback was influential in helping Graham to uncover these different assumptions about the roles of students and tutors. Yorke (2003) offers an insight which might help clarify how dialogic feedback works in Graham's example. Yorke argues that there must be a genuine intention to improve learning behind dialogic feedback, otherwise it is simply dialogue *about* feedback.

One of the great challenges of dialogic feedback, particularly in higher education, is that it can be highly labour intensive for tutors as they need to be constantly engaged in order to keep the dialogue going (Yang & Carless, 2012), particularly if students do not approach the dialogue with long-term learning-oriented intentions. Dialogue might therefore be restricted by the tutor to only give students the feedback they ask for or are ready to engage with (Nicol, 2010), thereby reducing the time tutors spend giving feedback that is not valued. Another proposal is generating feedback with peers rather than relying just on tutors (Yang & Carless, 2012), which again puts the onus on the learner as needing to be active in seeking out and engaging with dialogue opportunities, at least at first.

Feedforward as a phrase similarly emphasises the use of feedback by the learner, with the intent that feedback is taken forward to future tasks. This seems a much more pragmatic view of feedback than dialogic feedback because it focuses on how feedback is used by the learner in future performance rather than looking for longer-term impact or the process which informs their action. In teacher education, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) see feedforward as entirely a learner skill by equating it with anticipation (in contrast with feedback being equated with reflection). Sutton (2012) likewise goes so far as to suggest that feedforward

skills should be reflected in students' grades. Where dialogic feedback is a process, feedforward is therefore used to describe either a skill to be developed or a resulting action.

Feedforward also appears to have shorter-term and much more specific aims compared with dialogic feedback, typically not requiring as much self-evaluation from students. Knight simply describes feedforward as "information intended to help the student do better on a similar type of task in the future" (Knight, 2006, p. 446), rather than aiming to help with future tasks in general – a definition which seems very close to a conventional definition of feedback. Similarly, the tutors reported in Bailey and Garner (2010) only saw feedforward as occurring within similar modules rather than having greater utility. The tutor might also take a firmer role in feedforward than in dialogic feedback. Duncan (2007) describes feedforward as relying on the tutor anticipating the learner's future needs and tailoring their comments to help in that specific future task (for example, from their knowledge of future modules the learner will take), whereas a dialogic approach would encourage the student to articulate their own needs. Bodman (2007, p. 37) uses a different definition of feedforward in which feedback is used for "higher cognition and improved learning outcomes", emphasising a more ambitious goal whilst still making the tutor responsible for determining learning outcomes and evaluating success.

From exploring the etymological development of feedback and some new phrases which developed from it, I have identified different understandings against which students' descriptions of feedback can be compared. I have also highlighted some gaps and differing usage in how some of these phrases are used, so analysing the students' responses might help to clarify not just which model of feedback best fits their description but also whether these models need either greater precision or expanding. To support this aim, the following

section explains the main ways in which student conceptions of feedback have already been discussed in the research literature, first considering Higher Education students more generally before just looking at student teachers.

2.3 Student conceptions of feedback

The previous section considered definitions of feedback from the research literature, showing how these definitions departed from the everyday definition of feedback. Following the etymology of feedback helped to show how its meaning was shaped by varying the emphasis either on the objectives of feedback or on the role assigned to the learner, including the extent to which the learner was intended to learn how to evaluate their own performance. This all provided the context against which post-2000 conceptions of feedback could be understood, including sustainable feedback, feedforward, dialogic feedback, feedback for learning, and formative feedback. In this section, conceptions of feedback are considered from the student's perspective. As might be expected, these are typically less detailed or refined than definitions from the literature. Student conceptions of feedback are also much more closely linked with student approaches to assessment, which is again unsurprising since assessment drives so much of what students do.

One practical limitation with defining feedback from a student perspective, particularly in UK-based research, is that this is conflated with how feedback is scored in student satisfaction surveys (Nicol, 2013). Attention is therefore mainly focussed on what students do with how satisfied they are with the feedback in terms of its level of detail, frequency or promptness. Despite tuition fee increases generating interest in how students approach higher education, there is still very little literature that discusses feedback as the servant of learning rather than as the servant of assessment: there is still very little written about how students engage with

feedback beyond how they use it for assessment or how they rate it in terms of their 'experience'. It is therefore worth first considering how students approach learning and assessment in Higher Education, so that their approach to feedback can be appreciated in this broader context.

One of the earliest descriptions of groups of students modifying their behaviour based on assessment is given by Newcomb and Baird (1966). They looked at how groups of students in an American university behaved and passed on ideas to future students rather than, as was previously thought, each new intake finding their own way. Their study revealed an adversarial relationship between faculty and students, where students would exploit advantages they could find in the assessment system. For example, one fraternity discussed how grades were not important for future success ("when you get out of college nobody asks what your grades were"), so there was a need just to maintain a "respectable" average. To achieve this, the fraternity offered "plenty of help to brothers who fall behind", describing their "files of old examinations in almost every course" and even assigning older students "to tutor any brothers who need help" (Newcomb & Baird, 1966, p. 20). Some of these efforts may well support learning, but two points stand out: first, the goal seems to be maintaining a minimum acceptable grade for those who fall behind, second a key method is using previous exam papers rather than textbooks or curriculum-based resources. The secrecy of these arrangements also reinforces the adversarial relationship with the faculty.

A few years later, a much more detailed study was conducted by Becker et al. (1968), who spent over a year observing students in all aspects of university life. They found similar examples to Newcomb and Baird (1966) of groups of students looking for advantages in the assessment system, including collusion and plagiarism. Some students did have learning as an

obvious goal, but this was found to be both a minority view and one which would eventually change when assessment pressure increased. Crucially, learning was not seen as the most efficient strategy and students would look for a range of strategies (not just studying) to achieve their desired results. These included cue-seeking to mirror tutors' opinions in their assignments, getting tips from previous cohorts, befriending professors or attempting to "search out those professorial idiosyncrasies that may affect their grade" (Becker et al., 1968, p. 83). These students could be interpreted as seeking feedback (though the word was not yet in common usage in education), but their intended use of that feedback is clearly not in support of learning, indeed it might even be against meaningful learning.

Most significantly, Becker et al. (1968) did not explain these students' actions as resulting from opportunism, laziness or, as in Newcomb and Baird (1966), a lack of perceived value of learning. Instead, there was a strong sense that students saw these superficial strategies as important because they could not otherwise trust that they would get the grades they felt they deserved. Learning was only the preferred option when it was both efficient and reliable: students who either struggled with the material or felt uncertain about how their work would be graded would seek out other strategies.

Feedback, although Becker and his colleagues do not use that term, also failed to meet these needs as it seemed to mainly emphasise effort rather than giving any specific clues. A quotation is given from a professor returning exam papers:

Now the test itself is supposed to serve a pedagogical purpose. In fact, no test is any good if it doesn't serve that kind of purpose. Your first test, if you remember, was meant to say to you "You'd better read Jones [the course text]." And this test says, "Yes, read Jones, but read Smith [a book of supplementary readings] too." In other words, between these two tests you should have learned that I want you to read your text and I want you to go through these readings pretty carefully because most of the questions were based on the readings rather than on Jones.

Classroom observation, March 1961, from Becker et al. (1968, p. 70)

The professor's feedback seeks to emphasise the importance of effort, particularly preparation. This is very simple feedback since most university students should have anticipated key readings being relevant to a test, but it comes too late to help them improve their performance and seems more about teaching them a lesson for next time. Students who learnt from earlier years which readings would be covered on the test would therefore be at a significant advantage, whereas it seems most students only read Jones. Another tutor could even be seen to threaten students who ignored his advice to learn a particular formula when he says "I should have counted fifty [percent] on this question but I didn't. But it [the formula] will probably be on every test you get so you'd better learn it" (Becker et al., 1968, p. 71).

Another tutor's feedback showed his frustration by simply writing "ideas" several times "all over" an assignment, along with a failing grade. The student reasoned that the tutor "didn't like my ideas" and attempted another paper for the same tutor, but the same thing happened again. The student then reasons that "I'm just going to have to go in and talk to him, that's all there is to it, because I can't figure out what kind of ideas he does like" (Becker et al., 1968, p. 83). This shows a student's attempt at responding to feedback from a transmission-reception approach but then moving towards dialogue. Note, however, that the student has no notion of defending their ideas or finding out what is wrong with their ideas but is simply trying to figure out how to please his tutor. Other attempts to provide clear guidance and

examples had a similar problem that “students do not regard this information as sufficient and search for more” (Becker et al., 1968, p. 87), to the extent that students would never be completely satisfied with their feedback until it was so unambiguously targeted to their assessments that they need only memorise exactly what their tutors told them.

Students in Becker et al. (1968) apparently saw feedback only in relation to assessment, but were very proactive (to the point of breaking college rules) in seeking it. Feedback from their tutors would either give them clues or stress where students needed to increase their efforts, while feedback from peer groups would address exam technique, the kinds of ideas tutors seemed to reward, surface learning of key content or even alternative methods to get friendly with a tutor.

The next major development in the literature was to consider how such cue-seeking behaviour might be experienced differently by different types of students. Still in the American context, Horowitz (1988) distinguishes four groups of students with distinct approaches to assessment and, though she also does not use the term, feedback.

Starting with the college man (and, later, sorority woman), Horowitz describes the overall goal of enjoying deferring adulthood, an attitude which suggests confidence in job security post-university and perhaps an anticipation of a very demanding career. The college man is the stereotype of the well-connected privileged classes who treated higher education as a kind of “polish” for the gentleman, where a passing grade is sufficient – indeed, top grades might be seen as poor form. There is also an alternative structure of rewards based on connections. With no motivation to do better than to pass, the college man sought to defer the responsibilities awaiting him in professional life and enjoy the good times while he could. In part, this puts him in opposition to tutors but there might also be an expectation of

collusion in faculty helping these students to achieve the “Gentleman’s C” in recognition that these students are financially important to the university.

The college man’s approach to assessment is to avoid punishment by maintaining the required minimum but by the means of least effort. As a result, feedback takes cue-seeking to the point of cheating. There is a strong emphasis on short-term utility to get a passing grade. Learning is not an important outcome since learning is not valued: work experience or professional contacts are far more valuable, and the degree is merely a formality or rite of passage. Class status aside, a similar sentiment might be seen in students who already consider themselves competent in their chosen profession – though a minority, there were several examples in my interviews of students who referred to just needing “the bit of paper” rather than developing their teaching skills.

Horowitz’s second group is associated with the increased numbers of working class students attending university. Rather than seeking to network with the college men, these ‘outsiders’ instead trusted the faculty and the rewards of the university. As a result, they work hard, determined to show they can perform as well or better than the traditional group. This is an interesting group in terms of feedback, because we might expect them to engage in dialogue with their tutors as a way of attempting to gain tutors’ tacit knowledge. However, dialogue in this case is made rare and difficult by the students seeing themselves as (or even choosing to be) almost powerless, in what (Becker et al., 1968, p. 131) called “their relationship of subjection to faculty and administration”. The outsider group therefore aligns so closely with faculty values, particularly hard work, that they deliberately place themselves in a dependent, almost passive role regarding feedback.

In contrast, Horowitz links campuses becoming more politically active with a group she terms

'rebels'. The rebel comes with established notions of what university should give them, including a strong sense of morality. If the university provides this, then they will function happily within its provision and may be practically indistinguishable from outsiders. However, if it does not, then the rebel will attempt to subvert or change the university, or else disengage and find their own group outside the university. This distinction is therefore clear to see in how outsiders and rebels approach their feedback, as the outsider is working for the goals of their faculty, which they have accepted as their own, whilst the rebel is working towards their own ends. Depending on how their tutor responds, they might engage with highly challenging dialogue, or else completely disengage if the feedback does not interest them.

The late 1980s saw another shift in the dominant group, with the outsiders being replaced by what Horowitz calls the new outsiders. The result of increased student numbers and a shift to vocational education in universities, the new outsider is distinguished by their competitive nature. Where outsiders might have competed out of resentment against a complacent upper class, new outsiders compete against everyone (including each other) and take a much more individualist approach. This is important for understanding the state of higher education today, where students have far less contact with previous cohorts. Rather than the on-campus shared living experience, new outsiders seek greater home comforts – they might stay living with parents, rent high quality homes privately with a group of friends, or live in smaller, privately owned halls. Even this shift in living arrangements reflects a significant reduction in potential for peer feedback.

The new outsider is therefore much more reliant on tutors for feedback, whereas the other groups each relied on peers to some extent. This type of student, along with the traditional outsider category, also seeks maximum assessment rewards from their feedback, whereas

the college man and rebel only have minimal grade maintenance goals. The new outsider seems distinguished by their recognition that assessment is a game. Moreover, it is a game they are willing to play, giving maximum effort since this is what the faculty reinforces as important. However, they also recognise that effort is not consistently rewarded since they see other students as also seeking these limited rewards by the same methods: working hard, but also being aware of shortcuts.

This final category of new outsiders seems to be implicitly taken as the dominant group as research in the UK started to ask similar questions. Despite the much smaller sample sizes and shorter periods of study, these studies became highly influential in how students' goal-seeking behaviour would be interpreted. Miller and Parlett (1974) saw student goal-maximising behaviour, what Horowitz would have called new outsider attitudes, as so widespread that it was more useful to distinguish students by their ability to seek cues. They offer the categories of cue-seeking, cue-conscious, or cue-deaf. Students will either deliberately prompt for cues when interacting with their tutors, be careful to notice cues in feedback which is given to them, or will fail to notice cues when given feedback.

Marton et al. (1984) moved this further, describing students as having different approaches based on their fundamental approach to learning. Their example of two different approaches, for example, uses two students in the same learning and assessment environment. Their different approaches were therefore based on how they saw the task, either as something important to learn in an environment which would reward them for doing so, or as something they only needed to perform for an assessment.

This study is still highly influential today since it offered the description of 'surface' or 'deep' approaches to learning, although this is sometimes confused as 'surface learning' or 'deep

learning' (e.g. Hay, 2007), which has prompted some unfair criticisms of Marton et al.'s work based on how it has been incorrectly interpreted by others (more valid criticism can be made regarding their inferences about approaches to learning based on approaches to assessment or smaller sample sizes and less rich data when compared to the US-based studies). This is an important distinction to keep, since a surface *approach* to learning does not mean learning something for a short amount of time or learning something to a superficial level, but rather that the assessment is held as more important than the longer-term value of learning in this particular case. Surface approaches therefore should not be thought of as an inferior type of learning, but a technique used to gain rewards instead of meaningful learning: the most effective students may switch between approaches in a strategic way, which makes intuitive sense given that no degree programme will ever be completely relevant to every student in every module.

The approaches to learning literature was developed further from the two approaches, surface or deep, into six approaches which build in sophistication. This development was based on interviews with students in Sweden in the 1970s by Marton and Saljo (2005). How students conceptualised the purpose of learning at each stage affected their approach to learning, and by extension their approach to feedback. Marton and Saljo (2005) drew on Rossum and Schenk (1984) to relate these conceptions to deep or surface approaches, summarised below.

Aim of learning	Approach to learning	
	Surface	Deep
Increase in knowledge	✓	
Memorisation	✓	
Fact acquisition for a particular purpose	✓	✓
Abstraction of meaning		✓
Understanding reality		✓

Table 1 Conceptions of learning related to approaches to learning, summarised from Marton and Saljo (2005)

The final conception of learning, introduced later and not used in Rossum and Schenk (1984), is developing as a person, which would presumably continue the trend and indicate a predominantly deep approach. A third approach, strategic, was also introduced by Entwistle et al. (1979) based on Ramsden's (1979) reading of Miller and Parlett (1974) and their description of cue-seeking behaviour, adapted to "describe the more general tendency to determine the implicit rules of the assessment game" (Entwistle et al., 1979). Haggis (2004) notes that the literature has tended to treat this more as students selectively switching between deep and surface approaches, rather than being an approach in its own right, so most researchers typically refer to six conceptions of learning and two approaches to learning. Consequently, a surface approach is based on "quantitative, memorising and acquisition conceptions", whereas a deep approach is based on "abstraction, understanding reality and developing as a person" (Haggis, 2004, p. 90).

An important shift in Marton and Saljo (2005) is that this analysis of how students engage with assessment is used to infer how students engage with learning, rather than just being taken as a description of how they engage with assessment. There is a judgement that deep approaches to learning are "more likely" to result in high quality learning (Prosser & Trigwell,

1999, p. 4). This marks a fundamental difference in how the US-based and UK-based research literature saw the effects of students taking particular approaches towards engaging with feedback. Haggis (2004) gives examples from Meyer and Shanahan (2001) and Norton and Crowley (1995) of deep approaches being linked with student success and surface approaches linked with student failure. This is an opposite conclusion to Horowitz (1988) and Becker et al. (1968), where surface approaches were seen as efficient routes to assessment success. This more recent, UK-based literature therefore suggests that deeper approaches to learning are aligned with improved assessment performance, whereas the earlier, US-based literature saw these as separate and occasionally competing outcomes.

To summarise, the literature on students' approaches to feedback is almost entirely contained within the literature on students' approaches to assessment. This is particularly the case for superficial approaches to assessment. There is also disagreement over which approaches towards feedback deliver the best assessment outcomes, so it remains unclear whether feedback used for learning will complement assessment efforts or be a distraction. One of the key limitations in thinking about how students engage with feedback for assessment, rather than for learning, is that students have much less power in their assessments. This therefore emphasises a dependent role, or even passive or submissive relationships with tutors being perpetuated through feedback.

2.4 Student teachers' conceptions of feedback

In contrast with students more generally, student teachers have a wider range of learning goals and assessments they need to satisfy. This is especially true for undergraduate student teachers, since they must earn a degree from their university and be approved as teachers by their school. How student teachers understand feedback will therefore be different since they

should understand themselves as having a wider range of learning needs. Koehler and Mishra (2009) and Twiselton (2007) outline similar models of teacher knowledge which highlight a tension between three types of learning: learning the foundations of the theoretical knowledge, learning the pedagogical principles behind effective learning for their pupils, and learning the practical skills of managing their pupils' learning.

However, these knowledge goals are not sequential. Rather, student teachers might only see one or two of these goals as important and might even regard some as a distraction (Hobson et al., 2009; Malderez et al., 2007). Student teachers might also be more likely to display the approach Marton and Saljo (2005) describe as developing as a person, the most profound of the six types of conception of learning. This can be seen in the "personal revolution" some student teachers seek from their learning (Caires & Almeida, 2005, p. 117).

In thinking about how student teachers conceptualise feedback it is therefore important to consider the kind of learning they value as well as the kind of learning they feel is rewarded. For example, theoretical knowledge might be seen as providing only a basic grounding, whereas student teachers continue to prize "tricks of the trade" at all levels of their training (R. Knight, 2013). Related to this is how the student sees their position in relation to their tutors, whether or not tutors give students the tricks and tips they want. This has a significant influence on the relationship between tutors and learners and the way feedback develops, whether it is seen as cooperative or adversarial.

Whereas the previous section described students aiming to please their tutors to try get more clues for assessment or an easier grade, student teachers have another incentive since they are forming professional relationships, often within the geographical area in which they will look for their first job (or even within that school). The tutor has a very powerful assessment

role in teacher education and is also an influential referee for job applications, so a student might see building a positive relationship as more important than developing their own learning. This can be seen in Watkins' (2000, p. 69) description of the "game of evaluative relations" some student teachers felt they had to engage in with their tutors. Similarly, Copland (2011) offers an analysis where feedback conversations can be analysed as face-saving rituals, where the main goal is to maintain the relationship. In such a framework, feedback might be deemed successful if both the tutor and student feel respected and that their self-image is preserved, even if nothing that could be called meaningful learning has occurred.

A similarly subtle alternative view is to see feedback as building a student's general teaching skills. This is more difficult to assess, and the learner will typically take a more pro-active role in their own development. For example, Taras (2002) argues that rather than feedback delivering guild knowledge it instead acts as a bridge to help students develop guild knowledge for themselves. This builds from Sadler's (1989) use of the term guild knowledge, meaning that which is difficult or even impossible to make explicit. This alternative way of seeing students' approaches to feedback positions students as would-be experts (Sadler, 1989). Their goal therefore is not just to seek feedback, but to use it (or reject it) in a way which is consistent with their own longer-term goals and values.

This brief section has been included to emphasise the different learning needs student teachers might have from HE students more generally. The most important of these concerns their understanding of the feedback they need to 'do the job', whether they see this as meaning tips and tricks of the trade, very specific advice and strategies, or more general discussion. This is very different from feedback related just to assessment, and has received

little attention in the research literature. The studies described in greater detail in the following section should help to explain some of these differences as we look at more concrete examples of student teachers using feedback.

2.5 Key empirical studies

These seven studies were chosen for their similarity to my research questions and close analysis of how student teachers use feedback. This then informed methodological decisions, which are mentioned in each sub-section.

2.5.1 Components of a good practicum experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2002)

Beck and Kosnik (2002) interviewed student teachers about what support and feedback they felt was needed for a successful teaching placement experience. Participants in this study were all at a Toronto university, and they also differed from my sample as they were training on a one-year postgraduate course. The study sampled 11 students from a cohort of around 65, using open-ended interview prompts and a qualitative methodology using thematic analysis, slightly modified so that descriptions of each theme included the number of students who mentioned it (a reporting style I adapted for my own narrative analysis). Some contextual information was also gained from course satisfaction surveys, for example to describe the overall student view on the quality of feedback.

The authors cited McIntyre et al. (1996) to acknowledge some bias in student teachers' views, most notably being "blinkered by their need to get along with their associate teacher, survive in the classroom, and obtain a positive report" (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 82). As a result, the authors emphasised that they would not accept student views uncritically, but do not give any further information on how this affected analysis. Rather than challenging students'

views, however, these seemed to be valid concerns by the students. Whereas Beck and Kosnik regard these as sources of bias or distraction, there is a case for seeing managing these needs as a legitimate use of feedback.

Codes were reported as seven categories, with feedback being one of the seven. However, the other categories also seemed to relate closely to feedback as they included emotional support from the mentor, a peer relationship with the mentor, collaboration with the mentor, flexibility in teaching content and methods, the mentor having a sound approach to teaching and learning, and students having a manageable workload. This was helpful during survey and interview question piloting as it suggested several prompts which could be used to draw out responses related to feedback but which participants might not otherwise think to mention as relevant to feedback.

The feedback theme indicated a strong desire for feedback, including wanting feedback to be more formal and more regular. One student, for example, said that he wanted feedback at the end of each day, although another student did receive feedback every day but felt that this increased her workload too much. In terms of content, solely positive feedback was described as having no impact, with one student saying that it “was hard to take it seriously”. He described a mentor who seemed reluctant to give critical feedback and how he had to encourage her to do so. Several students also described feedback being limited if it was “too fast” (i.e. too brief) or “top down”, so that there was no chance for dialogue. Feedback was therefore limited to what the mentor would have done, rather than engaging with what the student was trying to do.

Feedback was also alluded to in the other themes. Nine of the eleven interviewees mentioned the importance of friendliness and emotional support. One student described how “tepid”

feedback frustrated her since she felt that she was making a significant effort in difficult circumstances, and her feedback did not acknowledge this. Another stressed that student teachers knew they needed to work hard, so did not “need a kick up the behind” so much as they needed a mentor to keep them calm and give them encouragement.

Similarly, students wanted to be seen as teachers, which was also reflected in appreciating feedback which was given in the spirit of collegiality and dialogue. In the same way, students wanted feedback to be flexible enough to accept the student has a different approach from the teacher which might also be valid. Other themes, such as the mentor being a useful role model to observe and workload being manageable, related less to feedback, although the mentor being able to model desirable behaviours could be seen as giving a form of feedback, whilst time to reflect is a crucial component of learning-oriented approaches to feedback.

The conclusions of this study suggest that the approaches to learning literature might be of limited use when researching student teachers, as was also suggested by Caires and Almeida (2005). In particular, the authors noted that student teachers “struggled with situations where they thought their development as teachers was being hindered or their pupils’ learning and welfare were being adversely affected. These were not people just concerned with getting a teaching certificate” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 97). This suggests a need for interviews to prompt for more than how feedback was used for assessment, since feedback may be seen as having a broader impact. The study also suggests that student teachers can give more detailed responses than expected if interviews allow them the space to do so.

2.5.2 Integrating feedback and reflection in teacher preparation (Brandt, 2008)

This study was included due to its ethnographic approach, somewhat rare in the feedback literature, spanning four years and including 95 participants across nine countries. The

collected data was very rich, including shadowing, journals, interviews and questionnaires. The conclusion was particularly interesting, that “feedback alone is considered insufficient”, with “reflective conversations” being needed (Brandt, 2008, p. 37), suggesting a particular type of dialogue was important in feedback.

Whilst focusing on a UK-based qualification, the study had a multi-national context. It sampled students taking a one-month, non-university course, which typically (though not always) requires an undergraduate degree for entry. The teaching practice was therefore much shorter than in my sample, with only six hours of observed teaching. I had some experience of a similar course through my own Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) training, so could see some similarities in the level of workload and planning requirements. However, one main difference was that these students were typically in close-knit groups of fellow students who would be encouraged to give peer feedback. The pupils in the observed classes were also different from school-aged pupils, as they are normally attending voluntarily and receive a reduced (or waived) fee for having a student teacher lead the class. The atmosphere is therefore highly conducive to a collegiate environment, although the feedback structure itself was simply based on the positive-negative-positive ‘feedback sandwich’.

The study found 26 issues which students felt were important, eight of which the authors classified as relevant to feedback. The first issue concerned the authenticity of feedback, that tutors could be too lenient or too critical. This was particularly problematic when contradicted by assessment. For example, one student describes a peer who was “coddled along and told she was doing really well” but then “told towards the end that she was on the verge of failing” (Brandt, 2008, p. 39).

By extension, some students felt that feedback was only real when it included criticism, but

found this difficult to accept from peers, implying the need for criticism to be supported by some kind of authority or legitimacy. Other students felt that criticism went too far, particularly as assessments became more important later in the course, with one student describing peers receiving “very cutting feedback which really knocked them back. There were tears at times” (Brandt, 2008, p. 40).

Inconsistency was also a concern, including between different course tutors, peer feedback, and self-evaluation. This could be a very significant problem if students did not have a positive relationship with their tutor, with one student describing a tutor’s “personal dislike” of a peer which would have resulted in his failing the course if not for the intervention of other tutors (Brandt, 2008, p. 41). Dialogue opportunities were also restricted by workload or time constraints, with students suggesting that they did not have time to justify their choice of technique or their goals for a class. In part, this was a reflection of receiving feedback in groups, as one student put it, “it would be selfish of me to take up more time. So I left it” (Brandt, 2008, p. 41).

Brandt’s study is included here because it draws on a broad range of data to evaluate feedback. The feedback therefore takes on some routines through its repetition and time pressures, including patterns such as holding back criticism in the earlier stages and using the feedback sandwich approach. This offers the potential for a very thorough analysis of a very limited context, which promises greater insight into how students experienced feedback.

I was also drawn to the study because it focused on reflection rather than assessment performance, seeing the value of feedback in how well it encouraged self-evaluation and reflection in the student teacher. These students typically received one month of tuition before being scattered around the world, often with little further professional development,

so sustainable feedback seems highly relevant to their needs. Reflection also seems to be a valuable prompt for encouraging teachers to talk about their own learning, and is a phrase which they are more likely to use instead of feedback. Brandt's study also highlighted some problematic contradictions in students' views, particularly related to the role of criticism in feedback, and the value of encouraging narratives rather than having a too structured interview.

2.5.3 Negotiating face and managing tension in feedback meetings (Copland, 2010, 2011)

The tutor-student relationship seems to have a significant impact on feedback. For example, Watkins (2000) suggests that feedback might not be seen by students as promoting their own learning since so much of feedback time was spent managing their relationship with their tutor. Two studies by Copland (2010, 2011) focus just on this aspect of feedback in teacher education. In these studies, Copland set out to explore tension in the assessor and mentor role and analysed these tensions by drawing on Roberts and Sarangi (2001) to describe the "rules of the game".

The teaching context was the same as in Brandt (2008). Copland used linguistic ethnography for her methodology, which appealed to me due to its close language study which would allow me to draw on some of the skills I developed as an undergraduate English literature student. The methodology also appealed because it suggests some ways in which student responses might be more rigorously interrogated whilst still controlling for researcher bias, helping to address concerns that students have too limited a view of feedback. The methodology also allows analysis to challenge the actual words students use if there is contradictory evidence from elsewhere in the interview or even in how those words are said, looking at factors such

as intonation, silence, or turn-taking.

Copland describes some of the tensions in combining the assessment and learning roles of a tutor, and how these can be combined in feedback, criticising “evaluation done under the guise of supervision” (Waite, 1997, p. 67). This offers a more charitable interpretation of feedback which does not directly support learning, since the tutor might have to consider multiple audiences and purposes when creating feedback.

Copland’s work was included here because it helps to reframe students’ comments about their relationship with their tutor. Whilst some may well simply experience conflict on a personal level, Copland’s analysis at least offers an alternative explanation that tension could be less to do with personality and more to do with inherent tensions in the mentoring and assessing role. Copland (2010) further suggests that tension might not actually be a result of the mentor having a conflicting assessment and mentoring role, but stems more from students failing to engage with the participatory demands of feedback, thereby forcing the mentor to take a more dominant role. This can be seen in examples where tutors take the lead in feedback, with their dominance interpreted not as aggression but a kind of linguistic repair work so as to avoid the awkwardness of silence (i.e. somebody has to speak, so the tutor takes control). This provides a different way of looking at the mentor-student relationship, and an interesting question of how this tension is resolved in successful relationships.

Copland (2011) develops this argument further, including an attempt at making explicit the tacit rules and expectations of the assessment game. I have summarised in the table below only those aspects relevant to teacher education in the UK (a third stage, peer feedback, is omitted as this is much rarer in teacher education than in TEFL) and avoided some of

Copland's specialist linguistics terminology:

Stage of feedback	Rules	Expectations
Self-evaluation	Tutor initiates with invitation to self-evaluate (e.g. "how do you think that went?").	Comments will be brief. Student should mention both positive and negative aspects.
Feedback from tutor	Tutor should mention both positive and negative aspects.	Tutor critiques with longer evaluative comments. Tutor should provide advice and suggestions.
Questioning	Tutor asks questions of the student.	Student should respond with explanation of rationale for specific parts of the observed lesson.
Clarification	Student is allowed to initiate. New topics can be introduced.	Discussion can be more explicitly about assessment, including other assessments not directly related to observed teaching.

Table 2 Expectations and 'rules of the game' in feedback meetings. Adapted from Copland (2011, p.3835).

This helps to explore some of the politeness and relationship norms which form expectations in feedback, what Copland describes as face-saving work. Both Copland's studies usefully suggest ways in which the learning goals of feedback are constrained by both parties feeling a need to manage the relationship, and also a subtle implication that this might also be a function of feedback. It might be too cynical to suggest that students would explicitly think of ways to improve their assessment prospects by working to respect the face presented by their tutor, but Copland's studies suggest that this will occur at a subconscious level. As a result, such tactics might be more obvious when they are absent, for example if a student does not pay heed to expectations. It also suggests that a complete focus on the type of feedback that best supports learning might fail to consider this important function of feedback, which could create unintended problems.

2.5.4 The impact of placement assessment on beginning teachers (Orland-Barak, 2002)

It is difficult to find examples of good practice in the feedback literature. Carless (2015) does so by looking at the feedback practices of award-winning teachers, but it would be very difficult to find a similar sample of successful students since student awards are bound up in their graded assessments, making it difficult to find students who are highly effective learners as distinct from being highly effective in assessments. One study which offers such a sample is Orland-Barak (2002), who sampled five exceptional students in a teacher preparation course at an Israeli university. Whilst all these students performed very well in assessments, with a grade average of 95%, selection was informed by more general impressions and informal assessments of their excellence. The study is also interesting as it followed these students into their first year as qualified teachers, drawing on a range of rich data, including interviews and written narratives. The study reports on just one of these five students and uses close linguistic analysis.

Whilst not specifically related to feedback, the study is relevant here because it offers a way of understanding how a student who was considered exemplary dealt with feedback and problems in her first year of teaching. It therefore addresses ways in which the student was able to very successfully perform as a student, but could not move from the specifics of the training situation to an experience which was “similar but not identical” (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 115). One example relates to feedback on overcoming difficulties and managing conflicts, which the student describes as absent from her feedback as a student because “we both thought that that wasn’t supposed to be the purpose of our evaluation and of our feedback session” (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 108). The example of this exemplary student struggling in her first year highlighted the problem of feedback being too specific – both that the feedback

would be of limited value and that the student could still be very successful in assessments without making these broader links.

Evaluating if feedback is sustainable or supports self-development conceptions of learning must be sensitive to this example, emphasising the importance of reflection moving beyond the particular setting. Similarly, Orland-Barak suggests that being more aware of the subtexts of the practice classroom offers new opportunities for dialogue and a need to “integrate problematizing and conceptualizing as part of the evaluation of the process of learning to teach” (Orland-Barak, 2002). This has been particularly useful as an example of what sustainable feedback might look like in the particular context of teacher education.

2.5.5 Relating beliefs and practices of mentors to beliefs and practices of their student teachers (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012)

The relationship between tutors and students has been a recurrent theme in this literature review, both in how it affects feedback and how feedback might be one of the main ways this relationship is developed and negotiated, thereby suggesting an alternative function of feedback in teaching practice. Rozelle and Wilson (2012) looked at how this relationship was manifested in the pedagogic techniques and beliefs of students. The study drew on a sample of six students, using ethnographic methods including observing meetings, keeping field notes of informal observations, and interviewing a range of participants in the setting.

I chose this study because it addressed some of the subtle ways that students aligned with their mentors, which could be seen as relationship maintenance (Ellis, 2013) or even a subtle type of feedback in how tutors teach example classes or share their materials. The study describes common stages of development, the first of which is essentially mimicry or “using the [mentor’s] script” but with the difference that “explanations were briefer, less developed,

quicker in pace, less open to student participation, and less informed by the details that concrete experience brings” (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012, p. 1200). This mimicry would receive a type of feedback from the pupils which highlighted its ineffectiveness, such as pupils not volunteering when asked to do so or ignoring jokes which would gain laughter when said by the mentor.

The mentor’s influence later becomes more subtle, with students adopting patterns from their mentor rather than being obvious copies. This was based on subtle hints in feedback, such as one mentor who gave recommended reading and encouraged his student to list some of his own strategies which might be useful to her. Some examples showed that this was effective, with students gradually moving to integrating a mentor’s patterns in their own style, whilst another student seemed to reject the suggestion and instead appeared to “double down” on copying her mentor’s style (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012, p. 1203).

When students successfully integrated a mentor’s practices into their own approaches, this seemed to be reinforced by positive feedback. This contributed to students internalising these practices, and even shifting their beliefs so that their overall approach became coherent. Unsuccessful examples were met with feedback which encouraged students to find new strategies for themselves, but the result seemed to be that the overall approach still jarred with their strategies, with no change in the students’ beliefs. Rozelle and Wilson’s study offers an interesting example of feedback encouraging students to find their own way rather than adopting quick fixes, but that this is only effective when students consider their overall approaches. Evaluating feedback therefore requires an understanding of how strategies relate to overall beliefs, requiring consideration of how flexible students are to changing their

beliefs since this seems to be a key requirement in effectively learning from feedback and moving beyond mimicry.

2.5.6 Mentor-student bullying (Sewell et al., 2009)

Johnston (2010) describes a situation in which negative feedback is symptomatic of a negative relationship between mentor and student, including if the student feels isolated from other sources of feedback. Using a sample of 16 student teachers, Johnston analysed such problems using both a socio-cultural and a professional framework. This helped to explain some negative experiences as the result, for example, of mentors being too busy or feeling pressured for time, but also as “the ultimate power move in preventing [students] from feeling valued” (Johnston, 2010, p. 316). Students who did not feel accepted either socially or professionally felt trapped and powerless, unable to take risks or ask for support. Johnston’s recommendation is that students be made aware of the importance of forming positive working relationships, while schools are encouraged to see mentoring as a whole-school support system rather than a dyadic relationship.

Johnston’s study was illuminating in how it described conditions in which negative relationships affected feedback and led to students adopting coping strategies such as mimicry. However, this did not engage with the experience of that negative feedback and what it actually meant for the students, for example in how it led to them feeling that they should not take risks in their teaching and how much of this was to do with feedback as opposed to assessment anxieties. Since students had spoken to me about feeling victimised or even bullied, it was therefore important to find a study which went further in exploring the experience of feedback in these fairly rare but nevertheless persistent situations.

Sewell et al. (2009) engages with workplace bullying in schools by drawing on research into

adult to adult bullying in Maguire (2001) which looked exclusively at postgraduate secondary school student teachers and their experiences of bullying as personally defined: if a student felt bullied, then they were. Sewell et al. (2009) used a similar survey method with a broader sample, adding a comparison of primary and secondary students to help identify some risk factors for bullying and adding some interviews to explore the issues further.

The study had a potential sample of 386 and used pen-and-paper questionnaires at the end of a lecture to obtain a strong response rate of 71% for the secondary cohort and 75% for the primary cohort. This was a useful strategy for improving my own survey response rate. The study also noted the risk of surveying at the end of term since students would be very tired and less likely to engage meaningfully, which was a useful tip in planning my own research schedule to avoid this issue.

The risk factors for bullying are interesting reading which might help to explain some narratives (female students in primary schools who are either much younger or older than average or are from an ethnic minority background), but what is particularly relevant for this thesis is how bullying was reflected or enacted through feedback. The most commonly reported bullying behaviour was “negative or belittling comments” (Sewell et al., 2009, p. 9), including during feedback but also often in public. Undermining behaviour, such as negative comments during a lesson or within earshot of pupils, and breaking confidentiality with peers were the only bullying behaviours which did not have a clear link to feedback. Otherwise, bullying seemed to manifest mainly through feedback, including unfair or inconsistent judgements, unrealistic pressure, an intentional lack of support, or ignoring behaviours, all of which contributed to making students feel isolated from sources of help.

Examples of bullying through negative feedback included two students being given only

negative comments and one being told to display the criticisms on her wall until the next observation so that she would “constantly remind myself of where my weak points were”, while another student described being told “I don’t think they like you...you need to change your teaching style” and another was told “I don’t think you’ll cope in September” (Sewell et al., 2009, p. 11).

The study also raises the issue of needing to consider non-verbal communication when analysing feedback, particularly when it contradicts the verbal feedback. One obvious case was a student who only received text messages as her mentor refused to talk to her, while another described being given feedback by a mentor who refused to make eye contact and another student was only allowed to talk to her mentor during their allocated weekly slot. This would obviously limit opportunities for dialogue, a point explicitly made by one student who would not even see her tutor to receive her feedback: instead she would suddenly notice that a feedback sheet had been secretly placed in her handbag. In such situations, what is actually said in those feedback sessions is inconsequential compared with the message sent by the context.

This study was very influential in my analysis because I had struggled with the issue of students being blinkered in their conception of feedback, making them liable to blame others when they should have been more engaged with feedback. This study was therefore a valuable reminder that outrageous mentor behaviour does occur frequently enough that it would be unsurprising in my own data, encouraging me to be more confident in trusting students’ views. The study also emphasised the significant cumulative impact seemingly small events might create, particularly behaviours which contribute to a student feeling undermined or unwelcome. Any consideration of feedback must therefore also be sensitive

to the context within which feedback is given.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a range of ways of understanding feedback both generally and in relation to student conceptions of, and approaches to, learning, summarised in the table below. I have argued that the most important aspect of feedback is intent, whether feedback is sought to improve assessment performance or to improve learning. I have outlined how the literature on deep and surface approaches to learning has suggested that deep approaches have an advantage for students not only in their learning but also in their assessment. This matches with concepts such as dialogic feedback or sustainable feedback, that more scholarly engagement can serve both present and future needs. The variety in the table (below) indicates the shortcomings in the everyday definition of feedback, and the difficulty of forming a definition which is both usable and includes all these different types.

	Likely outcome of feedback				
Learner's relationship to knowledge		<i>Little/no effect</i>	<i>Improves short-term performance</i>	<i>Improves long-term approaches</i>	<i>Improves self-evaluation skills</i>
	<i>Recipient</i>	Dialogic feedback	Feedforward	Feedforward	
	<i>Initiator</i>	Transmissive feedback		Dialogic feedback	Sustainable feedback
	<i>(Co) Producer</i>			Dialogic feedback Sustainable feedback	Sustainable feedback

Table 3 Mapping definitions of feedback

A broad definition is important since students might not recognise some cases where they are using feedback. Nor should a definition necessarily exclude what is meaningful for my respondents and what they choose to mention when prompted about feedback – generally, if they call it feedback, then it is. My definition also tries to avoid describing an ideal form of feedback, addressing the difficulty of talking about bad feedback when feedback is defined as, for example, dialogue in support of learning (Askew & Lodge, 2000).

In an attempt to articulate a working definition of feedback for this thesis, I suggest that feedback is most usefully thought of as:

Information either given to or created by a learner based on assessing their performance, either formally or informally. This information may have a range of intentions, but good examples will always seek to improve performance either directly through advice or indirectly, such as by communicating values, offering encouragement, or improving a working relationship. Poor examples will be distinguished by either lacking or only superficially addressing such intentions.

Focusing on students' intent is useful as it keeps success in assessment and learning as separate issues, since it is possible that addressing one might have an opportunity cost for the other. Feedback might also be called upon to serve other purposes, particularly managing the tutor-student relationship or quality control for the university-school partnership. This gives a richer understanding of feedback because it allows for valid additional functions, helping to explain why some interactions might not be 'for learning' but might still be trying to (and even succeeding at) addressing other intentions.

Finally, looking at work-based learning and teacher education suggests that student teachers (and possibly other work-based learners) are distinct from students who spend all their time at university. As a consequence, student teachers have a greater range of demands for different types of knowledge. They also have a broader range of assessment to satisfy, and

feedback from many different sources to draw upon. Whilst students in general still have to manage relationships with staff, this need is of far greater significance in teacher education due to the high stakes of in-school assessments and the significant power differences between student teachers and their tutors. This helps to explain why problems can occur, drawing on the idea of relationship management and conflict as integral elements of feedback.

Understanding some of the different models of feedback and the special case of student teachers has also helped to develop the research questions from their rough outline, so now they have expanded to consider:

1. How do student teachers understand the learning required to gain their teaching qualification compared to the learning required to become established as an effective teacher?
2. What intentions do student teachers assume are behind the feedback they receive?
3. How do student teachers see their own roles and the roles of their tutor in feedback?

Looking in detail at some recent studies with similar samples has also highlighted gaps in methodology. In particular, there seems to be the need for a study which can close the gap between an in-depth understanding of students teachers' conceptions of learning and a general overview of how a larger sample conceptualise feedback and deal with its demands in their practice. In the next chapter, I argue that this need is best addressed by a mixed-methods study moving iteratively between numerical and narrative data, and in which feedback is conceptualised broadly with consideration for its many purposes as well as its nuances and subtleties.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the literature review, I argued that the way feedback is understood can vary significantly based on assumptions regarding, for example, the role of learners, the role of tutors, or the purpose of feedback. In this chapter, I describe the methodological decisions taken to try to untangle this variety of understanding. First, I outline the reasoning for an integrated mixed-methods approach based on trying to find multiple ways to engage with the sample and their data. I then describe how my approach to collecting and analysing this data challenged the relationship between researcher, data, and participant. This blend of techniques and reasoning is then considered in a broader philosophical context in order to find a consistent overall explanation for the methods described in the methods chapter and how the resulting data was treated.

3.2 The appeal of mixed-methods

Mixed-methods research offers a way of bridging the divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches, helping to avoid many of the concerns and limitations resulting from the “paradigm wars” (Biesta, 2012, p. 147). Plowright (2011) offers an encouraging reminder that this was a false dichotomy anyway. Instead, he encourages thinking more of data being treated as either numerical or narrative, emphasising that mixing happens as much in analysis as it does in collection of data. I also wanted to address a gap in the literature by analysing responses from a large sample, not only because of the rarity of this scale in feedback studies but to add more objective analysis to the subjective interpretation, or “imagination” (Kettley, 2010, p. 79), which would be involved with narrative analysis.

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The major downside of mixed-methods approaches is that they offer little philosophical reassurance other than an assertion of pragmatism, with only brief discussions of the assumptions of mixed methods approaches available. Plowright (2011) offers an alternative perspective, suggesting that instead of starting from a personal understanding of ontology and epistemology and working towards a suitable methodology, “it is the other way round: methodology determines the philosophy you might employ to explain your approach to undertaking research” (Plowright, 2011, p. 181). Answering a research question through an integrated mixed-methods methodology therefore requires familiarity with “holistic integrationism”, consisting of:

- a pragmatic integrated methodology
- a relativist social epistemology
- a realist social ontology
- a realist object ontology.

(Plowright, 2011, p. 184)

The aim of this is to arrive not at a justified, true belief, but at “warranted assertability” (Plowright, 2011, p. 185). These assumptions will therefore be returned to later in the thesis as claims are made, but a brief overview of the philosophical reading which influenced the planning, data collection, and analysis stages is given below under ‘finding a philosophical home’.

Another appeal of mixed-methods was to avoid some of the limitations of self-reported data. Whilst interpretation is always an issue in self-report data, feedback is particularly problematic because of its different possible definitions. Even at the everyday level of the term, being asked to report how often feedback is received can be more problematic than it

seems. For example, students might be unclear whether informal oral feedback should be included in their response. If the student has read Boud and Molloy (2013), entirely possible since these students take modules in education studies, they might even report receiving no feedback if the information given to them did not lead to learning. Similarly, as in Lock and Soares (2005), feedback might be so narrowly defined that much of what I would call feedback is referred to as 'appraisal'.

Analysis of self-report data also tends to present student views as close as possible to their original form, which limits the interpretive role of the researcher and foregrounds the students speaking for themselves in presenting their views. This is intended to be respectful of the gift of data, empowering the participant as an expert in their own narrative. However, this is problematic when student descriptions of feedback are limited. In choosing methods, it was therefore important that my analysis could go beyond enabling students to speak for themselves, adding my own articulation wherever I felt that it helped to express what students were struggling to articulate. It was therefore very reassuring to be able to regularly check my interpretation with statistical tests.

3.3 Philosophical underpinnings

3.3.1 Assumptions and norms in educational research

Being explicit in choosing a research approach is considered crucial for explaining how a research topic is "seen", so that being explicit supports the rationale of the study (Trafford & Leshem, 2008, p. 94). A similar point is made by Jackson (2013), who links this to Sikes' (2004) argument that uncovering researcher assumptions improves credibility. Likewise Pring (2004) highlights the danger in being unaware of the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions when designing a study, that assumptions will be present in a study regardless of whether a

researcher is aware of them.

However, there is also a risk in being explicit about assumptions and then moving on, failing to challenge those assumptions with data. In a systematic review, Ashwin (2012) argued that theories and models were not being sufficiently challenged in part because the same approach was taken to the object of research and the method of analysis. Kettley (2010, p. 4) makes a similar point, focusing particularly on what he calls a “tendency to deify specific scholars”, specifically Bernstein and Bourdieu. Similarly, Kettley criticises a trend in doctoral research for taking on assumptions favourable to qualitative research and rejecting straw man versions of positivism to avoid having to use statistical analysis. This seems to be excessive criticism. However, it reflects more general concerns that the choice of solely qualitative approaches is more often based on the researcher’s mathematical confidence rather than their research problem (Gorard & Taylor, 2004), or that habitual loyalty to particular approaches forms a kind of “methodolatry” which limits consideration of which is the best approach for a particular research question (Janesick, 1994, p. 209). There is an incentive therefore for this research to draw upon more quantitative approaches in order to address a shortage (whether real or perceived) in the research literature. More importantly, it emphasises how the research literature on feedback has not really used quantitative methods in an exploratory way, and how this is an important contribution to make.

At the level of research philosophy, similar problems can be seen by researchers defining their approach not by what is most appropriate but by which approaches the researcher rejects (Pring, 2004). Where Pring (2004) argues that this is particularly dangerous is in the rejection of seemingly positivist approaches as such a rejection often relies upon an over-simplified understanding of these approaches. Choosing an approach to my research problem must

therefore not only consider the merits of different approaches, but should also take particular care not to too easily dismiss approaches which might be neglected in educational research. In terms of trying to address gaps in the research literature, this also makes a convincing case for including numerical analysis simply because it is so frequently neglected. Using a mixed methods approach which includes statistical techniques would therefore improve the impact of this study, particularly since a large sample and statistical testing is currently highly valued in the UK when forming policy.

3.3.2 Assumptions and mixed-methods approaches: finding a philosophical home

Mixed-methods research can be justified with “pragmatism, as opposed to orthodox alignments of theory and method” (Kettley, 2010, p. 82). Whilst Kettley disparagingly calls this a tactic, Plowright (2011) argues that pragmatism in an integrated mixed-methods methodology still aligns theory and method but does so in an unorthodox way: the method determines the nature of theorising. Since the method has come from the research question, this is entirely appropriate in taking an open and critical approach. The challenge is therefore to understand the assumptions at work behind the methods I have chosen so that my analysis would work coherently with the data and the types of claims required to answer the research question.

The starting point for this was deciding what counted as evidence. Pring (2004) argues that there is a false dualism in the evidence valued by either quantitative or qualitative approaches. At one extreme is an interpretivist response where the benchmark for knowledge is lower because reports of perception are considered valid due to there being no direct way to access reality. In contrast, radical positivism reasons that there is a single

objective reality to be found and so requires a higher benchmark for knowledge which rejects alternative interpretations. Pring's (2004) argument is that it is not necessary to adopt either extreme. Instead, objective reality is *increasingly* knowable and verifiable. This shares the approach that there are multiple versions of reality which are constructed and negotiated, but also argues that these constructions and negotiations must be based – at least to some degree – on commonly agreed realities, in which the essence of a thing does not change.

Pring does not associate this explanation of reality and perception with any particular philosophical tradition, but it seems to link with the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment and the ideas of direct realism – that often we really do see what is there, but can obscure this with our various lenses. This philosophical stance is most strongly associated with the work of Thomas Reid, who has only started to become a major name in research philosophy (Wolterstorff & Pippin, 2001), but is acknowledged more widely in philosophy as one of Hume's most effective critics and a leading thinker in the Pragmatism movement.

Reid's thoughts on perception and objective truth include some complex arguments drawn from his work on optics, but a useful summary is given by D. N. Robinson (2004). Starting with objective truths "which we are under an obligation to accept in all of the ordinary affairs of life" (Robinson, 2004, p. 127), it is argued that even if the mind brings its own interpretations to what is sensed, this does not change the fact that – on some level – we are still able to reliably sense what is really there. In turn, this leads to his argument that the signals the mind receives are not fallible copies, but rather "natural signs" (ibid), which the mind can decode so as to "move from the sign to the thing signified. There is a fit between our biology and the external world such that we are able to live in it" (ibid).

This approach can be labelled as either Direct Realism or Naive Realism, but this does not

mean that it is a way of sidestepping discussion of philosophical underpinnings or accepting information naively in the common definition of the term. Michell (2003) summarises this by explaining the nuances between direct realism and radical positivism:

Realists, in fact, believe that much that is said is false: indeed, that much that is said is socially constructed. In this, also, realists and constructivists are united. However, only realists can believe that their claims about social constructions may *sometimes* be objectively true.

(Michell, 2003, p. 21, emphasis added)

The philosophical home of my mixed methods study can therefore best be understood by what it accepts as reliable knowledge. Using the term direct realist rather than positivist helps to remove some of the stigma of the quantitative/qualitative debate, so that socially constructed knowledge can be taken as valid but needs to be rigorously explored (just as any evidence should be) before it can be considered as increasingly approaching objective truth.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has outlined the main philosophical tradition which aligns with my aims for this study, justifying the use of mixed-methods based on:

- Increasing the variety of methods used in the feedback literature
- Balancing respecting student voice against rigorously challenging all interpretations, including my own, as objectively as possible
- The need to explore generalisability or transferability through larger scale data collection.

The philosophical position I have outlined here flows from how I understand my particular research question, so is to some extent unique. Nevertheless, much of the effort to understand philosophical debates has resulted in arguing my way to pragmatism anyway, so there are strong similarities to the philosophical assumptions which are made explicit in

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Plowright's version of mixed-methods methodology. Plowright summarises this as an approach "drawing on a relativist social epistemology" in which "ontologically, the nature and characteristics of this world are restrained and constrained by the spatio-temporal world of objects and processes that characterise an ontologically prior intransitive reality" (Plowright, 2011, p. 185). Ethically, then, both student voice and professional judgement need to be respected, but also critiqued – as do my own inferences - in order to reach warrantable claims.

4 Methods

4.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter described the mixed methods approach of this thesis and stated a philosophical approach which matched with the research questions. The closest fit was direct realism: getting closer to truth or the essence of an experience, or at least further away from falsehood. In this chapter, the tools of data collection are described in more detail to explain how the data was analysed. This included adapting some techniques from studies discussed in the literature review, in particular the seven studies which were described in greater detail in section 2.5. I also introduce the choice of statistical tests and my reasons for adapting an interview method which has not been used in feedback research before: the Biographical Narrative Interview Method.

The structure of this thesis fits with a “quan → QUAL” design (Biesta, 2012, p. 149), in which the numerical data is collected first but then more emphasis is placed on the subsequent narrative data. Whilst there was some shifting between data during the analysis, this timing generally held as survey findings were used to inform the interview stage and analysis. During write-up, this was much more of an iterative process, particularly as I was prompted to return to the data following feedback on journal articles which treated each data type separately. I also became aware that I was starting to prefer the narrative data and was drawn to the interesting stories. To balance against this, I frequently returned to the numerical data, heeding the warning from Gorard and Taylor (2004) that it should be the research problem and not researcher preferences which determine the balance of methods used. Whilst analysis is presented mostly in chronological order, it is important to remember that a regular mixture of methods was actually used since this is a fundamental strength of mixed methods

approaches.

4.2 Survey methods

Muijs (2004, p. 36) describes survey research as “well suited” to descriptive research or looking at “relationships between variables existing in real-life contexts”. This makes them a useful and relatively cheap tool for concepts such as student approaches to learning, where there may be multiple relevant variables. Surveys are also a well-established method in feedback research, including in specific sections of large-scale surveys such as the UK’s National Student Survey (NSS) and Australia’s Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).

The challenge is to create survey items which make sense to students, but which also gives them enough freedom to express opinions which might not have been predicted. Seemingly straightforward alternatives such as giving an ‘other – please specify’ option have been demonstrated to dramatically restrict responses (Schuman & Presser, 1979). It was therefore important to select a range of survey items which would be meaningful to respondents, but still have a broad enough range to avoid forcing a definition of feedback on them. This is one of the benefits of extensive piloting (described below), but is also helped by choosing items which have already been thoroughly tested by other researchers.

I drew on items from five surveys which asked about feedback, either as their main focus or alongside other questions about learning. I included the UK (National Centre for Social Research, 2009) and Australian (Curtin University, 2011) national surveys for a general overview of feedback, particularly satisfaction with feedback. I also chose items from a survey used for newly qualified teachers (O’Pry & Schumacher, 2012) to look at feedback from a work-based learning perspective. Items offering more in-depth exploration of feedback came

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from a survey just concerned with assessment and feedback (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003). Finally, items related more closely to the approaches to learning literature were included to add a broader range of attitudes which could relate to different conceptions of feedback (ETL project, 2002). These five surveys gave a good balance of items, all of which had been well-tested with large groups of participants.

The next stage involved modifying items to fit my research questions and reduce duplication, although this was left sufficiently broad that very few items were discarded. Irrelevances were removed gradually either for technical reasons or following suggestions during piloting. Technical changes followed the procedures in Fink (2009), such as removing double-barrelling questions and leading statements. For example, the item “I pay careful attention to any advice or feedback I’m given, and try to improve my understanding” (ETL project, 2002) was confusing as it contained two distinct ideas, paying careful attention and using feedback to improve understanding. Following Fink’s advice, this was split into two separate items. Comments from the group of tutors in my pilot also suggested that ‘understanding’ might be a confusing term as it could mean understanding of pedagogy or understanding the tutor’s intent. My two items were therefore “I paid careful attention to any advice or feedback I was given” and “I used the advice and feedback to improve my practice generally”, with separate sub-items listed for “to figure out how to get the best grade” or “to figure out what they really wanted me to do”.

Phrasing was also adapted as necessary to balance positively and negatively phrased items. This is recommended “to disrupt any lazy or ‘auto-pilot’ tendency” (Yorke, 2009, p. 724).

A total of four rounds of piloting were used, one with a group of university-based tutors who regularly visited student teachers in schools and three groups of student teachers. At each

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stage, participants completed the survey individually and then discussed the items afterwards as a group. Piloting suggested a greater need for balancing of positive and negative phrasing, as some students and tutors felt that there was an overall bias to the items (although different groups had entirely opposite views of the direction of bias).

Piloting also helped to agree on key terms, since the literature review included mentors, tutors, co-operating tutors and link tutors. Despite all being in the same local area, the students in my pilot were similarly confused about associate tutor, link tutor, school-based tutor, partnership tutor, mentor, class teacher, or personal tutor, including some acronyms for these such as AT, LT, PT, or PAT, which some students used without knowing the full term. A solution which seemed appropriate for the aims of the study was to ask about “the main person who gave me feedback”, with a question separately asking what roles this person had in the school.

I also revised the confidentiality statement to give much more detail and ask participants to separately consent to each of the five elements of consent. This was based on concerns some pilot participants raised about being contacted or staff knowing their answers. I also added a phrase to emphasise that the survey wanted to know about both good and bad experiences. This followed from a pilot participant raising the issue that she had signed an agreement to not publicly criticise the university. Other participants were prompted by her question to share similar concerns, so this was an important point to address – as was evident from one student asking for a new survey so that she could give honest responses after I had made this reassurance. As well as these changes to phrasing, I also changed how I introduced surveys to emphasise my student role and my independence from the faculty. As a simple example, I had originally worn a suit during the piloting as this seemed to be the norm in the education

faculty, but after this I dressed casually.

Discussions during piloting were also useful to finalise the scale for responses. The surveys used for generating items used a range of Likert-type options, so there was no consensus on the most appropriate option. O'Pry and Schumacher (2012) gave four response options: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. Using an even number of response options prevents central tendency, the habit of respondents to favour the middle option (Cohen et al., 2007), but this advantage is mitigated by the reduced choice given to respondents – those who are genuinely neutral on a topic are obliged to give an inaccurate answer.

The survey from the ETL project (2002) used a more typical 5-point scale measuring agreement with statements with the labels Very strongly, Fairly strongly, Somewhat/not sure, Rather weakly, and Very weakly/not at all. This also has problems for interpretation, however, because somewhat agreeing and being not sure seemed quite different responses that I would not wish to group together, as would weakly agreeing and not agreeing at all. It also makes interpretation difficult for respondents who disagree, as they would only have one option to select and could not give a sense of the strength of their disagreement. The introductory comments to the ETL survey also discouraged use of the middle option, which also seemed inappropriate because it creates an extra explanation for respondents selecting other options. Finally, Gibbs and Simpson (2003) used a 5-point scale but avoided the difficulty of labelling the middle category by using a question mark rather than words. Their labels were strongly agree, agree, ?, disagree, and strongly disagree. This appeared the most straightforward of the three surveys, although I disliked the implication that the middle category was uncertain rather than a definitive response indicating a genuine lack of preference.

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With no clear consensus, I was guided by the discussion during pilots and the advice given in Muijs (2004) and Fink (2009). This led to a 5-point scale with labels strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. For those who were uncertain, my instruction was to leave the response blank. This was also important for statistical interpretation because I wanted to treat the scale as, to some extent, continuous for the purpose of calculating means, adding or weighting scores, or running scale-variable tests of correlation and regression. Some researchers disapprove of such uses of Likert-type scales, arguing for example that the difference between strongly agree and agree cannot be assumed the same difference as between disagree and strongly disagree. This “problem of equal intervals” therefore results in “illegitimate inferences” if used as I intended (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 327).

However, such a criticism seems an unfair generalisation resulting partly from a lack of precision in terminology and, perhaps, from the desire to give good general advice. Boone and Boone (2012) are particularly helpful in this respect because they distinguish between Likert scales and Likert-type items. Going back to Likert’s original intentions, they point out that analysis of individual questions as if they were scale variables (rather than ordinal) is indeed inappropriate as “[Likert’s] data analysis was based on the composite score...He did not analyse individual questions” (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 1). Drawing on a definition from Clason and Dormody (1994), the scale can be considered appropriate for treatment as a continuous measure when it “is composed of a series of four or more Likert-type items that are combined into a single composite score/variable during the data analysis process” (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 2).

My final decision was how to administer the survey. The most efficient method would be

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online. However, I was wary of any self-selection bias in respondents. In particular, I wanted to be able to defend my study against the criticism that it over-represented negative experiences – part of the remit from my studentship was that my research should help the faculty improve its practice, so I needed to persuade staff that my results were representative of student teachers in general. Increased response rates from negative students may be a legitimate concern, for example when the NSS changed from structured telephone interviews to self-completed surveys, Surridge (2008) found that survey responses were more likely to be negative. However, Surridge explains this as more likely relating to respondents being overly positive in their responses to telephone interviews.

In order to address these concerns of self-selection, I decided to conduct at least some surveys on paper to be able to test for differences in response based on completion method. Paper surveys had an almost total response rate as lecture time was set aside to allow completion, an approach I adapted from Sewell et al. (2009). Only one student chose to not complete the survey because she came to the class late and felt stressed. Having such a high response rate from the students meant that there was no self-selection in completion. The only patterns of non-completion related to students who did not attend the sessions (a very small number as sessions were compulsory), or those whose tutors would not grant me access to the group. I felt that the value of sampling students without any possible self-selection bias was worth the extra time and expense of printing and inputting data. This was also valuable for testing self-selection bias in the online sample – while ANOVA (analysis of variance) tests would later show only a minor difference in response patterns, it was at least worth the extra data collection to know this and not have to worry about having a self-selected sample.

A target sample was set following the advice of Field (2009) that exploratory factor analysis is

best with 500-1000 students. As well as this ideal figure, I calculated a minimum requirement for regression of 301, based on a confidence interval of 5 with a confidence level of 95% and a population of 1392 student teachers in the sampled university. To give some context, the Higher Education Statistics Agency recorded number of student teachers on similar courses that year nationally at 45945 (HESA, 2013).

Paper surveys were completed by 367 students, with another 139 completing online. This provided an acceptable sample, but principal component analysis would be improved by a larger sample. I therefore took advantage of an opportunity to sample student teachers at another similar university. Attending two lectures there enabled me to bring the total sample up to 613, as well as enabling analysis to look at how responses varied depending on the university, thereby helping to give an idea of transferability and generalisability. Seeking additional participants from a fresh population was also preferable to repeatedly asking the same sample since this might risk irritating students and consequently reducing goodwill for other researchers (Bell, 2010) or even lead to unreliable token responses (Surridge, 2008).

4.3 Methods of statistical analysis

The survey was designed with the intention of finding underlying factors, what are sometimes referred to as latent variables. In this way, students' conceptions of feedback could emerge from the wide selection of items rather than being forced into a narrow range of responses. For example, one option with analysis would be to decide before collecting the data which items would combine into a scale (ideally between four and six to give enough range of possible scores), and then assign a descriptive label (e.g. 'formative feedback'). Principal component analysis is instead performed after the data is collected, so that patterns of response suggest which items relate to each other. The interpretive challenge is then to assign

a descriptive label to whichever items cluster together. This appealed as a more exploratory method of analysis which could help to show any unexpected relationships and would retain any complexity in the factors, whereas pre-selected factors will tend to have a very clear logic which might obscure the complexity of how the factor is really experienced.

Interpretation of principal component analysis, despite being numerical, is highly subjective.

Field (2009, p. 633) warns that:

The major assumption in factor analysis is that these algebraic factors represent real-world dimensions, the nature of which must be guessed at by inspecting which variables have high loads on the same factor. So, psychologists might believe that factors represent dimensions of the psyche, education researchers might believe they represent abilities, and sociologists might believe they represent races or social classes. However, it is an extremely contentious point whether this assumption is tenable and some believe that the dimensions derived from factor analysis are real only in the statistical sense – and are real-world fictions.

Matching with the philosophical approach described in the methodology chapter, it is therefore important to remember that the descriptive labels given to these factors are necessarily approximations of something which might not even be possible to express clearly. These descriptive labels will still be taken as approximations of something which is real in the experience of student teachers and has been reliably observed by them, even though it is only approximately articulated by me. The numerical nature of the factor should therefore be seen as helping the factors to emerge from the data, even if the verbal label of those factors takes some time (and other data) to refine into something more meaningful.

4.4 Regression

One of the major criticisms of statistical analysis is that there are so many relationships and so many data points that something can always be found to be statistically significant. This is

one of the issues behind concerns about replicability of research and publication bias of spurious correlations. For new researchers, Field puts it bluntly: “one thing *not* to do is select hundreds of random predictors, bung them all into a regression analysis and hope for the best” (Field, 2009, p. 212). Regression analysis should instead start with combinations of items which match with the research literature.

First, stepwise regression was used to look for relationships between items which might be expected from my analysis of the literature, helping to show which items are most influential in each factor. These factors were then refined by using backwards removal regression, in which items with the weakest explanatory power are removed. This helps to give a simpler factor, showing which items suggested by the literature were most relevant to these participants.

Factors created through this regression analysis helped to check some of the ideas from the research literature, seeing how well represented each concept was in this sample. These factors also provided a useful comparison for the factors created in principal component analysis. Performing correlation tests was very helpful for forming descriptive labels, since a factor which had a strong correlation with a pre-selected factor would suggest a similar theme (for example, what I eventually labelled as ‘feedback with learning as its main intention’ had a strong positive correlation with the pre-selected factor which described dialogic feedback).

4.5 Survey administration

4.5.1 *Data entry with QueXF*

One of the challenges from using paper surveys rather than online was getting the data into a usable format for analysis. Not only would it be time-consuming, but manually entering data would introduce the chance of data entry errors. The QueXF project offered a way to reduce

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these problems, although it initially came with a steep learning curve since it required some server building and linux knowledge (a more user-friendly commercial alternative is marketed by IBM as 'SPSS Paper', but is prohibitively expensive for all but the largest scale studies).

Printed surveys were formatted to be read by the software. Using large-volume scanners meant that around 50 surveys could be imported at a time. Responses were automatically detected, with each page presented on the screen with the software's detection overlaid on the scanned page as shown below. This let me check that auto-detected responses were correct (where the purple box is on top of the respondent's tick), correct inaccurate detections (where the purple box does not overlay the correct response, such as where an option has been crossed out and another selected), and quickly enter data manually if no response was detected. As a result, data entry took around 12 hours for the 474 surveys completed on paper and processed through QueXF, with an average checking rate calculated at 53.7 per hour.

[illegible]

Figure 2 Example of QueXF verification screen

Following verification, the data was exported as a CSV file into Excel where I checked for any missing values. 34 surveys could not be fully processed through the software due to poor

alignment in the scanning, and so were manually entered directly into the spreadsheet. The filenames were transferred from the SQL file and linked to the form id so that each form could be identified by its filename on my computer rather than the code assigned by the software. This made it easier to copy any written comments so that they were available for analysis alongside the numerical data.

Including printing, scanning, handing out the surveys, setting up QueXF, verifying the data, manually entering missing data and manually entering written data, the process took around 40 hours, so about an hour of time for every 12 respondents. This represents a saving over surveying without the assistance of technology, but can also represent the cost in time of not conducting the survey online. Paper surveys were necessary for a sample size which allowed principal component analysis, but comparing responses from students who completed on paper or online showed no statistically significant differences. This is an important finding since online surveys are assumed to be limited by self-selection bias (Bethlehem, 2010), so finding that this was not the case for this sample suggests that future research in this area could reliably use online surveys provided that the sample size was sufficient.

4.6 Interview methods

As I expected that feedback might have quite subtle influences, it was important that the interviews offered a framework for participants to express their personal understanding both without prompts and as part of a more structured interaction. This would help to form a balance between letting participants speak for themselves from their own understanding of feedback whilst also probing for nuances from a broader understanding of feedback.

Semi-structured interviews were a popular method in the qualitative studies described in the

literature review chapter, with each study mixing some pre-determined questions with giving interviewers freedom to lead the interview as they felt appropriate. Despite the very similar interview approach, the studies put interviews to very different purposes. For example, Sewell et al (2009) used interviews as a way to give more detailed descriptions of the themes identified in their survey stage. The interview data was therefore analysed according to the themes from the survey, rather than the two data sources being interrogated against each other.

Other studies, such as Orland-Barak (2002) and Copland (2010, 2011), used a standard semi-structured interview to collect their data but then interrogated it during the analysis stage. Using close linguistic analysis therefore ensured that the way students responded was taken into consideration as much as their actual responses. An alternative approach was to use multiple data sources, where interview responses were not necessarily challenged but were seen as just one part of the data which needed to be considered (e.g. Brandt, 2008).

The mixed-methods approach in this thesis was intended to work iteratively between numerical and narrative data, so it was important to find an interview method which was challenging of participants' responses in that moment, as well as leaving the option for close linguistic analysis for key points. However, it was also important that follow-up questions were not leading the discussion away from the participant's own experience. I was therefore drawn to the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) for two main reasons. First, the participant structures the initial stages of the interview, giving the option of later analysing this structure. Second, the multi-stage format of the interview would allow me to blend in use of Kelly's Repertory Grid to prompt a different type of narrative (described more fully later).

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The BNIM approach developed from Wengraf (2001) and has since become very influential in psychology and therapy research. An active research community has contributed to many enhancements to the method, collected in Wengraf (2014), but the defining feature of the method is its three separate interview sessions: a freely-structured narrative, interview prompts structured around the narrative, and a final session led by the interviewer.

The first session uses a carefully worded introduction to prompt the respondent to speak freely, giving their narrative in whatever order they choose and with no further prompting or interruption. Keywords noted down during this period are then used for session two, where the same order of topics is used to prompt for further details. In this way, the participant's narrative structure from session one leads the discussion in session two, with their words also forming the prompts. Session two is also restricted to those points raised by the participant. The third session gives more freedom to the interviewer to structure the interaction and is the only opportunity to ask about points not mentioned by the respondent. Examples include verifying information, asking about any points not previously covered, or engaging in more open dialogue to share experiences between the researcher and participant (Wengraf, 2014).

The method also stresses the importance of interviews not being rushed. Wengraf (2014) advises that researchers "go for three [hours]...Don't accept a time-slot of less than two" (Wengraf, 2014, p. 242) for sessions one and two, which can occur in the same meeting. A break is then given before sub-session three. This can vary from ten minutes to a month, depending on how intense the sessions are and how much time the researcher feels they need to prepare for session three.

Accessing volunteers for BNIM research seems not to be a problem. In the training session I attended, Wengraf emphasised that he never offered incentives for participants. Rakesh

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Biswas went further, sharing his experience as a researcher in A. Price et al. (2013), in which participants so valued the attention of a healthcare professional that they paid to be interviewed. Unfortunately, my sample did not seem to share these views, and my initial call for volunteers received only a few responses. Offering a small incentive (£10 book voucher) brought the number of volunteers up to twenty, with five students not responding any further past their initial expression of interest and another two arranging sessions but then failing to attend.

Some participants were also clearly discouraged by the proposed length of time. As a compromise, I tried to keep to the principal of achieving an unhurried pace by planning for one hour but asking participants for one and a half hours. Working within these limitations required adapting the interview method not just to make the study feasible, but also so that replication of the study would at least be possible for other educational researchers. This meant doing as much as possible within one shorter meeting, whilst also trying to avoid any sense of being rushed. The main way this was achieved was by focussing on learning and feedback, whereas BNIM approaches generally invite the respondent to start with a broader narrative. Only one of my participants seemed to find this restrictive and, after just a minute of narrative, needed prompting to the extent that we began sub-session two. Otherwise, however, this focus successfully helped to create a narrower narrative which could then be developed in sub-session two.

Session two more closely followed a standard BNIM structure, but was shorter in duration than a standard BNIM interview because the narrative from session one was similarly briefer. Some students wanted to move straight to sub-session three whilst others appreciated a break, which occasionally offered useful data due to the more relaxed atmosphere. Using the

repertory grid technique for session three also provided a change of focus and pace, which helped to keep engagement so that a longer break was not necessary.

4.6.1 Preparing for the interview stage

BNIM interviews are mostly led by the participant, so most of the skill of the researcher is in avoiding leading the interaction and being patient with responses. Wengraf (2001) points out the important role of silence in an interview, and the BNIM training session gives practice in encouraging participants to lead the interview. Many PhD researchers supplement this with a five-day training course, but since I was adapting BNIM and using it as just one part of a mixed-methods approach I found the self-training materials in Wengraf (2014) more than sufficient. I had some students from a previous study who offered to let me practice on them, which was very helpful and also meant that I did not have to use students from my sample for practice.

As final preparation, I attended a three-day interviewing workshop at Nottingham University where I was able to practice a range of techniques and reflect on my BNIM training. This was helpful not only in building my confidence, but in comparing different interview approaches. In particular, I reflected on the way I prompted for particular incident narratives and how Wengraf's insistence to "keep pushing" (Wengraf, 2014, p. 310) was probably best suited to the longer, more relaxed BNIM structure and could seem intimidating in a shorter session. I was therefore careful to keep a relaxed feel to the session and to find more subtle prompts. For example, I tried to make questions more open and use modal auxiliary verbs to avoid the harshness of direct prompts. As with most new researchers, listening back to interviews also highlighted the need to dramatically reduce the amount I spoke and to give my participants more space, reemphasising the importance of silence and patience.

4.6.2 Using Kelly's Repertory Grid for session three

Based on the interesting drawing out of tacit values of examiners in Price et al. (2013), I was keen to use a repertory grid approach to help draw out subtleties and nuances in their experiences of feedback. Whilst there are no other examples of using repertory grid with BNIM, Wengraf encourages its use during analysis and told me that the idea seemed very compatible with the BNIM approach.

The repertory grid technique, sometimes shortened to KRG for Kelly's Repertory Grid, is based on personal construct theory as described in Kelly (1955/1991) and the idea that "behind each single act of judgement that a person makes (consciously or unconsciously) lies his or her implicit theory about the realm of events within which he or she is making those judgements" (Fransella et al., 2004). A range of grids and analysis methods are available and can vary, for example, by how numerically the data is treated and whether the interviewer or the participant supplies the elements to be compared. Typically, however, the grid is used to structure an interview where a number of comparisons are made between what are called 'elements'. These might be real people, examples of assignments, or more abstract ideas such as 'the ideal essay' or 'my better self'.

Participants are presented with groups of three of these elements and the interviewer elicits a way in which two of those elements are similar but the third element is different in that same way, for example 'made me feel welcome' or 'left me to my own devices'. This forms the emergent pole of the construct. The participant is also asked what the contrast was, which forms the contrasting pole, such as 'aloof' or 'supervised me closely'.

Participants may then be asked to state a preference, explain some more or give an example of the construct, or rank all the elements on this construct to provide some numerical data.

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This is typically used to create a Likert-type scale, but the scales can be used as norm-referencing against which other examples can then be considered. For example, some participants in Bloxham et al. (2015) created a scale ranked 1-5 from the example elements, but then expanded these scales when new examples were added rather than renumbering the original examples.

Creating these scales has two main goals. It attempts to draw out tacit constructs, and it helps to describe these constructs with nuanced labels. Asking for comparisons rather than straightforward description can also help avoid participants self-editing their reported behaviour (Fransella et al., 2004), or avoid token responses. For example, the Bloxham et al. (2015) study explored what constructs tutors used when grading assignments, finding that the formal marking criteria was rarely mentioned when making comparisons. Directly asking which criteria tutors used might have simply resulted in being given the 'right' answer that they used the written criteria. Discussing comparisons may also help to avoid well-rehearsed answers, which is important in researching feedback since students in this sample, and in the UK generally, were frequently surveyed about their experience of feedback in course evaluations and institutional surveys.

Using constructs is also helpful for drawing out subtle comparisons or ideas which are hard to articulate. Polanyi calls such ideas "tacit", meaning that "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4). Polanyi's expression is credited by Hedesstrom and Whitley (2000) as introducing the term 'tacit' to philosophy. The term has since been used in a variety of ways so that it is now better to think about a range or spectrum of tacitness from what could be explicitly stated but simply has not been to that which can never be adequately explained verbally. Sadler's (1989) concept of guild knowledge would therefore be an example of tacit

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knowledge because a novice can never be adequately told, rather they must cast ideas into their own words and gradually get closer to the idea – one that they, too, will be unable to fully explain but can nevertheless pass on in the same way. In this way, tacit knowledge is held as “non-codified, disembodied, know-how” (Howells, 1996, p. 92) which can be drawn out through making comparisons. Tacit knowledge does therefore not just mean that which cannot be written down, it also cannot be found in reality but is formed in its articulation which is necessarily imperfect but nevertheless improvable.

The repertory grid relies on comparisons being easier to respond to than direct questions. In this way, ideas held but not yet articulated can emerge through the comparisons. This was my own experience when trained in the use of the grid. Asked to compare photographs of learning environments, I very quickly articulated some tacit expectations I had about learning environments which I would not have been able to simply state, some of which even surprised me.

In addition to drawing out constructs which the participant may have held tacitly, the repertory grid helps to draw out and describe these constructs in greater subtlety. For example, the emergent pole ‘professional’ has ‘unprofessional’ as its logical antonym, but the elements being compared (in this case, people) invites more detail about how those people had not been professional. The scale might therefore run from ‘professional’ to ‘made me look stupid’. This helps analysis to get closer to the real tacit meaning of the construct, noting that “we should never assume that a construct is the same as its verbal label” (Fransella et al., 2004). Since one of the justifications for this research was that advice about feedback has been over-reduced to simple verbal labels, the repertory grid is an ideal approach for attempting to unpack constructs.

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Further subtlety can be understood from the context in which each construct was described and if this varied according to the elements being compared, helping to give an understanding which goes far beyond the verbal description:

For example, does the client use the word 'affectionate' only when talking about persons of the opposite sex? Does he apply the term 'sympathetic' only to members of his own family or only to persons who have also been described as 'intimate'? The answers to questions such as these may give us an understanding of the interweaving of the client's terminology and provide us with an understanding of his outlook which no dictionary could offer.

(Kelly, 1955/1991, p. 189. In: Fransella et al., 2004, p.54)

This method helps to include many of the benefits of close linguistic analysis which were so valuable in the ethnographies of Brandt (2008) and Copland (2011), described in the literature review. Considering, for example, a construct with the emergent pole 'maternal, looked after you as an individual', it is unclear as to whether the contrast will be more focused on treating the student as an individual or being caring. The contrast pole in this example was 'just another student on the books', which helps to clarify that the impersonal nature of the relationship was an important part of forming this construct. The elements used to form this construct can also enrich interpretation, so in this case the construct followed a description of two tutors who were passionate about working with children. These same two tutors were grouped together as "maternal, cared about you", which was later rephrased when the contrasting pole was added. This helps to add the importance of these tutors being seen as caring in general, both for their pupils and for this student, perhaps adding a sense of genuineness to the construct.

After deciding on the use of the repertory grid, I had to choose from a range of formats. Fransella et al. (2004) describe how to use ten different types of grid, including different ways

of recording and analysing responses, some of which I was able to explore and practise using during a workshop offered by Keith Taber at the University of Cambridge. Whichever type of grid is used, the principle aim is “deriving a mathematical description of part of a person’s psychological space, a basic assumption being that a mathematical relationship between a person’s judgements reflects psychological assumptions underlying those judgements” (Fransella et al., 2004, p. 54). Each variety of grid therefore seeks to express this relationship in a different way, so the challenge for a researcher is finding the most appropriate expression. The choice of grid should be neither too restrictive nor too complicated, and there is a balance between making the data easier to manage and allowing any natural lopsidedness to be expressed (for example, clustering of elements).

The choice of tutors (elements) was not a major concern, since the interview was more focused on how students conceptualised feedback. If the construct required understanding the nature of the elements which suggested it, this could always be found in the interview transcript. There was no need, therefore, to record which elements were rated as alike or different, so the added complexity of circles and shading in Kelly’s Role Construct Repertory test was not necessary. Similarly, ranking grids were not necessary since participants were describing feedback rather than the tutors who gave them that feedback.

The rating grid is one of the most popular varieties, and has an air of familiarity as it expands the simple emergent-contrast distinction into a multi-point scale which looks very similar to a Likert-type response. When rating several constructs, a 7-point scale is most common, although a wide range are in use and the length of scale has not been shown to have a significant effect on responses (Fransella et al., 2004). Choosing the length of the scale is therefore dependent on the context, with longer scales not necessarily leading to more

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precision. Where a scale length is the same as the number of elements, there might also be some confusion since this would appear very close to a ranking grid, although this issue has not been studied in the literature.

Other varieties of grid are closely related to their origins in therapy and psychology. The structure of these grids is therefore focused on very specific goals, such as highlighting dependency, resistance to change or inter-personal relationships, making them unsuitable for this study. After assessing these varieties of grid and having some practice, I decided that the numerical analysis was less important than ease of completion, since the grid itself was less important than the spoken response it prompted. I therefore adapted a five-point rating grid by asking participants to rate their general preference rather than rating each tutor.

This format led to some useful prompts, such as students explaining that they generally preferred a certain type of feedback but not the way a particular tutor did it. This was much more valuable for my research aims than ranking the tutors, leading to greater insight into the subtlety of the constructs. One important example was a frequent preference expressed for feedback which was honest. Several students described this as 'blunt', and seemed to mean it in a positive sense by associating it with unfiltered, genuine feedback. However, some of the same students also complained earlier in the interview of tutors whose feedback was insensitive or upsetting. Asking for preferences on a rating grid helped to explore this issue and add more detail to the 'blunt' construct, adding that bluntness should have a clear intention of helping the learner or be given later in the relationship after some trust has developed.

4.7 The interview format

A small office was used on the campus of the sample university. I arranged the seating as recommended in a doctoral training workshop, using easy chairs so that our postures were relaxed and we were at the same height. The seats were offset to avoid directly facing each other, and a low table was placed slightly away from the chairs for the repertory grid task. After greeting participants with tea and small talk, I asked them to complete the ethical consent form and gave them the chance to ask any questions. I then used the set format from the BNIM training manual to begin sub-session one:

As you know, I'm researching the way feedback is experienced on teaching placements. So, thinking about your placements so far, can you please tell me the story of the different kinds of feedback you have experienced. I'm interested in all the events that were important to you, personally, in your experience of a placement. Begin wherever you like, we have plenty of time. I'll listen first, I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes for after you have finished.

During the narrative, I was careful not to show too much interest in any particular comments but noted down keywords in the order they were given to be used as prompts in session two.

As I did not use a separate session three, we would take a short break and refocus on the repertory grid task. The participant would think of five people who had given them feedback, and write either their names or initials on small drywipe boards. These were then presented in various combinations and the participant asked to explain a way in which two of the people were similar but, in that same way, the third was different. I kept notes of the emergent and, if given, contrasting poles. This continued until the participant could not give any more, when I would present a different selection. This stage typically took around 20 minutes, and was followed by reflecting back the poles of the construct and assigning descriptive labels to both ends of the construct where necessary. I then asked if there was any preference for one pole

or the other and marked this on a five-point scale. I then prompted participants to reflect on the interview as a whole and draw together their overall experience and approach to feedback. They were then given an opportunity to add anything they felt was missing, and the interview ended with me summarising the next stages of the study and the opportunity to check the transcripts.

4.8 Transcribing

Another decision was how to transcribe the interview data, as detailed transcription limits the amount of data that can be feasibly analysed. Starting with verbatim transcription, I found that Burke et al.'s (2010) estimate fit well, predicting around 100 hours of transcription for this project. This was based on only transcribing non-verbal communication (e.g. pauses or laughter) when it seemed important for meaning, but still writing every word spoken by participants in each interview. I also followed advice from Burke et al. (2010) to summarise small-talk and set directions.

Linking with my overall methodology, transcription was considered an interpretative act to the point of forming part of the analysis process, as described in Wellard and McKenna (2001). This goes beyond the idea of increased familiarity meaning transcription brings "researchers closer to their data" (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006, p. 40), emphasising that transcription is an exercise in simplification. This was reassuring because it reframes data loss as data

refinement, highlighting the importance of looking beyond the detail and of paying close attention to the data. Wengraf (2014, p. 154) explains this as the researcher working

over the transcript asking (i) what is the speaker trying to get at here?, (ii) why are they saying what they're saying, and why are they saying it in this way? As they (you) do this, producing a sequentialisation, and struggling with the difficulties of doing so, they are producing difficult-to-achieve understandings of what was going on in the interview...The 'construction of gist' and the 'uncovering of simple or mixed textsorts', and noticing a hardly-articulable mutation of 'gist and/or textsort' at a given point, is crucial to your becoming more sensitive to the text and to the intersubjective interaction in the interview that such going over the transcript in order to 'chunk' it can re-evoke.

In order to help this process, I used the associated-docs function in Atlas.ti. Memos and codes could be created during transcription to help capture some of the analysis process. I was also able to use the timestamp function to link the mp3 file with my transcribed text. This meant that I could later review smaller selections of text but still hear the relevant audio sections without having to find them in the original file (timestamps shown by red dots). This helped to keep some of the nuances of audio which are lost when transcribing, whilst also allowing me to have the interview in text to sort and refine. Using a three-button foot-pedal, creating the timestamps soon became habitual and represented very little additional transcribing time.

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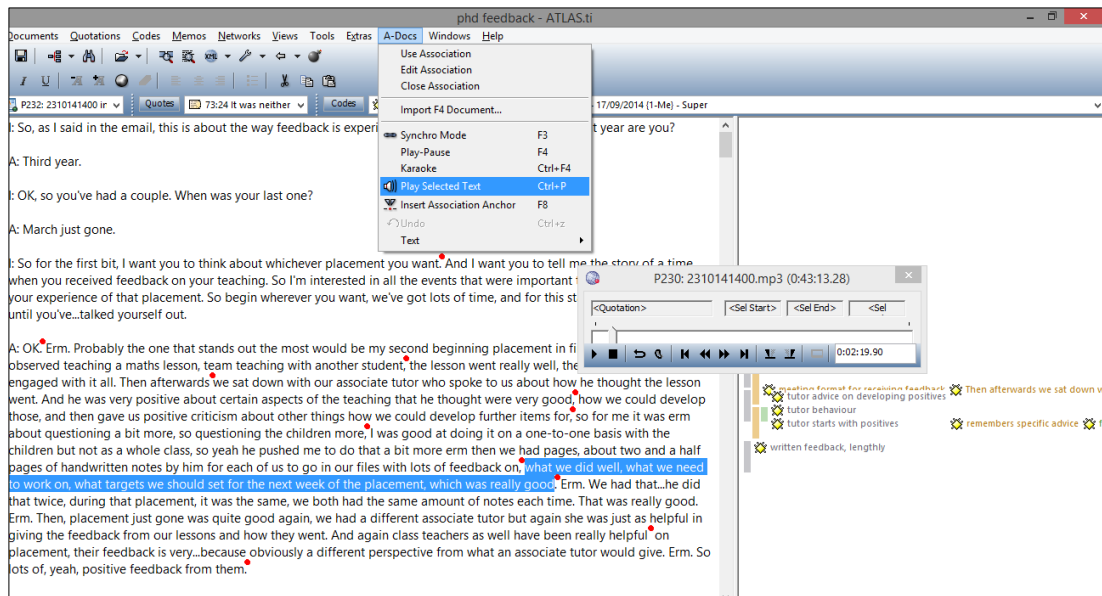


Figure 3 Timestamping and transcribing as early analysis using A-Doc tools in Atlas.ti

4.9 Summary of ethical considerations

Before considering the methods of data analysis, this sub-section draws together the ethical considerations involved in the data collection stages, summarising the decisions made as part of the University of Cumbria's ethical approval process. This study went through the process twice as part of the approval and transfer process from MPhil to PhD. As part of this ethical approval process, survey questions needed to be checked to mitigate any chance of causing psychological harm. This was partly addressed by drawing on questions from established surveys, but was also supported by a check with a senior colleague and three rounds of piloting in small groups for any sensitive items.

The timing of surveys also needed to be negotiated. In part, this was to benefit the quality of data collection since, as Bell (2010) cautions, students can face survey fatigue at certain times of year. However, the main benefit of careful scheduling was to avoid affecting students' responses to similar surveys. Timing of the surveys was therefore negotiated with individual course tutors to avoid course evaluations, but was also careful to avoid the National Student

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Survey data collection period. Since the NSS is so important for institutional reputation, a buffer of one month was agreed to comfortably avoid this survey window.

In addition to considerations regarding the survey data collection, the in-depth nature of the interview method and close exploration of personal constructs meant that particular care would need to be taken regarding the potential for psychological harm through upsetting interviewees or bringing up uncomfortable topics. Wengraf (2014) mentions avoiding psychological harm and upset as one of the benefits of the biographical narrative interview method since allowing participants to articulate these feelings can be considered therapeutic, however this sentiment may reflect the popularity of Wengraf's method with psychology researchers and therefore assumes some level of counsellor training for interviewers. With no such training myself, a compromise was agreed that counselling support through the National Union of Students could be signposted for participants. I would also need to take care with probing questions, and remind participants as necessary of their right to withdraw or redact.

The BNIM method also limits the potential for the introduction of upsetting topics causing psychological harm since this method structures the interview around the narrative offered by participants. This helps to avoid any risk of the interviewer asking about topics which the interviewee might not feel comfortable discussing. In practice, only one participant (Lisa) touched on a sensitive topic and became slightly upset during the interview. However, she was keen to continue and said that she wanted to talk about the incident. We took a short break and I later shared a similar story of my own, which was not planned but seemed to relax the atmosphere and make Lisa feel more comfortable.

Finally, analysis and discussion of the data also required careful consideration of ethical

implications, particularly related to anonymity. As well as using pseudonyms throughout, details such as course of study and institution were removed from transcripts. Some participants also singled out some of their tutors for praise or criticism, but it was made clear to these participants that confidentiality meant that I would not be able to take a complaint or commendation forward for them, although I could point them to someone who could help. These details were also removed from transcripts before samples of coding were checked with one of my supervisors since there was a chance that some of these tutors might be known to the supervisor. This same principle was followed later in the reporting of the study, following the advice of the University of Cumbria's approval panel that the two universities attended by the sampled students should not be named.

4.10 Analysis of interview data

My training in qualitative analysis was based in grounded theory approaches, first in the second-generation methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) during my masters degree and then in third-generation methods (Charmaz, 2006) at the start of my PhD training. I also tended to add in some close-reading analysis skills based on my undergraduate training in English literature. Similarly, my analytical technique shows clear influences from various tutors. Most obviously, my introduction to educational research was by Paul Ashwin, so my theory-building was informed heavily by Ashwin (2012). Likewise, my early research was supervised by Paul Trowler, so my analysis was also drawn to explaining the overall cultural environment in which narratives were shared, as in Trowler (1998). At PhD level, my supervisors introduced me to a range of methods for drawing out more detail in interviews, requiring more careful consideration of my own assumptions and theoretical framework in order that my analysis could confidently rely on my interpretations of the data, as can be seen in the analysis of

metaphors in Boyd and Bloxham (2014) and the analysis of tacit values in Bloxham et al. (2015).

The analysis of narratives in this thesis therefore draws on these influences whilst also trying to form into a coherent method which matches with my overall methodology. A key feature was to find a way to ensure rigour whilst still giving freedom to my analytical “imagination” (Kettley, 2010, p. 79) as a way of exploring tacit constructs. This aim fits well with Charmaz’s description of grounded theory analysis, in particular that “it’s legitimate to make inferential leaps because you’re going to be checking them, you’re going to be seeing if they hold up and if they don’t you’ll be getting rid of them” (Charmaz, 2012). Analysis therefore regularly returns to questioning assumptions, particularly through analysing “hidden assumptions in our own use of language [in labelling codes] as well as that of our participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). However, an entirely grounded approach would lose the benefits of the BNIM structured narrative, so some mixing of methods would also be required at the analysis stage.

Charmaz (2006) distinguishes between initial and focused coding. Initial coding is a close reading of fragments of data, looking to summarise important points using either descriptive codes or a participant’s own words as an in-vivo code. Focused coding then looks for the most useful of these codes and tries to test them against a consideration of the data more generally. Charmaz summarises this as “we compare data with data and then data with codes” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 42). The extensive line-by-line coding process Charmaz describes can then function as a simplified narrative, where the detail of the narrative fades so that the action and feelings are foregrounded. This is especially the case when the description given to codes follows Charmaz’s advice, drawn from Glaser (1978), of trying to find gerunds for codes. For example, “receiving negative feedback” would be preferable to just “negative

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feedback” or even “received negative feedback” since it emphasises the action being described.

As codes are drawn together into themes, a theory starts to develop: “you begin weaving two major threads in the fabric of grounded theory: generalisable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analyses of actions and events” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). At the same time, analysis should stay open to other possible interpretations which are then gradually confirmed, refined, or replaced. One suggestion for retaining openness to nuances in the data is to code each line, regardless of how important or complete the line seems. This “frees you from becoming so immersed in your respondents’ worldviews that you accept them without question” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51).

The next coding stage, focused coding, requires selecting initial codes based on either repetition or importance. This stage condenses the data and starts to allow comparison across narratives, which was supported in this study by my separate narrative analysis in which similarities became apparent while summarising narratives.

The repertory grid data was also analysed separately, which helped to further draw together some of the main constructs raised by participants and look for similarities in the descriptive labels given to constructs and during focused coding. The components identified during numerical analysis of survey data also served a similar function, suggesting a coding frame and relationships which would be helpful in understanding each student’s experience.

Each narrative was supplemented with discussion during the repertory grid stage of the interview, which added more detail and at times helped to analyse a narrative using the student’s own constructs. Working through each narrative in detail and writing each one out

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helped to develop an in-depth understanding of the complexity of each student's constructs, as well as suggesting some ways in which similarities could be seen between participants.

Choosing a range of analysis techniques for interview transcripts matched with BNIM, in which "Any interpretive procedure – and, in principle, the more the merrier – has its strengths and weaknesses" (Wengraf, 2014, p. 18). Each technique helps to both avoid and make explicit any of my own assumptions, whilst prompting multiple readings of transcripts so that I had a greater chance of noticing nuances in the data. In keeping with the principle of an integrated methodology, it was also important that no one approach was regarded as superior to another (Plowright, 2011). This makes a case for how data supports the claims made during analysis, with each analysis technique contributing towards my analysis as either superior to the alternatives (Gorard & Taylor, 2004) or in need of qualifying.

To summarise, integrating a range of analytical techniques contributes to the validity of any conclusions, informing the description of the "warrant, qualifying conditions and backing conditions" of claims (Plowright, 2011, p. 138). In this way, a qualified warrant with rebuttal of alternative inferential explanations forms the foundation of a conclusion. Using an integrated mixed-methods approach allows a great deal of flexibility in choosing from a plurality of methods, but the real strength of the methodology is on drawing these together to interrogate the data. This helps to challenge assumptions and find nuances in the data, and also challenges the researcher to draw on their existing skills or learn new skills as dictated by the research problem. The next chapter describes the start of this process as survey data is analysed using statistical techniques, which is then integrated into later chapters as narratives are introduced.

5 Exploring the numerical data

Plowright (2011) prefers the terms numerical and narrative data, as opposed to quantitative and qualitative, to emphasise that analysis is not necessarily dictated by the type of data. This is particularly useful for describing iterative and exploratory approaches to data. For example, this chapter considers the survey data and the statistical tests used in the analysis, but the analysis also has narrative characteristics in how the statistical tests are used to understand the experience of students. This helps to describe patterns in positive experiences of feedback contrasted against negative experiences of feedback, and makes a distinction between data which is useful to evaluate feedback experiences and data which is useful to understand feedback experiences.

Promptness of feedback provides a useful example. Promptness as measured in the survey has a strong correlation with many different types of positive feedback. Since promptness is very easy to measure, this makes it an excellent way to evaluate feedback. However, there is no narrative sense in how promptness relates to other aspects of feedback. Blending numerical and narrative analysis approaches to the numerical data therefore helps to make causal inferences, something which is otherwise very difficult to do with self-reported numerical data. This type of analysis enables the important conclusion that promptness is a useful measure for satisfaction surveys, but should only be thought of as an indicator of good feedback rather than a trait of good feedback: even if good feedback has a limited lifespan, poor feedback given quickly is still poor.

This chapter starts by outlining some of the ways data was treated prior to analysis, in particular how different data sources were combined (online and in-person surveys as well as

different year groups and campuses). The chapter also shows how analysis moved from the 35 single survey items into scales, then components, then themes.

As mentioned in the methods chapter, items were chosen to relate to a wide range of ways feedback might be explained or experienced and so were not pre-assigned to any particular scale. However, an approximate mapping, shown in the table below, can be made between the items and the research questions. These were not set as categories for analysis, and arguments could easily be made for different versions of the right-hand column, but it at least serves as a useful reminder of the items in the survey and some of my expectations before data was collected.

Item number	Item	Aspect of research questions
1.	In feedback sessions, my contributions were welcomed	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
2.	The feedback was tailored for me as an individual learner	Usefulness of feedback Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
3.	Feedback gave me clear priorities for my next observation	Usefulness of feedback Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
4.	I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next lessons	Usefulness of feedback Tutor/student roles
5.	I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next observation	Usefulness of feedback Tutor/student roles

Exploring the numerical data

Item number	Item	Aspect of research questions
6.	It was important to be seen to act on feedback	Tutor/student roles
7.	I made sure that my observed lesson had something special in it	Tutor/student roles
8.	I made sure that my observed lesson used an idea from the main person who gave me feedback	Tutor/student roles
9.	My observed lessons were the same as my normal practice	Tutor/student roles
10.	I had some special activities which I saved for observed lessons	Tutor/student roles
11.	I tried out my observed lessons beforehand to make sure they worked	Nature of learning Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
12.	The feedback from different observations on the same placement was inconsistent	Usefulness of feedback
13.	I would have behaved the same in feedback sessions even if placements were not assessed	Nature of learning Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
14.	I was confident about assessing the quality of my own work	Tutor/student roles
15.	I trusted my own judgement more than the judgement of the main person who gave me feedback	Usefulness of feedback
16.	It would not have been appropriate to question the decisions of the main person who gave me feedback	Tutor/student roles
17.	I didn't just focus on what the main person who gave me feedback wanted, I did what I felt was important	Nature of learning Tutor/student roles

Exploring the numerical data

Item number	Item	Aspect of research questions
18.	I trusted that if I did what I was told then everything would work out in the end	Nature of learning Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
19.	The main purpose of the feedback sessions seemed to be to reinforce the status of the main person who gave me feedback	Usefulness of feedback Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
20.	The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(i)...to improve faults in my teaching	Intention of feedback
21.	(ii)...to guide me to improve generally	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
22.	(iii)...to help me meet my own goals	Nature of learning Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
23.	(iv)...to make sure the pupils got good lessons	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
24.	(v)...to make me work harder	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
25.	(vi)...to make sure I had evidence for each QTS standard	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
26.	(vii)...to prove that the school had met their responsibilities to the university	Intention of feedback Tutor/student roles
27.	The grade I received was not influenced, positively or negatively, by any personal factors between me and the person who gave me the grade	Tutor/student roles

Item number	Item	Aspect of research questions
28.	I pushed myself to make a good job of every task, whether or not I thought it was important	Tutor/student roles
29.	I paid careful attention to any advice or feedback I was given	Usefulness of feedback Tutor/student roles
30.	Feedback came in time to be useful	Usefulness of feedback
31.	Feedback matched up with observation focus criteria	Usefulness of feedback
32.	I used the advice and feedback to...(i)...improve my practice generally	Nature of learning Tutor/student roles
33.	(ii)...figure out how to get the best grade	Nature of learning Tutor/student roles
34.	(iii)...figure out what they really wanted me to do	Nature of learning Tutor/student roles
35.	The expectations on me were far too high	Tutor/student roles

Table 4 Survey items mapped against research questions

5.1 Data source

In the methodology chapter, I noted that my target sample was based on a site population of 1392. During data collection, this was revised to 1321 due to 71 in-year changes (students either leaving, deferring, or changing course). Based on a confidence interval of 5 with a confidence level of 95%, this required 301 respondents as a minimum to make generalisable claims. However, a larger sample was desirable for exploratory factor analysis, requiring over 500 students (Field, 2009). Students willingly completed the surveys so the main difficulty was negotiating access via tutors to work around course schedules. Some tutors were also concerned that I should avoid the department and Students' Union's own survey periods. I

received email responses from 139 students, and in-person responses from a further 367 to give a total of 506. This was sufficient, but I was keen to increase the sample size. I was able to sample a different (though broadly similar) university, giving a total of 613 students and a chance to test if any responses were specific to the institution. This added a way to begin testing transferability by comparing these sample groups, and offered an option to strengthen principal component analysis if the groups were found to be similar enough.

5.2 Data preparation and missing values

Standard procedures for data cleaning were taken from Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) and Field (2009). First, frequencies and standard deviations were explored for each variable to check that responses were within expected ranges and nothing seemed implausible, which might indicate a data entry error. SPSS ignores a respondent if they have missing values for a particular analysis, so it is also important to know whether these excluded respondents shared any characteristics – for example that missing values were on similar variables. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) summarise this as missing completely at random (MCAR), missing at random (MAR), or missing not at random (MNAR). MCAR is the best-case scenario, where missing data is unpredictable. MAR means that a pattern of missing data can be predicted by responses to other variables, while MNAR indicates that the variable itself is the reason for the data being missing, which is more problematic and suggests a poor survey item.

Missing values and t-tests indicated that the data was not missing completely at random, so there was some consistent explanation for why some data was missing. For example, data was much more likely to be missing on four variables than any of the other thirty-one. Sometimes this suggested a relationship between variables, for example students who left item 35 (expectations on them were too high) were much more likely to report not receiving

prompt feedback. However, this relationship did not stand up to correlation tests – it is worth remembering that with 35 items, a 5% margin of error will occasionally give a false positive.

Other patterns seemed more persistent. For example, item 21, that the main purpose of feedback is to inform general improvements, was responded to significantly more negatively by participants with missing values than the rest of the sample. This trend is repeated for another three influential items, with the non-responding group means around one-point lower than the rest of the sample, indicating significantly increased disagreement with positively phrased statements (e.g. that feedback was timely). These patterns of disagreement to similar items by students with missing responses suggest that feedback was seen as less useful by those students. Non-responders were more likely to disagree that feedback was helpful for finding faults in their teaching, helped their general improvement, helped to meet their own goals, helped ensure quality for their pupils, gave evidence for QTS standards, or was useful either for improving grades or figuring out what was required for success. At the same time, they were more likely to report feedback being influenced by personal factors, coming too late to be acted upon, and using feedback in a general way. These respondents were also far less likely to report making a good job of every task, suggesting that they were targeting their efforts but that this was not informed by feedback. Similarly, not responding to item 34, that feedback was useful for working out what an assessor really wanted, was associated with being far more likely to disagree with the statements that feedback helped students to achieve their goals or inform general improvements, or that the students would make a good job of every task. The strength of disagreement suggests that non-respondents had a much more limited view of feedback.

5.3 Analysis of respondents with very low item response

Faced with the problem of missing data which is not completely random, decisions must be made about how responses are treated for analysis. Based on the above analysis, replacing missing values with mean scores would risk over-reporting positive sentiments since missing data suggests more negative experiences. However, removing students completely from the analysis risks skewing the sample or abusing the gift of data, albeit incomplete data, simply because some items might not have seemed relevant to the student. Then again, there is little point adding poor data simply out of a notion of inclusivity. Deciding whether to exclude a participant's responses therefore required analysing their missing data to see if their non-missing responses could still be useful.

The SPSS Missing Patterns tool was used to identify respondents with high proportions of missing responses, defined as more than 5% missing responses. This indicated 37 respondents, of whom 12 were missing 20% or more (the highest being 31.4% for respondent ID 592).

To see if patterns of missing data could be related to individuals as well as variables, I created a dummy variable to identify this group. Running independent t-tests, however, did not return significant values for any of the variables. This means that whilst patterns of non-response to particular items might be predictable from responses to other variables, there is no reliable way of using variable responses to predict which students would have a high non-response rate besides these four variables. This indicates that non-response to items has both a pattern and a random element, which makes it difficult to identify why a particular respondent might have a high amount of missing data.

A similar issue was trying to determine whether the survey had been completed seriously. There were no examples of what Yorke (2009) describes as autopilot tendencies, in which students answer the same to each question or in an obvious pattern, but some silly written comments and graffiti suggested that the survey was not approached maturely by a few students. I therefore checked each of these for a general impression of whether the data should be included, using a much more subjective judgement of how varied the response was and whether very similar items had similar responses.

Analysis was therefore set up to only ignore missing values for statistical tests using those particular values. This meant that students' responses were not distorted by replacing them with mean values, but that students would be included in as many tests as their unmodified data allowed. Students with a high number of missing values would therefore not significantly affect the group analysis.

5.4 Implications of missing data

The pattern of non-response described above was generally indicated by disagreement with statements, which is not surprising giving that most statements were positively phrased. The disagreements also centred around the idea that non-responders saw feedback as less useful or less important compared with the sample as a whole. It is curious that respondents with these negative views of feedback would not respond to items which allow them to express these negative views, particularly items such as number 35 (that expectations on them were too high). A lack of regard or engagement with feedback might therefore not be so easy to detect simply by looking at respondents expressing dissatisfaction or complaining – they

might also simply be missing from data, particularly as many statistical tests ignore missing data by default.

This has important implications for survey design in feedback, as non-response may indicate much less engagement with feedback (rather than just a lack of engagement with surveys). Those students not responding to items within the survey showed significant differences to students who responded to each item, so it reasonably follows that those not responding to the survey at all cannot be assumed to be broadly similar to those who are represented in the sample. Significant efforts were made to limit self-selection in this sample by including in-person completion, so a similar pattern might be difficult to find in online surveys, which are the most common method used. In particular, where response rates are low or the sample is self-selecting, this has the potential to over-report positive sentiments and uses of feedback – which is a concern given that the responses gained from these surveys already report a high proportion of negative views.

Knowing about the bias in this sample helps to avoid reporting a positively biased result, and is influential in later narrative analysis since the numerical data suggests that the students volunteering these narratives will have a positive skew to their experiences when compared with the larger survey sample (and so, presumably, the population).

5.5 Distribution of responses

Tests were also performed to check normality for each item by looking at skewness and kurtosis. Positive skewness indicates a majority of low scores (and negative skewness a majority of high values), while positive kurtosis indicates a sharp peak in distribution (and negative kurtosis a flat distribution). Formal inference tests can lack the sensitivity to detect

these problems with large samples, so a visual check of histograms and P-P plots is preferable (Field, 2009).

Kurtosis and skewness can lead to misleadingly strong or weak correlations or mask patterns in means, but correcting for these effects can also lead to problems since the same correction must be made to all variables in a particular analysis. Instead of seeing this as a numerical problem, it is helpful to look for a narrative explanation. In this case, the most significant problem was skewness. Of the 35 items, 24 had negative skewness and 5 had positive skewness.

Looking at the data in just a numerical sense would suggest re-expressing the data by applying a function, in this case either the square root of the value or, in extreme cases, a logarithmic function (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). However, the consistent direction of the skew makes sense in the context of this study as consistency of provision is an important measure for universities' teacher training provisions, so it might be expected that many students will report similar experiences. More importantly, the direction of the skew is broadly in line with a positive response. This makes sense in the context of the majority of students being broadly satisfied with their feedback, so to apply a numerical transformation would inappropriately flatten out these traits in favour of more uniformly distributed responses. Combined with the reassurance of a strong sample size, it was therefore appropriate to not apply any transformations to the data.

5.6 Assigning pre-determined variables

Before conducting inferential statistics, it was useful to start with the literature to create some variables. This would give a basic framework against which results of model-building

and inferential statistics could be compared. The following themes formed this starting point:

Items used to create variable	Variable label
02 Feedback was tailored for me as a learner, 21 The main purpose of feedback was to improve me generally, 22 The main purpose of feedback was to help me meet my own goals, 32 I used feedback to improve my practice generally.	Feedback with learning as its main intention
05 I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next observation, 08 I made sure that my observed lesson used an idea from the main person who gave me feedback, 09 My observed lessons were the same as my normal practice (inverted values), 13 I would have behaved the same in feedback sessions even if placements were not assessed (inverted values).	Feedback with assessment performance as its main intention
03 Feedback gave me clear priorities for my next observation, 12 The feedback from different observations on the same placement was inconsistent (inverted values), 33 I used feedback to figure out how to get the best grade, 34 I used feedback to figure out what the assessor really wanted.	Strategic use of feedback
01 Contributions were welcomed, 06 It was important to be seen to act on feedback (inverted values), 15 I trusted my own judgement more than the judgement of the main person who gave me feedback (inverted values), 16 It would not have been appropriate to question the decisions of the main person who gave me feedback (inverted values).	A positive relationship with the mentor/tutor
03 Feedback gave me clear priorities for my next observation, 30 Feedback came in time to be useful, 31 Feedback matched up with observation focus criteria	Feedback as evaluated in satisfaction surveys

Table 5 Variables drawn from literature review

As with which items were assumed to relate to each of my research questions, arguments could be made for alternative groupings since so many of the survey items asked about similar ideas. However, these groupings seemed fairly robust from looking at backwards regression models – essentially a test of whether any of the items in each variable was redundant or could be replaced by a better item.

The goal was not to impose a variable, but simply to create a starting point to help make some

narrative sense of the data. This would be an important grounding point for inferential statistics – at each stage, it would be important to reflect on whether the newly developing model was adding worthwhile explanation to the simple baseline model established in this chapter.

The boxplot below shows the distribution of each of these variables, with the values of negatively phrased items reversed so that each variable can be placed on the same scale where 1 is a very negative sentiment, 5 is a very positive sentiment, and 3 is a neutral sentiment. This plot gives a general overview of how students described feedback in terms of these variables.

Variable 1, feedback with learning as its main intention, had the highest median positive sentiment (the dark line inside the box) and a fairly narrow interquartile range (the size of the box) which is almost entirely within the positive sentiment range. However, significant outliers (dark circles) cover most of the range, including some minimum (i.e. extremely negative sentiment) extremes. However, the variable is mostly positive, and even maximum scores (i.e. extremely positive sentiment) were within the inner fence (the line which extends from the box – at 1.5 times the interquartile range, any observations within are not considered outliers). Taken together, this indicates overall positive sentiment on this variable: students in this sample generally report feedback which has learning as its main intention. Some moderately negative experiences occur, but are outliers, while strongly negative experiences are extreme outliers.

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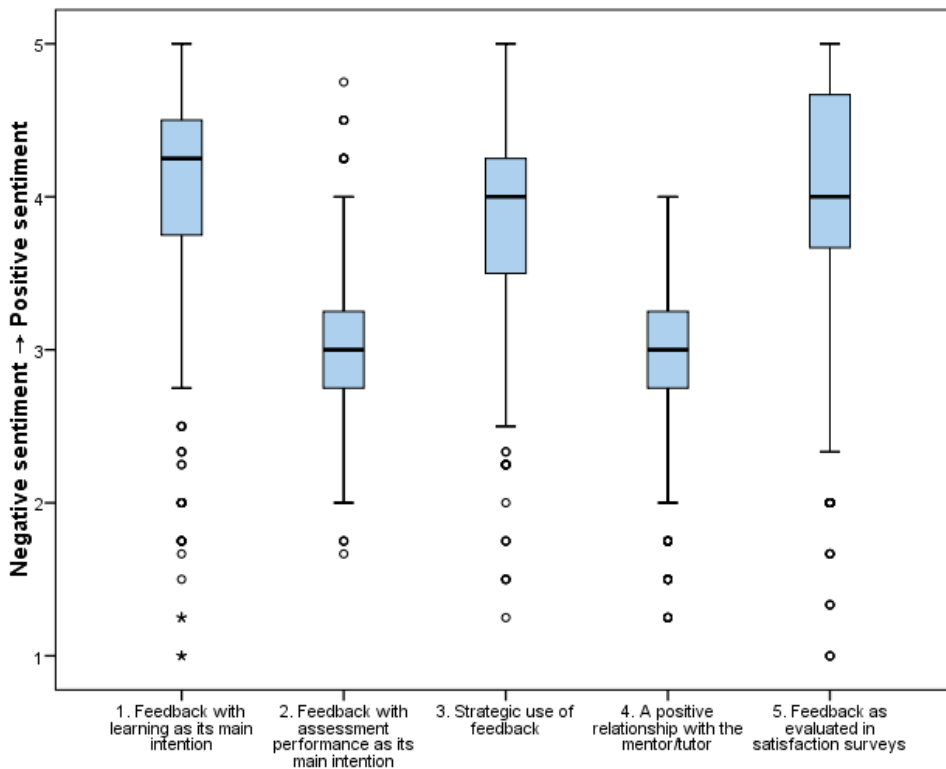


Figure 4 Boxplot of pre-selected variables

Variable 2, that feedback had assessment performance as its main intention, showed a much narrower grouping of responses. While many students reported moderately positive or negative sentiment on this variable, the median was almost exactly 3. More outliers expressed positive sentiment than negative. This indicates that assessment has a fairly consistent influence on feedback, both positive and negative, but that (compared with variable 1) this was a minor function for feedback.

Variable 3, indicating a strategic use of feedback, showed strong overall agreement. Some responses ranged into negative sentiment, indicating students who did not take such approaches or felt negatively towards them, but the most common response was agreement that this was a major aspect of using feedback. As with variables 1 and 5, responses in

complete agreement with the variable were within a normal range and were common enough to not be considered outliers.

Variable 4, indicating a positive relationship with the tutor, had an almost identical distribution to variable 2: the tutor-student relationship had a consistent influence, with many examples of both moderately good and moderately bad experiences. There was a minor difference in the distribution of outliers, so extremely poor relationships were slightly more common than extremely positive relationships.

Finally, variable 5, a measure of satisfaction with feedback, showed an overall positive response. Most students had a moderately strong positive sentiment (i.e. satisfaction with feedback), and extremely satisfied students were well within the normal range – even quite high scores were within the interquartile range. Some extremely negative views were still reported as outliers without being regarded as extreme. However, the overall impression from this variable is positive (or, at least, students would have positively evaluated feedback on a typical satisfaction survey): students were satisfied with their feedback, some very much so.

Taken together, responses to these variables suggest a satisfying, occasionally very satisfying, experience of feedback in which the student teachers' own learning is the main focus of that feedback. Students mostly engage strategically with this feedback, although this is not necessarily a strategic use associated with assessment performance (e.g. it might just reflect time pressure). Relationships with tutors are typically moderate.

These variables can also be explored in relation to each other. Pearson correlations for the variables are given in the table below. These have been simplified to only show correlations

Exploring the numerical data

which were significant at the 1% level and met Muijs' (2004) advice for evaluating strength, that $r > 0.3$. Essentially, this means that the correlations are meaningful since they explain at least 10% of the variance in another variable and are unlikely to be the result of chance. All the correlations which were significant at the 5% level were also significant at the 1% level, so no borderline cases needed to be considered.

	1. Feedback with learning as its main intention	3. Strategic use of feedback	4. A positive relationship with the mentor/tutor	5. Feedback as evaluated in satisfaction surveys
1. Feedback with learning as its main intention		.635	.350	.718
3. Strategic use of feedback	.635			.708
4. A positive relationship with the mentor/tutor	.350			.337
5. Feedback as evaluated in satisfaction surveys	.718	.708	.337	

Table 6 Pre-selected variable Pearson Correlations ($r > 0.3$, $p < 0.01$)

It can immediately be seen that variable 2, feedback with assessment as its main intention, has no relationship with any other variable. Feedback therefore either had very little impact on how students engaged with assessment or the experience of assessment was so consistent that the effect was very similar for all students (the former seems more likely, though still rather surprising given the extensive discussion of assessment in the feedback literature). Looking at the other variables, feedback with learning as its main intention was strongly associated with both strategic uses of feedback and satisfaction and a moderate association

with positive mentor relationships. Similarly, strategic uses of feedback and satisfaction had a strong association.

Overall, analysis of pre-selected variables indicates that these students appreciated feedback which was focussed on their general learning rather than assessment needs. However, they still took very strategic approaches to how they used that feedback, suggesting that they might have other important goals aside from assessment performance. Learning-focused feedback which could be used strategically was also very influential in students being satisfied with their feedback. A positive relationship with the tutor improves all these measures, but not by very much.

5.7 Foregrounding the research questions

Before using inferential statistics and more complex multivariate techniques, it is worth considering how well the pre-selected variables explain the data. This helps to compare against the kind of analysis that would have been possible without taking a more exploratory or challenging approach to the existing literature, such as in a smaller-scale study or evaluation (Ashwin, 2012). It is also timely at the halfway point of this thesis to reflect on the research questions and attempt brief answers:

How do student teachers understand the learning required to gain their teaching qualification compared to the learning required to become established as an effective teacher?

Students have a general view of how they will need to improve to be effective teachers, which is definitely distinct from how they are assessed. This requires feedback which generally supports learning, but also requires that students engage selectively or strategically with this feedback. There is little evidence of distinguishing short- and long-term needs. Good feedback for any particular purpose is good feedback in general.

What intentions do student teachers assume are behind the feedback they receive?

Not really addressed, other than to say there is a general assumption that feedback is for students' general development.

How do student teachers see their own roles and the roles of their tutor in feedback?

Students need to take some strategic approaches to feedback, and more helpful tutors will assist in this.

Overall, so far this thesis has put forward arguments that definitions of feedback can be problematic, and that feedback might well be experienced very differently by student teachers compared with students in higher education more generally. This seems to be supported by the data, indicating that these students are not as strongly influenced by assessment as would have been predicted. Nevertheless, they feel a need to engage strategically with feedback and do not simply approach it as learners. Already this has led to some useful outcomes. In the professional literature, I have made a case for seeing student teachers (and possibly work-based learners generally) as a distinct group when evaluating their engagement with feedback (Carver, 2016b). I have also been able to suggest that the feedback literature more generally needs to be clear on its assumptions regarding how students learn (Carver, 2016a). The challenge as we move into the second half of this thesis is to build on these incremental contributions and see if an alternative model can emerge which better explains the data.

6 Inferential and multivariate analysis of numerical data

6.1 Principal Component Analysis

In the previous chapter, data was explored using existing models either directly from the literature or shaped by regression analysis and my own interpretation of narrative sense in variables. Principal component analysis (PCA) offers the opportunity to turn this around, starting with a numerical analysis which lets the data emerge in patterns which can then be explored to see if they suggest a narrative. I therefore call these 'components' as distinct from the 'variables' in the analysis described in chapter 5 or 'themes' described in the narrative analysis chapters.

There are some slight differences in how phrasing is used in the literature, so here I simply use the terminology adopted by the SPSS software. PCA is a type of factor analysis, which looks for groups of items which combine to explain variance. A researcher then makes an interpretation of what these groups of items might mean (i.e. assigns a descriptive label). Rotated principal component analysis is used in SPSS to refer to particular types of factor analysis, where rotation simply refers to a set of mathematical assumptions which help interpretation by avoiding too much clustering of items. This is essentially the difference between exploratory and confirmatory PCA (or factor analysis), with rotation only really used where it gives a clear improvement over the standard solution. The results of analysis will simply be a list of components with different items weighted according to the strength of influence. Ignoring low scores (i.e. from -0.5 to 0.5) helps to uncover a coherent group, which ideally suggests a real-world explanation for the group.

The first step was to use a scree plot to determine how many useful components would be found in an exploratory PCA. This indicated four important components, although as is typical

of exploratory PCA the first component contained too many variables to be particularly meaningful so it is usually easier to start with the other components and work backwards. For example, component 3 drew together items 4 to 8 (using feedback to plan subsequent lessons, using feedback to plan for observations, being seen to act on feedback, saving something special for observations, and using a mentor's ideas during an observation). This suggested a narrative of using feedback for improving lessons, and perhaps also a strategic use of feedback or a sensitivity to assessment needs.

Rotated PCA helps make these kinds of interpretations by avoiding overlapping items. Following the descriptions of different types of rotation in Field (2009), oblimin rotation was chosen, the output being simplified in the table below. The rotated solution looks broadly similar to the unrotated version, but the first component now has fewer items, many of which have moved into the second component. There are now also five components which seem important compared to the four components in the unrotated analysis.

Component	Contributing items
1	<p>20 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(i)...to improve faults in my teaching</p> <p>21 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(ii)...to guide me to improve generally</p> <p>22 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(iii)...to help me meet my own goals</p> <p>23 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(iv)...to make sure the pupils got good lessons</p> <p>24 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(v)...to make me work harder</p> <p>25 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(vi)...to make sure I had evidence for each QTS standard</p> <p>26 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(vii)...to prove that the school had met their responsibilities to the university</p> <p>28 I pushed myself to make a good job of every task, whether or not I thought it was important</p> <p>29 I paid careful attention to any advice or feedback I was given</p> <p>30 Feedback came in time to be useful</p> <p>31 Feedback matched up with observation focus criteria</p> <p>32 I used the advice and feedback to...(i)...improve my practice generally</p> <p>33 I used the advice and feedback to...(ii)...figure out how to get the best grade</p> <p>34 I used the advice and feedback to...(iii)...figure out what they really wanted me to do</p>
2	<p>-1 In feedback sessions, my contributions were welcomed</p> <p>-2 The feedback was tailored for me as an individual learner</p> <p>-3 Feedback gave me clear priorities for my next observation</p> <p>12 The feedback from different observations on the same placement was inconsistent</p> <p>15 I trusted my own judgement more than the judgement of the main</p>

Component	Contributing items
	<p>person who gave me feedback</p> <p>16 It would not have been appropriate to question the decisions of the main person who gave me feedback</p> <p>19 The main purpose of the feedback sessions seemed to be to reinforce the status of the main person who gave me feedback</p> <p>-21 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(ii)...to guide me to improve generally</p> <p>-22 The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(iii)...to help me meet my own goals</p> <p>-27 The grade I received was not influenced, positively or negatively, by any personal factors between me and the person who gave me the grade</p> <p>-30 Feedback came in time to be useful</p> <p>-31 Feedback matched up with observation focus criteria</p> <p>-32 I used the advice and feedback to...(i)...improve my practice generally</p> <p>35 The expectations on me were far too high</p>
3	<p>7 I made sure that my observed lesson had something special in it</p> <p>8 I make sure that my observed lesson used an idea from the main person who gave me feedback</p> <p>10 I had some special activities which I saved for observed lessons</p> <p>11 I tried out my observed lessons beforehand to make sure they worked</p>
4	<p>4 I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next lessons</p> <p>5 I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next observation</p> <p>6 It was important to be seen to act on feedback</p> <p>28 I pushed myself to make a good job of every task, whether or not I thought it was important</p> <p>29 I paid careful attention to any advice or feedback I was given</p> <p>32 I used the advice and feedback to...(i)...improve my practice generally</p>

Component	Contributing items
5	9 My observed lessons were the same as my normal practice 13 I would have behaved the same in feedback sessions even if placements were not assessed 14 I was confident about assessing the quality of my own work 15 I trusted my own judgement more than the judgement of the main person who gave me feedback 17 I didn't just focus on what the main person who gave me feedback wanted, I did what I felt was important
Numbers indicate item number in the survey, negative numbers indicate disagreement with that item. For example, component 2 includes a pattern of response which agrees with item 12 and disagrees with item 1.	

Table 7 Contributing items to rotated PCA

Since the first two components still use over half of the available items, it is easier to look for narrative sense in the smaller components and then work backwards. As an explanation is found for each of the smaller components, those meanings can be left out of the larger components, which should help indicate the main overall sense of these two larger components.

Component 5 suggests students feeling confident in their own judgement and acting upon those judgements. When including items with loadings between 0.4 and 0.5, it also suggests a lack of concern about assessment, either because students were confident in their abilities or that they focused on something they felt was more important (e.g. their pupils' learning). Component 4 suggests an industrious approach which has something to do with a very focussed use of feedback. It may also indicate a more professional approach, that the student sees themselves more as a teacher than as a learner. Component 3 gives a strong sense of one-off performance rather than the more general strategic approach in component 4,

beginning to separate ideas such as performing for assessment (e.g. saving special activities, mirroring a tutor's techniques) or performing to the general expectations of life as a teacher (e.g. consistent hard work, visibly taking on advice).

With these more defined narratives considered, component 2 can now be seen to add to the idea of managing relationships with a description of negative experiences of feedback and feedback which did not serve the student's own interests. The rotation seems to have found a commonality between negative relationships with mentors and negative experiences of feedback, particularly feedback which has poor opportunities for dialogue.

This relationship in component 2 in turn allows a clearer narrative to come through from component 1, which can be seen to express a wide range of positive uses of feedback. Component 1 is also interesting since it suggests that positive features and uses of feedback relate, that good feedback is useful, and used, for a range of purposes rather than a particular type of feedback being more important for assessment needs or for learning needs.

6.1.1 Appropriateness of the model

It is standard practice to explain the appropriateness of any rotated solution to support the case for keeping the components. The first measure is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. This ranges from 0 to 1 with a generally accepted threshold of 0.6 to establish acceptability of a model. My rotated solution scored .888. Next, it is essential to be able to reject the null hypothesis of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. My model had $\chi^2(595)=6929$, $p<0.000$, comfortably rejecting the null hypothesis. Communalities were all greater than 0.3, giving reassurance that all items were at least partly related to each other. Finally, the reproduced correlation matrix showed the vast majority of residuals were below

0.5, with only 29% above this threshold. Squaring and then taking a square root of each value gave a mean of 0.0375, indicating the overall small size of the residuals. Each of these measures gives reassurance for the appropriateness of the overall model. The appropriateness of each factor is judged separately by the amount of variance it explains, as well as the visual interpretation of a scree plot as already described. Factor one explained 22.87%, factor two 10.12%, factor three 5.55%, factor four 5.1% and factor five 3.97%. This makes a stronger case for the first two factors and a reasonable case for factors three and four. Factor five has a less convincing score, suggesting that it might be worth incorporating into one of the other factors or ignoring completely. In a mixed methods design, this is not a decision to be taken purely on the percentages: each factor should also be considered in terms of the narrative sense it makes.

6.2 Drawing the models together

The previous chapter described models which pre-selected items to make variables based on the literature review. These were explored and amended using regression, increasing the number of items in each variable or replacing some items with a better fitting item. PCA came at the same problem from the opposite direction, looking at which survey items grouped together based on the pattern of students' responses. These formed components, which I then sought to describe verbally. The final stage of numerical analysis therefore requires drawing together and simplifying these components and variables to give a more general description of the student experience, including looking at how these components and variables relate to each other.

The first step was putting all the variables and components in the same table so that I could clearly compare the items which built each variable/component. I aimed to use between four

and six items for each, with each item used only once unless it seemed vital for the narrative sense of the variable/component. In some cases, I adjusted the verbal label to more clearly explain the decisions I had made. As with choosing items for pre-selected variables or assigning labels to mathematically clustered items, this is an interpretive task with a need for a narrative understanding of the data. This is important to remember, since the effect of combining several items into one variable results in a scale which can look very precise and objective: this is not true, nor would it be particularly desirable since this kind of interpretation will be required in the narrative analysis stage anyway. Rather, this should be seen as statistical guidance in the early stages of thinking about themes.

A mean score on each variable/component (hereafter simply referred to as components) was calculated for every respondent so that a score would range from 1.00 to 5.00. The distribution of scores is given for each theme in the table below.

Component/variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
1. Learning-focused feedback	1.00	5.00	4.08	.714
2. Students' self-confidence	1.25	5.00	3.47	.521
3. Consistent hard work was important	2.00	5.00	4.24	.533
4. A need to fit into a school culture	1.67	4.83	3.15	.511
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	1.00	5.00	2.29	.648
6. A need to perform in assessments	1.25	5.00	3.38	.632
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	1.00	5.00	3.81	.714
8. Strategic use of feedback	1.25	5.00	3.78	.663
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	1.00	5.00	4.06	.830

Table 8 Descriptive statistics for components/variables

The first component, learning-focused feedback, indicates a broadly positive sentiment but high variability in the student experience, including many full scores and a significant number of very low scores with a few extreme low outliers. Feedback can therefore be said to have been mainly learning-focused, in many cases entirely so, but this general positive experience is accompanied by significant numbers of students who report negative experiences, including some very negative experiences.

The second component, students' self-confidence, is a much more evenly reported experience with strong consensus on this being fairly moderate. Some students report extremely high self-confidence, with fewer students reporting low self-confidence and no

extremely low reports. This suggests an overall moderate level of self-confidence shared by most students.

The third component, that consistent hard work was important, had the highest overall agreement and little variety in this experience. Extreme high values were fairly common, with no extreme low values. This suggests a shared view that consistent hard work was important, with only minor disagreement.

The fourth component, a need to fit into a school culture, was similarly moderately felt. There were no maximum or minimum scores, but responses were spread fairly widely around the mean and median, suggesting significant but moderate variety in how this component was experienced: there were very few extreme cases, but responses still varied significantly within the narrower range.

Component five, an experience dominated by the tutor, gave the lowest mean. Whilst some students reported maximum scores on this theme, the overall reported experience was disagreement with this theme, including a significant number who completely disagreed with every item. Since this is a negative component, it is encouraging that so many students do not experience it, or experience it to a slight degree, but there are still significant numbers who report this to a moderate degree and some extremely negative cases.

Component six, a need to perform in assessments, was a generally moderate experience, but with a wide range in how this was reported, including a significant number of students reporting this to be entirely the case. At the same time, a smaller number of students reported this as mostly not true, although there were no extremely low scores. This suggests a general impression of a need to perform in assessment, but more importantly a wide inter-quartile

range shows significant variety in how this is experienced. A similar picture emerges from the final three themes, that there is broad agreement with the theme but that the experience can vary considerably. More students report this varying in positive ways, with maximum scores, but significant numbers still report very low or even minimum scores.

Component seven, feedback focused on the students' overall best interests, shows a generally favourable report but the range indicates moderate experiences as fairly common and dozens of examples of extremely poor experiences. This suggests that feedback is generally agreed to focus on students' overall best interests, but this can also be highly variable and occasionally feedback seems to take no regard of the students' needs. Component eight, the strategic use of feedback, is similarly common with an almost identical mean score and distribution.

Finally, Component nine, feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys, differs slightly in that it is more commonly reported as a moderate experience, but there are still plenty of students reporting top scores for satisfaction. Moderate dissatisfaction is common enough to fit in the inter-quartile range, while extreme dissatisfaction is fairly rare but still experienced by a significant number of students.

As in chapter 5, these descriptions can be developed further by looking at the relationships between these themes. Statistically significant (at the 0.01 level) and meaningful (above .3) correlation between each theme is given in the table below.

	1. Learning-focused feedback	3. Consistent hard work was important	5. An experience dominated by the tutor	7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	8. Strategic use of feedback	9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys
1. Learning-focused feedback		.565	-.648	.837	.635	.718
3. Consistent hard work was important	.565		-.372	.569	.431	.505
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	-.648	-.372		-.657	-.512	-.656
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	.837	.569	-.657		.673	.799
8. Strategic use of feedback	.635	.431	-.512	.673		.708
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	.718	.505	-.656	.799	.708	

Table 9 Pearson correlations for variables and components ($r > 0.3$, $p < 0.01$)

It can immediately be seen that components two, four, and six had no statistically significant meaningful correlations with any of the other themes. This suggests that either these

components (student self-confidence, a need to fit into the school culture, and a need to perform in assessments) had no relationship to the experience of feedback or consensus was so broad that the effect of each theme was similar for most students. Either way, they have little explanatory power and so are not useful for the purpose of understanding students' experiences of feedback. This challenges some expected narratives. First, more confident students might be expected to engage with feedback differently, or equally students might feel more or less confident as a result of feedback. This seems not to be the case, however, so analysis of individual narratives later in the study might therefore benefit from disregarding self-confidence as an explanation.

Similarly, the importance of fitting into a school's culture makes good narrative sense (e.g. feedback would help a student fit in), but responses show an even distribution of moderate scores and weak correlations with other components. This indicates not only that the importance of fitting into a school's culture is not as highly regarded as might be expected but also has little influence on how students experience feedback. This does not necessarily mean students explaining their experience in this way should not be believed, but it does at least suggest that another explanation could fit their experience. Perceiving a need to perform for assessments likewise had weak correlation with any other component, with the distribution of scores suggesting that this is quite a common perception amongst all students, but also one which rarely evokes a strong response. A need to perform can therefore be interpreted as part of the rules of the game of teaching placement, but rarely one which is experienced in extremes, either high or low.

Component one, learning-focused feedback, was associated with a range of positive outcomes. Students reporting higher scores on this component were more likely to rate the

importance of consistent hard work, feel that feedback served their overall best interests, that feedback could be used strategically, and to report satisfaction with feedback. They were also much less likely to report a mentor-centred experience. Component seven, that feedback focused on the overall best interests of students, had very similar, slightly stronger relationships – indeed, components one and seven had a strong association with each other.

Component three, that consistent hard work was important, had very similar but weaker relationships to components one and seven, but also a curious relationship with component eight, the strategic use of feedback. There was no sense that working hard consistently was incompatible with using feedback strategically, challenging my own assumption and that of the literature. This raises a new question: if strategic uses are not saving effort, then what is their purpose?

In terms of institutional policy, the most interesting relationships probably concern student satisfaction ratings. These were highest for feedback which focused on the best interests of students, but also very high for feedback which focused on longer-term, more meaningful learning. This is very encouraging that students will appreciate feedback done well, and there is no conflict between giving students what they need and maintaining good satisfaction ratings. Students, or at least these students, seem to be aware enough that they do not need pandering to. Nor do they seem to demand feedback which is just focused on their assessments: they actually prefer feedback with a broader focus, again suggesting an appreciation for the complexity of learning how to become a teacher.

Mentors might also be interested in correlations with component five, an experience dominated by the tutor. This has very strong negative relationships, indicating feedback which

is neither focused on learning nor other worthwhile goals. This component is associated with students making less effort, engaging less with feedback, and reporting lower satisfaction. Of course a tutor would probably take a dominant role in these situations, which is one causal explanation. Alternatively, tutors who dominate feedback might drive these behaviours. It will be interesting to see how student narratives explain the motivations and effects of dominant mentors, but already the strength of these relationships makes a compelling case for feedback which focuses on the learner and what they are trying to do rather than the mentor and what they want the student to do. Students need to feel valued, but more than that need to feel that their feedback is actually intended to help them rather than simply being part of a process.

6.2.1 Exploring groups of students through the components

A large sample was created by combining some groups of students in different years of study and even from a different university. As described in section 5.1, this included online and in-person survey completion at five different campuses across two broadly similar universities. This increased sample size was helpful for conducting PCA and regression models, and gives a good understanding of the different ways placement feedback can be conceptualised and how these components might relate to each other. However, combining the dataset in this way might mask significant differences in experience of different students – for example it is useful to know that strategic use of feedback has a strong relationship with consistent hard work, but it is also important to know whether this holds true for different types of student.

In order to test for this, respondents were sorted into groups based on gender, year of study, the university they attended, their response format (in person or online), and whether or not they had a high number of missing responses. Scores for each of the combined variables could

then be compared between these groups using independent samples t-tests.

6.2.1.1 Differences based on gender

The only statistically significant differences based on gender were found for feedback focused on the students' overall best interests, with a slightly higher mean for female students ($M=4.00$, $SD=.55$) compared with male students ($M=3.65$, $SD=.77$), $t(611)=2.288$, $p=.024$. Some differences in the 5-10% significance range were found for learning-focused feedback and consistent hard work being important. In both these cases, female students reported slightly higher means than male students. No statistically significant differences were found for any other theme, indicating that the gender of respondent had very little influence on their reported experience except for a slightly more positive overall experience for female students.

6.2.1.2 Differences based on collection method

It was anticipated that collecting data in person would benefit the validity of the data by reducing self-selection bias, which is often assumed to be a limitation of online surveys. Statistically significant differences were found for three themes: the importance of consistent hard work, a need to perform in assessments, and feedback focused on students' overall best interests. Online respondents reported a higher mean for the importance of consistent hard work ($M=4.34$, $SD=.47$) compared with in-person respondents ($M=4.22$, $SD=.55$), $t(611)=2.439$, $p=.015$. Online respondents also reported a higher mean for feedback focused on students' overall best interests ($M=3.96$, $SD=.58$) compared with in-person respondents ($M=3.76$, $SD=.74$), $t(611)=2.934$, $p=.00$. Finally, in-person respondents reported a higher mean for the need to perform in assessments ($M=3.41$, $SD=.65$) compared with online respondents ($M=3.26$, $SD=.62$), $t(611)=-2.523$, $p=.012$.

Overall, this suggests that online respondents were slightly more positive about their experiences, reinforcing the need to proactively seek greater engagement from a sample in order to represent the broad range of views. However, the slightness of the differences suggests that this is not as big a concern as might be assumed, and it is doubtful whether this slight increase in the range of responses was worth the extra time and cost of sampling in person (although this was still necessary in order to achieve the required sample size).

6.2.1.3 Differences based on place of study

Relatively small, but statistically significant, differences were found based on the university attended for learning-focused feedback, the importance of consistent hard work, a need to fit into a school's culture, satisfaction with feedback, a need to perform in assessments, feedback focused on students' overall best interests, and strategic use of feedback. Differences in the extent to which an experience was dominated by a mentor were also found at the 10% significance level (slightly lower mean at the main university). The small scale of these differences is reassuring for combining the two samples for the purposes of factor analysis, but the consistency of difference is also important since this suggests that while student teachers at similar universities will have broadly similar experiences, there is still significant difference between the universities. This difference between universities suggests that there is an institutional culture regarding feedback.

Students from the main sampled university reported a higher mean for learning-focused feedback ($M=4.17$, $SD=.59$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.92$, $SD=.85$), $t(611)=4.209$, $p=.000$. Students from the main sampled university also reported a higher mean for the importance of consistent hard work ($M=4.32$, $SD=.46$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=4.12$, $SD=.62$), $t(611)=4.561$,

$p=.000$.

This pattern of slight but statistically significant increases continued for the next two themes. Students from the main sampled university reported a higher mean for a need to fit into a school's culture ($M=3.21$, $SD=.50$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.06$, $SD=.52$), $t(611)=3.561$, $p=.000$. Students from the main sampled university reported a higher mean for satisfaction with feedback ($M=4.14$, $SD=.76$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.94$, $SD=.92$), $t(611)=2.891$, $p=.004$.

The only case in which students from the main sampled university reported a lower mean was for a need to perform in assessments ($M=3.31$, $SD=.63$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.49$, $SD=.62$), $t(611)=-3.525$, $p=.000$. The higher means for the sampled university then continued in the final two themes. Students from the main sampled university reported a higher mean for feedback focused on students' overall best interests ($M=3.94$, $SD=.59$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.59$, $SD=.84$), $t(611)=6.144$, $p=.000$. Finally, students from the main sampled university reported a higher mean for strategic use of feedback ($M=3.84$, $SD=.60$) compared with students from the second sampled university ($M=3.70$, $SD=.75$), $t(611)=2.633$, $p=.009$.

Overall, the t-test results suggest that there was very little difference between the main sample university and the second sample university. However, these small differences persisted, indicating that students from the main sampled university were more likely to report learning-focused feedback, the importance of consistent hard work, a need to fit into a school's culture, satisfaction with feedback, feedback focused on students' overall best interests, strategic use of feedback, and a lower need to perform in assessments. This can be interpreted as an overall positive skew, that the sampled university is performing slightly

better than the second university in terms of student feedback, and this is broadly supported by inspection reports of the two universities. It is interesting to note that strategic use of feedback was reported slightly more despite this overall positive skew, which returns to the question I raised in the literature review of whether strategic behaviour should be seen as a positive or negative.

6.2.1.4 Differences based on year of study

As there were more than two groups for this variable, ANOVA was used rather than t-tests. Interestingly, the year of study had no statistically significant influence on any of the themes. This result was so surprising that I also checked for relationships by treating year of study as a continuous variable and performing correlation analysis, but still no relationship was found. Students might be expected to change in how they experience feedback as they become more familiar. However, there seems to be no difference in the reports of feedback experience even when comparing students in their fourth year to those who have only just started.

6.2.1.5 Differences based on high non-response to questionnaire items

Statistically significant differences were found for six of the nine themes: learning-focused feedback, the importance of consistent hard work, an experience dominated by a tutor, satisfaction with feedback, feedback focused on students' overall best interests, and strategic use of feedback. In each case, a high number of missing responses indicated a more negative experience. The only exception was for strategic uses of feedback, where the mean was significantly lower for those not completing several items ($M=3.29$, $SD=1.07$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=3.82$, $SD=.62$), $t(611)=4.741$, $p=.000$. As with the trend in responses based on which university students attended, this suggested that strategic use of feedback was a positive feature of feedback (e.g. feedback was good if it could

be used strategically).

The strength of difference was much more significant for low-responding students than for any other difference tested. These were as follows:

For learning-focused feedback, the mean was significantly lower for those not completing several items ($M=3.28$, $SD=1.12$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=4.13$, $SD=.65$), $t(611)=7.325$, $p=.000$. For the importance of hard work, the mean was significantly lower for those not completing several items ($M=3.71$, $SD=.67$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=4.28$, $SD=.50$), $t(611)=6.524$, $p=.000$. For an experience dominated by a tutor, the mean was slightly higher for those not completing several items ($M=2.50$, $SD=.63$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=2.28$, $SD=.82$), $t(611)=-2.043$, $p=.041$. For satisfaction with feedback, the mean was significantly lower for those not completing several items ($M=3.42$, $SD=1.2$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=4.10$, $SD=.78$), $t(611)=4.948$, $p=.000$. Finally, for feedback focused on students' overall best interests, the mean was significantly lower for those not completing several items ($M=3.03$, $SD=1.08$) compared with those who completed almost all the survey items ($M=3.86$, $SD=.65$), $t(611)=7.116$, $p=.000$.

Overall, these differences give a strong indication that students who left several items blank on the survey had an overall much more negative experience than students who completed most of the survey. This was particularly true for what students saw as the intention of feedback, and so their satisfaction with it, but also for how they used feedback. It is interesting that consistent hard work and strategic uses of feedback are both lower for this group, whereas reporting one would logically imply that the other would be less true. One possible

explanation is that these students did not see much correlation between their learning and the effort they put in and the way they used feedback, perhaps attributing this more to chance, experience, or personal relationships.

6.3 Summary

The model set out in the previous chapter has now been developed into nine different components to try to explain students' experiences of feedback. Relationships between these components indicate broad support for the advice from the literature review, but give a much more detailed view of how feedback is experienced. It has also been shown that year of study and gender play a lesser role than might be anticipated. The relationship between leaving responses blank and a much more negative overall experience than expected also makes a strong case for data collection which goes beyond self-administered surveys (whether online or on paper) if negative experiences are to be more fully understood, adding to the need for more in-depth research methods. It is also significant that the data collection method of surveys made little difference to responses, suggesting that provided a large enough response is achieved there is no reason to go to the extra time and expense of paper surveys.

In terms of students' experiences of feedback, the overall picture is positive, indicating that students have good experiences of feedback on placement. There is also general support for the idea that the best feedback for any purpose is that which focuses on the student as a learner, and that students do not see themselves as behaving particularly strategically – they expect placement to be hard work, and using feedback strategically is part of their work. Where experiences are poor, this is indicated by a lack of dialogue and the student feeling that they have low status in the mentor/student relationship, or that the feedback has no real purpose. It is also important to consider why year of study makes very little difference to

responses. This suggests that students are not changing their view of feedback even after four years of regularly receiving (and even giving) feedback. A generous interpretation would be that the university instils a positive attitude from the start, but this seems too charitable even with the overall positive sentiments students express. In order to explore these nine components further, the next chapter considers five students whose narrative data could be linked to their survey responses. This means that their scores on each component can be used as support for interpretation of their narratives, adding detail to the experience.

7 Matched student narratives

This chapter describes the detailed analysis of five interviewees whose interview responses could be linked with their survey responses (the other eight students having not included their email address on the original survey). This allows the analysis of numerical data to carry over into the narrative data, providing major components as a starting point for developing narrative themes so the study progresses in stages rather than as two separate studies. Combining these methods develops key themes, informing an analytical framework which is evaluated for these five students in the next chapter as a final check before being applied to the full sample of 13 students as thematic analysis.

The numerical data acts as a useful check on the narrative interpretation in terms of whether expectations from the narrative data are met in each student's narrative. A good example is Josh, whose ranks on the components from the numerical data suggest a very different experience from his narrative. Rather than rejecting either data source, considering the two together helps to show the significant impact of Josh's most recent experience and how it transformed his views of feedback.

It is important to note that the survey and interview asked different questions: the survey asked about the most recent feedback experience, while the interview asked about a memorable experience. This chapter is therefore not about triangulation, but asks whether dominant components expressed in numerical data can illuminate analysis of narrative data. This detailed analysis of each individual is used to develop themes for analysis of the remaining eight interview transcripts, which are described in the next chapter.

Asking about a memorable experience rather than the most recent experience also affected

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the subject of the narratives since, for six of the 13 students, this was an early or even their first experience of feedback on their teaching, summarised in the table below. In some cases, this involved looking back three or four years.

Student	Year of study	Year of narrative
Bella	2	1
Liz	3	1
Tom	3	1
Dawn	4	1
Mary	4	1
Rose	3	2
Anna	3	3
Josh	3	3
Rachel	3	3
Tracy	3	3
Lisa	4	4
Meg	4	4
Sarah	4	4

Table 10 Students' study year compared with the year described in their narrative

It can be seen that five of the 13 students gave narratives from their first year. It is also worth noting that Rose described her first “proper feedback” experience, but that she did not feel that this had happened until her second year of study. The remaining seven students simply described their most recent experience. The five students analysed in this chapter describe a mixture of first experiences and most recent experiences. As discussed in the numerical analysis chapter, there was no significant difference for any measure based on year of study. It is therefore interesting that so many students found these early experiences to be

memorable, since they might form views which are very resistant to change. Even though the numerical and narrative data may describe different experiences, it is telling that there seem to be commonalities in the experiences of feedback even though the schools themselves are often described as very different. Finally, a brief reminder on phrasing – mentor means a teacher in the school who supervises student teachers, which may or may not be the teacher of the class the student teacher is assigned to (I refer to these as class teachers when there is a separate mentor), and tutor means someone employed by the university who visits the school only once or twice or, in the repertory grid stage, might also refer to a course tutor at university.

7.1 Mary

Mary's narrative related her first experience of being formally observed teaching, which came during the second year of her four-year degree. The lesson was observed by both the regular class teacher and a university tutor. Mary's narrative started with a general reflection on the lesson, that some parts of the lesson were "OK" and others "did not go well", which was mainly accounted for by her feeling "panicked" in the observation. This summary given to me was very similar to her response at the time when the university tutor started the feedback session by asking Mary how she thought the class had gone. Mary referred to this as "the usual" way feedback started, and described her typical response of "It was OK, this could have been better, that could have been better, but I think the kids got it".

One of the most striking themes in this narrative is what I labelled 'an experience dominated by the tutor' in the numerical analysis stage (component three). In this case, it is the tutor's unrelenting focus on what Mary feels to be a minor issue that drives this whole narrative. Similarly, dialogue does not feature as a theme except for being shut down by the tutor. This

is most obvious in the blunt response from the tutor “I didn’t think that at all”, which has an air of finality to it, particularly with the intonation Mary describes. However, Mary might also be seen as shutting herself out of dialogue by offering only a token response to the initial invitation to self-evaluate. Describing this as the “usual” question and response suggests that Mary saw this as more of a ritual than a genuine invitation to start dialogue. It is impossible to say whether a different initial response might have changed her tutor’s behaviour, but the superficiality of her initial self-evaluation suggests that Mary started by positioning herself in a passive role.

When asked about her response to her tutor’s question, Mary described this as coming from a recommendation from the university to “start off with a positive, but then say ‘but’ and come up with something you could have improved on and then it always makes you look good”. When pressed further, she described this as intending to show that she was looking at herself critically and did not have too big an ego, which she related to the features of a reflective practitioner.

More strategically, Mary described this formulaic response as trying to “second guess” what the tutor was going to say and being “eager to please”. This was intended to show that her understanding matched that of her tutor, aiming to get them to think “ooh yes, I agreed with that”. In this particular case, however, she did not think that anything she said made a difference to what the tutor would have said next – “she went ‘no’, she basically went ‘no, that’s not what I think’, and then told me her opinion”. Feeling that “she wasn’t the kind of woman you spoke back to”, Mary’s response was once again passive: “yeah, OK”.

Mary’s problem with this feedback experience does not seem to be the harsh or overly critical

nature of the feedback – indeed, her repertory grid repeatedly emphasised a strong preference for feedback which was “not afraid to tell you both good and bad” and “tell you what went wrong”. At the same time, she expressed a preference for tutors who were more positive in general and were open to dialogue. For example, it was important for her to feel that her opinion mattered and that the tutor wanted her to be in the school. This distinction is exemplified in one construct where Mary surprisingly did not have a clear preference between “softer approach” and one where “I was scared of getting feedback, she could be critical without hesitation”.

Taken together, these constructs and the narrative seem to reinforce the importance of dialogue and the detrimental effects of a tutor dominating, whilst also emphasising the importance of honesty and unfiltered feedback. Mary did not necessarily have a problem with her tutor only mentioning negatives about her lesson, but rather was upset that there was nothing beyond this which looked like it was trying to help her. Indeed, her only attempt at dialogue seems to provoke a defensive response from the tutor. Dialogue shuts down as Mary herself is closed out of the conversation – Mary is referred to by the tutor as “she” as the tutor talks directly to the class teacher in Mary’s presence. This might more generously be seen as the university tutor addressing criticism to the class teacher for not helping Mary to prepare a more strong assessment opportunity, but from Mary’s perspective seems more like an attack – she referred to feeling “terrified”, “shot down” and “pulled to pieces”.

After this feedback meeting, Mary was given two pages of written feedback from the tutor. This reiterated the key criticism on what seemed a relatively minor issue. Mary could only remember this and one positive statement, which she described “attaching myself” to so that she could feel better about the lesson. This suggests firstly that the tutor felt confident that

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dialogue would not change her written feedback as this was prepared in advance, but also that Mary saw very little value in that written feedback since she only remembers one comment from two pages.

Relating this narrative to her survey responses was done through creating percentile ranks since this removed the need to consider the range of responses. For example, Mary's 'self-confidence' ranking puts her in the lowest 10% while her 'need to perform score' puts her in the highest 20%, and she reported a fairly average (i.e. median) opinion on both the importance of consistent hard work and strategic uses of feedback. Mary's percentile ranks for the nine components were:

1. Learning-focused feedback	21.94
2. Students' self-confidence	07.75
3. Consistent hard work was important	56.61
4. A need to fit into a school culture	37.77
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	76.84
6. A need to perform in assessments	83.61
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	17.05
8. Strategic use of feedback	43.07
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	22.76

Table 11 Component percentile ranks for Mary

The rank for these components seems to match very closely with Mary's narrative - she has a strong sense of needing to perform, and of an experience of feedback which was dominated

by her tutor (though interestingly not an experience about fitting into that school, further emphasising the importance of the tutor specifically). As predicted from the numerical analysis, learning intention and the idea that the student's best interests were at heart are both correspondingly low in cases where the tutor dominates. What is also interesting is that there was no correlation for self-confidence in the numerical analysis, but Mary has a strikingly low rank for self-confidence which seems to also run throughout her narrative as related to her feedback and relationship with her tutor. She seemed fairly unconcerned in her self-evaluation before this experience, so it seems reasonable to assume that the feedback was influential in lowering her self-confidence.

In terms of learning, however, Mary seemed to largely ignore feedback from this tutor and attached herself to a less experienced class teacher who seemed more caring and "was sort of the middle ground anyway". This less experienced teacher was also valued for her recent experience and knowledge of current procedures and policies, so "she was great at throwing it at us". This informal feedback was much preferred to how the school seemed to conduct performance management feedback, which Mary described as "all a bit strange" because it focused so much on simply telling her something was wrong and that she had to fix it, which was very similar to how the pupils had to be given feedback. The informal feedback therefore meant that Mary's feedback was "always constructive", even though in that environment she felt that generally "I don't think it was very constructive for anybody in any situation, but that's just how they handled things".

Mary expressed a preference for more positive and encouraging feedback – both as a learner and a teacher. She would "always try and go in positive", using the "two stars and a wish" model because "there's no point going in negatively because it sets the wrong tone

completely". However, she also explained that she found it difficult to give what she saw as "real" feedback because she would often focus too much on being encouraging. This was partly explained by familiarity, that she would be more "guarded" until she got to know someone, as they would be with her, although "for some people it doesn't work like that". In one case, Mary described feeling that she had to introduce the negatives as a way of giving permission for the tutor to mention them in the feedback rather than just being encouraging. This also impacted on the understandability of feedback, as Mary felt that some tutors "were too scared" to write direct feedback and so wrote it in a more confusing way which had to be "deciphered". In contrast to this "timid" tutor, others "were not afraid to tell you where you went wrong or what didn't work", with Mary much preferring the direct approach.

Mary also valued tutors taking time to understand the context of the class, either by knowing the class well or asking Mary about it before giving their feedback. This interest in the context was partly related to effort, with Mary contrasting the tutor who made her feel "appreciated, like your opinion mattered" against tutors and teachers who "couldn't be bothered...they were sat at the back doing their own work". This also affected whether Mary felt able to speak freely: where some tutors would appreciate her explaining more about the lesson whilst this would "definitely not" be appropriate with another whose "word was final".

As the repertory grid developed (below), Mary's preference for blunt or direct feedback was described in greater detail. She described being "afraid" of receiving feedback from a tutor who could be "critical without hesitation", which seemed to contradict her earlier statements about wanting feedback to be blunt. She described the "heartbreaking" feeling of just receiving negatives, whilst stating that "you've got to know the negatives to improve". This helped to explain a preference for feedback which was unfiltered, yet still balanced, which

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seems a more suitable description than Mary's choice of "blunt".

Emergent pole	1	2	3	4	5	Contrasting pole
Understood individuals in the class		✓				Focused more on content
Not afraid to tell you what went wrong	✓					Timid, you had to mention negatives first
Detailed written	✓					Bullet points
Brief/hard to get out					✓	Long, in depth
Negative attitude generally					✓	Positive person
Related to previous feedback		✓				FB just in the moment
Consistent style (balanced), not afraid to tell you both good and bad	✓					Not many negatives at first, but gave me more as got to know me
Would want to know background/context	✓					Just observed in the moment
Felt my opinion mattered, they wanted me to be there	✓					Wasn't bothered either way
Always gave feedback	✓					Only gave FB on official observations
Open to dialogue	✓					Her word was final
In-depth, specific	✓					Hard to decipher
Detailed, concise, clear	✓					Not
FB from school's perspective on good practice			✓			FB tailored to me as a learner
I was scared of getting FB, could be critical without hesitation			✓			Had a softer approach

Table 12 Repertory grid responses from Mary (ticks indicate preferences where given)

Mary similarly described preferring feedback which was "concise but detailed", which she recognised as being an unusual sounding request. In part this reflected the effort of a tutor matching Mary's own effort: "there's nothing I hate more than 'Here's two bullet points'. You

go, 'I put all that effort in and you gave me two bullet points?!'". Whilst she still valued a snapshot judgement from a brief observation because it gave "an impression of where you're heading", Mary's preference was for tutors who made the effort to get to know her and the teaching context. This was associated with regular "slow drip" feedback, which "took the pressure off" and was reassuring because it gave her a "constant feel of where they think you are". In this way, feedback was detailed because it had a better understanding of Mary's long-term development and would encourage her to "try figure that out...you look for yourself because you can't be told". However, it was also important to be concise "if it's something where they've got the answer and it's just something I completely missed, 'here do this' is very helpful".

Despite the apparent linguistic contradiction, being able to give feedback which was both concise and detailed could be explained by the type of advice being given, whether it was for long-term development or was a tip for good practice. This reinforced the unfiltered preference described earlier, with the addition of the idea that tutors should put in effort because they expected a lot of effort from Mary. "Concise but detailed" may also relate to dialogue, as she described being told very directly how some school procedures worked due to being a religious school. In this case, Mary valued very concise feedback because these were non-negotiable aspects, "how it's got to be done", so extra detail or discussion would be a waste of effort (although in this case it was perhaps too concise as she felt rather unwelcome).

Mary's feedback preferences seemed to relate to the importance of performance, which came through strongly in her survey responses. She described being advised by both the school and university that "that you do something big and special" for observations, so

seemed to expect that feedback on these events would similarly be big and special. She expected that tutors would put the effort into getting to know her so that they could give better feedback, and would think about which parts of their feedback should be concise and which should be detailed. Mary worked hard to be organised (including managing part-time work commitments) and was disappointed when the university failed to do the same, commenting in the text box on her survey that some schools obviously “didn’t want you there” and that the university’s organisation was “poor”.

Feeling frustrated by inconsistencies between assessment and feedback or the university’s poor organisation in general seemed to be related to Mary’s expectations for herself. She described expecting to work hard, sacrificing her social life and having to be very organised in her independent learning, so it seems reasonable that she would be frustrated by the university failing to keep to the same standards. It is perhaps this expectation that university life would be tough and she would have to work at drawing value out of feedback that led Mary to say that she was very satisfied with feedback at the university (an opinion not picked up in the questions which aimed to capture satisfaction).

Mary’s phrase “concise but detailed” is also a helpful distinction when compared with responses from other students, possibly explaining why some tutors are felt to “bang on about” minor points whilst others are “simply left with” too little information to act upon. This distinction also supported Mary’s survey response which indicated a very low perception that her best interests or learning goals were a priority, so it was important for her to get the strategic information as efficiently as possible so that she could still have time to work on the more important, detailed feedback.

7.2 Rachel

Rachel described feedback on a lesson she taught based on an activity which had been demonstrated to her group at university. This was a resource-heavy lesson, with four activities running simultaneously. Students would move around each station as a “carousel”, meaning that there was a set amount of time at each station before groups would move to the next activity. Rachel planned the lesson with a peer and did not seek, or get, feedback on her lesson plan.

Her mentor “didn’t really say much” during the lesson, but Rachel and her peer decided that “it wasn’t working very well”, so they took the decision to “change it halfway through...and it worked alright in the end”. After the lesson, Rachel’s mentor said “we had, like, the right idea” and only suggested that some of the small activities within the carousel could have been changed. Rachel summarised this as “all to do with timings”, including the mentor’s agreement with the change made during the lesson. Rachel was also advised about “trying to be more enthusiastic”, but did not mention any particular advice or explanation.

Rachel described feeling “sort of nervous but excited” at the start of the lesson, but then “panicking” when the lesson seemed to go wrong. She then “tried to keep...cool” and finish the lesson. Feedback was given immediately after the lesson, which Rachel described as “nerve-wracking because it had gone wrong” but was soon “relieved afterwards...when she’d given me the feedback”. Rachel feeling better seemed to be based on her mentor being “positive” and saying “nicer things and...what we did well, but she sort of turned it into how we could improve”. Her mentor also encouraged Rachel, saying that she “had the right idea” and giving the impression that she “liked carousels”.

One point in her mentor's feedback seemed to criticise the way the activity had been demonstrated at university, which Rachel reflected on as being based upon the differences between this class and the class seen on video at university. The main difference was explained as "behaviour management", but Rachel also reflected that the children in this class were also younger than those in the university demonstration.

I then asked Rachel about planning the lesson, and she indicated that "we had more pressure to sort of plan it right and have good activities that would sort of impress. We were trying to impress her but, yeah, it made us sort of more organised. There's more pressure when you're being observed". This pressure was partly due to feeling nervous since this was one of her first experiences of leading a full class, but also suggested a need to make a good first impression. Rachel explained that this was not an assessed observation, so this pressure did not relate specifically to assessment.

I then asked Rachel about how she responded to her feedback, and she described mostly "agreeing with" and "taking on board" comments. One comment did strike her as "a bit personal" and "upset me a little bit", but she then reflected that "it's obviously how you've got to be with the class" so seemed to accept this. The feedback was given immediately after the observed lesson, taking place in the same classroom as this was the last lesson of the day. The meeting started with Rachel and her peer self-assessing, but this was just a comment about why they had changed the timing of the lesson. Rachel described this as the "normal" way feedback took place in schools, based on the idea that "you always sort of try to improve your practice so I always just think about how I could have done things differently if things went wrong or how I could do things differently". The mentor then gave her thoughts. These were only given verbally, though Rachel and her peer both made notes "for our file".

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Rachel's overall approach was to try to turn negatives "into positives" and "take on board all the feedback and try to put it into practice". This suggested that she had a role to play in how she interpreted and used feedback, but there was very little in her narrative to suggest a more active role. Rachel's repertory grid, given below, reinforced this idea, with an emphasis on mentors needing to be positive and friendly.

Emergent pole	1	2	3	4	5	Contrasting pole
Critical, more negative than positives in the feedback				✓		More positive
Gave small step targets to work on	✓					Bigger steps, harder to reach
Positive, easily understandable, made me feel good	✓					Not as positive or focused on teaching
Academic content					✓	School-based feedback
Personalised and spent more time with me	✓					Based on snapshot
Made me feel better	✓					More critical
Harder to speak to					✓	Could discuss further and ask questions
Abrupt speaking style					✓	Sensitive
Approachable	✓					Less approachable
Positive things to improve on	✓					Not as many positives, made me feel "what was I doing right?"
Gradual, smaller changes	✓					Big changes in one go

Table 13 Repertory grid responses from Rachel

Rachel negatively described two tutors who gave her "critical" feedback, which she explained as "they didn't give much positive" and "gave more like negative than positive". In contrast, she appreciated tutors who gave "targets to work on" and "smaller steps" compared with

tutors who gave “bigger [steps] that were sort of harder to reach”. A similar sentiment was later expressed as feedback being given in smaller “chunks”, and being easier to understand because it was given gradually over a longer period.

Another tutor was also praised for giving feedback which “was easily understandable” as well as being “very positive with her feedback”. This “made me feel good sort of when I was teaching, because she’d tell me things that I was doing well, but things I could do to sort of work on”. Rachel also appreciated feedback which was “more personal”, which came from tutors who saw her more regularly. This seemed to improve the feedback by making the tutor more perceptive, as a tutor who did not know her well “just saw what she saw” rather than giving personalised feedback.

Rachel described some dialogue, with one tutor being praised for allowing her to “discuss it further and ask more questions”, whereas another two tutors “were harder to speak to about feedback”. As she described one of these tutors further, being harder to speak to seemed to relate to him also being “abrupt” both in how he spoke to Rachel and the rude way she saw him speak to a child at the school. Dialogue was also implied by tutors who were more “approachable”, who Rachel felt she could go to “if I was having an issue”. Being approachable also linked back to being positive, with those tutors giving “positives and obviously things to improve on”, whereas a less approachable and less sensitive tutor “made me feel sometimes ‘what was I doing right?’ because they gave me so many negatives”.

Rachel completed the survey on paper and gave her email address, so her interview data could be matched to her survey. Her percentile ranks for the nine variables were:

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1. Learning-focused feedback	7.34
2. Students' self-confidence	17.62
3. Consistent hard work was important	72.02
4. A need to fit into a school culture	37.77
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	76.84
6. A need to perform in assessments	59.22
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	13.05
8. Strategic use of feedback	18.11
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	8.89

Table 14 Component percentile ranks for Rachel

These ranks show some extremes, particularly relating to best interests or learning intentions of feedback and Rachel's satisfaction with feedback. Her low score for strategic use of feedback similarly suggests that the feedback was not really used. This is supported by the predicted relationship with negative experiences: a tutor dominating feedback. However, this may be as much to do with Rachel's passive role since there is no real narrative of a very dominant tutor – her dissatisfaction seems more to do with an accumulation of small disappointments rather than any major incident. Her rank indicates a slightly stronger feeling that there was a need to perform for assessment and a slightly weaker feeling that it was important to fit into a school. Overall, Rachel's experience seems to be one of quiet but nevertheless very strong disappointment. Feedback does not seem to serve any particular purpose for her or be especially helpful. It is unclear whether this is a cause or effect of her passive role. Her emphasis on just "taking on board" feedback suggests that she does not see

any particular need to engage, although those tutors who engage her on a personal level more generally seem to be valued for the helpfulness of their feedback. In such cases, however, it seems to be the relationship and implicit caring role of tutors that is appreciated more than their feedback.

7.3 Bella

Bella described one of her earliest teaching placements where she was formally observed by her mentor for 40 minutes of an hour's lesson. The mentor left the class early to write up her notes, meaning that Bella was able to receive feedback in the 15 minute break immediately following the observation. Bella did not describe anything particularly different about how she prepared for the observation except that her lesson plan had "a lot more information" compared to her normal "note form" style. She added that she "would write out things that I would want to remember to say" and which children she wanted to work with individually. This was explained as mainly to help her remember what to do, but was also intended to show the observer what her aim was for the lesson "so that if I had anything missing or anything I could do better she could tell me".

Bella initially described feeling nervous due to being watched, but soon felt comfortable so that "I sort of just got into being a teacher and helping all of the children and sort of forgot she was there after like 20 minutes". She later "relaxed completely" when the mentor left to write up her notes, with only slight feelings of apprehension about receiving feedback afterwards. Bella's own evaluation, and her feedback, indicated that this was a broadly successful lesson, with only a fairly minor criticism made. Bella described the feedback as mainly chronological, with her mentor taking the lesson plan in order "talking through everything that I did, saying it was a good idea or like when I went on too long with the

discussion”.

Bella’s mentor then asked for her thoughts on how the lesson went, which was notable since this question is usually asked at the start of the meeting. She responded with “quite well” before discussing a problem she had with behaviour management. Despite already knowing that the mentor thought this was a good lesson, Bella’s response showed what she called the importance of being humble and self-critical to show “reflective skills”. Bella’s mentor seemed to respond positively to this self-evaluation, highlighting the problems with behaviour other teachers had in the school and lending her some books which gave behaviour management ideas. Bella read these books and tried some of the strategies in later classes which were not observed, finding some successful strategies. The feedback session ended with a brief discussion of targets, phrased as suggestions, which Bella was very open towards.

When discussing feedback she gave to her pupils, Bella described the school’s policy of “What Went Well” and “Even Better If”. Pupils would have to write their initials next to their teacher’s written feedback “to see that they had read it and if they had any questions they could come see us about it and then they would implement it to their next piece of work”. Bella described this as a big improvement on the feedback she received as a pupil at school, which was just “you should be doing this, blah, blah”. Bella described the feedback she received as broadly similar to how she gave feedback to her pupils, that whenever discussion did not follow a chronological order it would instead start with positives and then progress to suggestions for improvement (usually following the pattern of whichever form was being used).

The separation of positives from points for improvement was described as following the forms used in different contexts (either school or university), although Bella also noted during the

repertory grid discussion that some forms were “talked through” whereas others had comments “just on the sheet and you don’t talk about it or go through it”. She also noted that some forms were completed in notes whilst others were “all very formal” depending on the purpose, which was a very similar description to how Bella described her lesson planning for an observed lesson compared with her everyday planning. The informal observations were ungraded and also generally described as more open to discussion about scheduling, so she also had an input on what would be a good time.

In common with other students, Bella described a preference for feedback given over a longer period. She also noted that this tended to give her more feedback in general as well as giving it more frequently, in contrast with “one off” observations or assessments. Frequent feedback was also more likely to be verbal, and the tutors open to Bella seeking clarification later, although there was an example of verbal feedback given as a one-off which was more informal and simply gave suggestions for improvement.

The level of discussion was described as highly varied, but in each case Bella described being given ways to improve. Verbal feedback was typically more likely to include discussion, and tutors who knew Bella over a longer period were seen as more likely to engage in discussion, providing feedback that was more “tailored to us”. As well as these tutors being more open to discussion in the moment of giving feedback, Bella also felt that they were more open to her seeking them out for further discussion later (although she had not actually sought further discussion, she felt reassured by the knowledge that she could).

Tutors knowing her seemed to be a recurring theme as Bella’s repertory grid was developed, summarised in the table below, including that feedback from tutors who had known her longer was “easier to listen to” and more likely to be followed up on by both her and her

tutors. As well as being more open to accepting their comments, these tutors would also take the time to “talk through with you” so that written comments were easier to interpret, helping Bella to better understand “just what they want from you” compared with just reading the written comments. Her description of written feedback was interesting here, as she described the “more detailed” format used in university as more difficult to understand, so ‘detailed’ was described negatively, as too complex.

Bella’s strong preference for being “talked through” feedback did not, however, mean that verbal feedback was preferred to written. Rather, she described a strong preference for formal feedback “with a grade so you can see where to aim for the next one as well”. Being talked through was therefore more about availability or accessibility, “so if I don’t understand a part of it they can rephrase it or explain it and it’s a lot easier than if its written down and I don’t get it I have to hunt someone down to explain it”.

Bella also expressed a preference for more experienced tutors, whilst also describing some advantages of a relatively inexperienced tutor whose feedback “still had some good ideas”. In particular, she valued feedback from tutors with teaching experience who gave feedback on her teaching (rather than assignments) because “I am going to be a teacher so it feels better having feedback on actually teaching than writing about teaching”. This seemed to summarise many of her preferences for feedback as following a pragmatic approach, which may help to explain some seemingly contradictory preferences. For example, she had no preference for prose or bullet point written feedback, noting that it was more important that the feedback be tailored to the individual and “not too complex”. Similarly, she liked the idea that tutors who gave her feedback over time would monitor her progress. She described short-term self-checking, such as writing reminders to herself at the top of lesson plans, but

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seemed to trust her long-term development to her tutors. Despite describing not learning much from some one-off feedback, Bella had no criticisms – all the feedback had been prompt and useful.

Emergent pole	1	2	3	4	5	Contrasting pole
Filled out uni sheets				✓		Used in-school forms
Talked through written FB	✓					Didn't
Formal	✓					Informal
With grade	✓					No grade
Watched you teach		✓				FB on assignments
Throughout time, overall more FB (x7)	✓					One off
Positives first, how to improve separately (x3)					✓	Chronological order of comments
More overall	✓					Less feedback
Multi-stage	✓					Couldn't follow up
Written (x4)					✓	Verbal
Structured on timeline, what went well, improvement suggestions	✓					Verbally asked 'have you considered'
Discussion	✓					Told what to improve
Knew me longer	✓					Didn't know me, feedback not as tailored
Talked it through	✓					Just got the sheet

Table 15 Repertory grid responses from Bella

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Bella's percentile ranks for the nine variables were:

1. Learning-focused feedback	84.26
2. Students' self-confidence	32.95
3. Consistent hard work was important	95.92
4. A need to fit into a school culture	16.80
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	25.77
6. A need to perform in assessments	08.32
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	97.31
8. Strategic use of feedback	43.07
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	74.39

Table 16 Component percentile ranks for Bella

Some of these rankings indicate that Bella had quite extreme ratings, for example she had a very low perception that placement was about performance and a very high perception that the feedback had her best interests at heart. Bella also ranks highly for feeling that consistent hard work is important. As could be predicted from the correlation between components discussed in the previous chapter, Bella ranked low on reporting a Feedback dominated by tutor experience and high on learning being the main intention of feedback.

Overall, Bella's survey responses suggest a rejection of strategic approaches towards assessment, encouraged by the feeling that her tutors have her best interests at heart. Bella seems to feel relatively little pressure to fit into a school's culture or adapt to her tutor's preferences. Her interview expressed a strong desire for understandable feedback which she could put into practice, and that her tutor would take an interest in her long-term development. The strong belief in consistent hard work did not really come through in the interview, and it seemed instead that Bella expected her tutor to do most of the work in

making her feedback useful and understandable but she would work hard on implementing advice. This may be explained by her strong focus on the professional, rather than academic, aspect of her course, that very specific feedback from a wide range of professionals and wider reading could slowly accumulate into teaching skills. Bella was therefore not strategically aligned towards her assessments, but towards her professional goals. This is neatly summarised in her criticism of university tutors' feedback being of limited use, saying that she wanted feedback on teaching and not on "writing about teaching".

Taken together, Bella's interview and survey responses seem to indicate a strong sense of professional identity, where she trusts the value of her learning experiences and so has very little incentive to take strategic approaches. She sees herself as benefitting from a wide range of experience, so it is important that the feedback she receives comes from a wide range of credible sources who know her well and make their feedback understandable to her. She feels that she is doing pretty well in this system and is gradually learning what it is to be a teacher, so feedback needs to be gradually integrated into her normal ways of working.

7.4 Josh

Josh described being observed by his university tutor in the previous year. This tutor had seen him teach before in another school. He first described preparing for the lesson with a peer (the lesson would be team-taught). This preparation was well in advance, but there were still last-minute checks and resources which had both students "running around frantically". Josh then skipped to the end of the lesson, where the tutor returned after leaving to observe another two students in the school and Josh received his feedback. This took place with his peer, which was normal, as was receiving feedback in front of the other two students in the school so that all four students might receive feedback during the same 30-minute session.

Josh did not comment on this being too brief, instead describing it as an opportunity for them to listen to each other's feedback and also help each other, particularly with organising their evidence files.

Josh found it difficult to recall any of the tutor's feedback other than her agreeing that "it was good to get them up and out", supporting the lesson being partly outdoors. Josh struggled to remember more detail than this, commenting "I can't remember if she said our subject knowledge was good or we had a few issues with it". However, he recalled that "it was a good overall observation, she thought it was it was a good standard and like from the first year placement how much I had developed, like, teaching skills and styles".

Later in the interview, my prompts reminded Josh that they had received feedback on the plan from the regular class teacher. However, Josh did not refer to this as feedback but advice, describing how "we had gone over it with the class teacher I think and just made sure that she like she gave us as much advice as possible before the lesson to make sure it went alright for us so that sort of gave us a bit of comfort". There seemed to be informality implied in "going over" the plan, whilst "comfort" suggests a link with later feeling "panicky", suggesting an emotional response to the prospect of being observed. Again, Josh could not remember any specific advice but did remember following advice and changing the order of some activities to better manage behaviour. He later commented that the lesson was "much better" for following this advice.

The lesson preparation suggested a need to perform since the activity was both novel and highly resourced. Josh also explained how the medium-term plan for the class had to be amended so that both students could teach during the same session, so the practicalities of

one tutor observing four students in a single afternoon visit required some adaptation to the regular class plans. The class were told that they needed to be on their best behaviour because there would be a “special visitor”, which Josh noted helped with his behaviour management since he would only have to “give them [pupils] a look”. After the tutor had left, Josh noticed that both he and the other student visibly relaxed and so did the pupils, so that “our behaviour strategies had to come [back] in place”.

However, there were also examples of the observation being more relaxed as Josh described the activity becoming more “child-led” and deviating from their written plan. The tutor also talked briefly with pupils, but this too seemed fairly relaxed. Whilst the lesson was clearly prepared as a special occasion, Josh showed that his priority was still making sure that pupils were learning rather than being too concerned about his own performance.

Feedback meetings were described as starting with general comments on each student’s evidence files, including noting where another student had a good example of something which would help, which encouraged sharing. Feedback would then proceed chronologically, pointing out positives and negatives in turn. Josh also remembered, when prompted, that feedback usually started with a general question about how he felt the lesson had gone. He described his response to this as “honest” whilst trying to avoid seeming too confident. He felt that it was important to show awareness of faults, since “it’s a lot easier for her to give feedback and I suppose if you’ve made a mistake and not realised when you have it’s sort of it’s a concern there for her”.

In terms of his preferences, Josh appreciated having the same tutor in consecutive placements because she could see his development and commented on the improvements

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he had made, particularly in organising his evidence file. Having the same tutor was largely chance since each tutor is assigned to a region, but in this case both of Josh's placements were in the same area. As we created his repertory grid, Josh started to describe the pressure of being observed by some staff more than others, relating it to an OFSTED inspection. He also noticed a different reaction based on his own confidence, that he was a much better teacher than academic so would receive more negative comments on his university assignments. He did not take these personally since he recognised many faults in his academic work, so "I don't feel like he is picking on me with negatives I think he is trying to build me up with where I need to improve". He generally welcomed a mixture of positive and "constructive" criticism so that he "knew where to go next".

Emergent pole	1	2	3	4	5	Contrasting pole
School based			✓			File based
Tutor works with other tutors	✓					Not much input on students
Felt under pressure				✓		Didn't
Come to me with just positives					✓	Told me straight where I needed to improve
Motivated to do well academically	✓					Not
Very positive placement	✓					Not
Old-fashioned/authoritarian					✓	Modern/encouraging
Kept in close contact with other tutors	✓					Didn't

Table 17 Repertory grid responses from Josh

Josh also described his goals shifting during a placement, as he became more motivated to take on a particular specialism. He therefore became highly motivated in this aspect of his professional development, including taking on voluntary work in a local school. Feedback

from his university tutor recognised and encouraged this change: “my personal tutor said that they must be doing something right if it’s got me to do my reading and stuff because like my last few years I hadn’t done much reading around my assignments or anything, whereas this year I’ve started off doing all of the reading”. Josh similarly came to have a greater respect for a tutor who he saw as trying to better himself through further study.

This new motivation also included improving his relationship with a tutor who he had previously disliked based on their harsh feedback:

JOSH: I felt like she was picking on me, but in the second placement I was fine with her, I didn’t have a problem with her.

MC: And was that because she behaved differently with you or she had a different attitude?

JOSH: Yeah, I think it was because I had done a lot better on this placement. I think because she was there to support me on my first placement as well.

This change in Josh’s attitude was not a total transformation, however, as he still noted unhelpful feedback from an “old fashioned” and “strict” teacher who just seemed to want to “shoot me down”. Feedback seemed to relate strongly to whether Josh liked a tutor, but this did not necessarily hold at university as he described really liking a tutor but “I just didn’t listen to him much this year”. Finally, Josh described the benefits of tutors talking to each other – in particular when a tutor recognised his improved work ethic and fed this back to other tutors, who then seemed to help him more.

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Josh completed the paper survey, and had the following percentile ranks:

1. Learning-focused feedback	36.79
2. Students' self-confidence	17.62
3. Consistent hard work was important	42.66
4. A need to fit into a school culture	84.58
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	68.68
6. A need to perform in assessments	59.22
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	55.71
8. Strategic use of feedback	59.79
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	38.66

Table 18 Component percentile ranks for Josh

These percentile ranks seem to match poorly with Josh's narrative, possibly indicating how much of a transformation he underwent as he was guided towards a specialism. His self-confidence and work ethic seem completely in contradiction with his survey responses, as does his satisfaction rating. The only score which still seems to relate to Josh's narrative is fitting into a school, although even this seems to have changed now that his identity as a teacher is so strongly linked to his aspiration to work with children with special educational needs.

This might simply be a case of trying to fit together two different interpretations, but the dramatic transformation in Josh's narrative (from being formally disciplined to being one of the hardest workers) seems to be so influential that it is of little value to know how he

previously experienced feedback, other than to reflect on just how powerful the effect of one inspirational tutor can be. Nevertheless, to be able to see the life-changing impact of a tutor in the gaps of these two narratives is quite a rare and special insight, even if it tells us little about feedback since Josh simply engaged more with everything, feedback included.

7.5 Meg

Meg described a visit from a university tutor who had seen her teach in another school. She started by describing the lesson, noting generally that it was “a good lesson and the children were all really engaged”, as well as giving more detail that the structure of the lesson, her paperwork and materials on the board were all good. After the lesson, she described how her tutor “was reading through my plans and he said to me that ‘you’ve got a spelling mistake on that plan so that means that your lesson wasn’t as good as it should’ve been’”. Meg challenged this, arguing that the mistake was on her plan and all the spellings seen by the pupils were correct, so she did not think that this affected the quality of her lesson. However, his response made it clear that he thought otherwise: “he said ‘Well, you will never be a teacher as you can’t spell’”. Meg described feeling “a bit upset” and that she was been “interrogated”, but also that the feedback was too “personal”. Consequently, she described how she lost some of the respect she previously had for this tutor because she saw how his “professionalism dropped”.

During the narrative, Meg moved on to describe how other teachers in this school and before had made her feel supported, but that this tutor had “shattered” that support. She also felt that he had no sympathy for her being dyslexic. Returning to feedback, she described how “his feedback wasn’t that good”, but then he did give some feedback on missing or weak items in her file. However, Meg described feeling that she could not get past his comment

that she would never be a teacher, describing how it “shattered that relationship between me and him” and how “even though we still have to work together, my attitude towards him isn’t as good as it would be towards other people because his professionalism slipped”. She described feeling as if she had no reason to continue on her course and how it “stopped me in my tracks”, making her very “wary” when planning other lessons. Ultimately, however, her narrative took on the tone of defiance, but this only came out later in the interview.

As Meg discussed feedback more generally, she kept returning to this narrative and adding more details, indicating the significance of this incident. She described how she was careful in her planning to anticipate any spellings pupils might ask her for, and make note of them for quick reference. She also described how she had prepared more carefully than normal for this observation so that “if anything went wrong...he could see what I was intending to do”. She also described how she planned the lesson to be more “creative”, partly “to get a better mark” but also “to benefit the children, so that the children got a lot more out of it”. She also wanted to show her tutor “what I was capable of...taking risks, really”. This desire to impress her tutor also seemed to relate to her previous experience of being observed by him, that “his comments have always been negative” and inconsistent both with “what everyone gives me as a grade” and even with his own grades: “he almost always criticises what I do, but then he gives me a grade 1 [laughs] so it doesn’t match up with what he is saying verbally”.

To some extent, Meg wanted to impress this tutor but also wanted “to know that gap really, and what he’s thinking when he sees me teach”. She described how he had previously criticised her lesson for not challenging pupils enough, to the point of him arguing with the class teacher at the time. This seems to have influenced Meg’s desire to show that she was taking risks, which might also have fed into her sense of frustration that this was not

acknowledged. During the repertory grid task, she praised tutors who got to know her, so it seems reasonable to assume that she was upset that this tutor had not drawn a link between these two observations.

As I prompted Meg to describe how his feedback was given, she added more details which showed her expectations of feedback by explaining what she felt was missing: “he said like the lesson structure was fine and things like that but he didn’t actually say you could’ve done this differently and this would’ve improved it in that way or if you had done this”. Her class teacher later filled this gap, which Meg described as “doing his job for him”. She also felt that he should have given her targets or a grade, since without these “it left a bit of a gap really I didn’t know where I was at really until the last grade”. Similarly, there was very little written other than a few bullet points which were just descriptive.

As Meg described this feedback in more detail, she was reminded of an earlier observation by the same tutor which was also rather odd because “he sat with his back to me so that his back was to the lesson, and he was just typing on his computer”. In this case, her feedback just consisted of him describing “what I had done in the lesson and that was it, no targets or anything, and in order to give targets I think that you need to watch the lesson”. This was later linked to Meg trying to understand why her tutor had just focused on a single spelling mistake and not commented on the rest of the lesson, reasoning that he might not have had anything to say or had not paid close enough attention so felt “like ‘ooh, I need to give her some negative points’”.

Meg then returned to her main narrative and was reminded of her class teacher looking at the written feedback and commenting that it was “not much to go on” before adding some feedback and targets of her own. The class teacher also helped Meg to feel better about the

feedback, so that she “felt more positive towards the rest of the day”.

As we were discussing the narrative, Meg did not describe any emotional response to this feedback and even replied “no, not really” when I asked about it. However, about 20 minutes later she again returned to the story and described how she felt angry: “I shut the file and said ‘Alright then’ and walked out of the room...I just thought ‘Well, if you are being unprofessional then I’m just going to go back to the lesson’”. Meg also described a senior member of school staff showing concern after seeing her in the corridor, to the point that she went to speak to the university tutor and told Meg “he isn’t talking to you like that” and “he isn’t being supportive”.

Being defended by this teacher seemed to help Meg feel better about the feedback, particularly when the teacher disclosed that she was also dyslexic and had found ways to cope even in a senior position. Meg did not receive any indication from her tutor that anything had gone wrong in their interaction, however, with him only asking routine questions about their next meeting. At this point, Meg told him that she had already talked to another university tutor about the incident and asked for another tutor to take her next observation instead. The tutor then “left it at that, and I’ve not actually seen him since”, but Meg described feeling “a bit nervous” in case he is assigned to her next placement.

Reflecting on the experience, Meg felt that her previous respect for this tutor had been “shattered”, the third time she used this word, and how she had been looking forward to him observing her:

Matched student narratives

I thought highly of him and thought 'he is really going to support me through my placement' but then he sort of shattered the relationship and the respect I had for him as he picked up on a personal and not a professional target really and it was just the way he said it like his attitude towards it and towards me hasn't been positive.

Her preparation also suggested a level of apprehension, with Meg describing how he could "do spot checks" in the future even if he was not her tutor, so she now took great care to "proofread" every lesson plan, to the extent that she was "treading on egg shells" and "spending more time on [proofreading] than actually what I was delivering".

Reflecting on this experience and describing what feedback should be like, Meg felt that there should be a balance between positives and negatives, and that a tutor should think about the importance of their feedback, avoiding anything minor or petty: "if it doesn't matter, why mention it?".

Meg also described how receiving feedback required that "you should be open to what they say, but if it's getting personal then you have the right really to think 'Well why are you saying that? Do you have the right to say that?'". This included two aspects of feedback, professionalism (not being too personal) and relevance (giving feedback on the most important points), so that feedback would "support my development and not shatter it". Using the "correct wording" was also seen as an important part of professionalism, and Meg expected tutors to speak to her as respectfully as she did the children in her class.

Matched student narratives

Emergent pole	1	2	3	4	5	Contrasting pole
Feedback on my dissertation		✓				Feedback just on phonics and EYFS (early years foundation stage)
Set targets generally				✓		Just one specific area
Knows a lot about us	✓					Subject specific
Tutor easy to get hold of	✓					Not
Professional demeanour				✓		Bubbly personality
Focus on placement			✓			General FB
Only supports you on placement					✓	Supports you any time
Strict					✓	laid back
Lets own opinions get in the way					✓	Gives professional advice
High expectations	✓					Not
Can get too personal					✓	Doesn't
Looks on a whole					✓	FB is personal to you
Can have personal conversations			✓			only professional
Has been a cohort leader	✓					Hasn't
Has seen you on placement	✓					Hasn't
Approachable	✓					Not
University-based				✓		Visits you in school
Experienced in key stages 1 and 2		✓				Experienced in early years and foundation stage
Empathises and is supportive	✓					Isn't

Table 19 Repertory grid responses from Meg

Matched student narratives

Meg completed the online survey, with the scores given below.

1. Learning-focused feedback	18.43
2. Students' self-confidence	52.20
3. Consistent hard work was important	56.61
4. A need to fit into a school culture	74.63
5. An experience dominated by the tutor	58.65
6. A need to perform in assessments	27.57
7. Feedback focused on the students' overall best interests	44.13
8. Strategic use of feedback	59.79
9. Feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys	38.66

Table 20 Component percentile ranks for Meg

Meg's scores on these components seem to fit well with her narrative, particularly that feedback did not really have a learning intention. However, her score for feedback being dominated by the tutor was fairly average. This is perhaps a limitation of the survey, since she did appreciate feedback from her mentor, class teacher and another university tutor, just not this one. Whilst they are fairly high, I would have expected much higher scores for components three and eight (consistent hard work and strategic use of feedback), since her narrative gave me a strong sense of her work ethic and making sure that she was very well prepared for assessments. Again, the survey does not seem to have picked up her sense of duty to her pupils alongside her determination to maintain her perfect grades. It was curious that consistently receiving such positive feedback and regular assessment created pressure

on her to maintain a faultless record, rather than giving her comfort – yet her score for needing to perform is low.

While the survey scores are helpful as a way into Meg's narrative, they seem unable to reflect a complex experience of an exemplary student who usually receives helpful feedback but has a persistently poor experience with just one tutor. It is worthwhile noting, however, that this seems to be influential in her satisfaction rating – she separately rated her satisfaction with her own learning as very satisfied, but her satisfaction score for feedback is quite low. Even when a team of tutors provide excellent feedback, one tutor has the potential to spoil the rating.

7.6 How representative were the interviewed students?

Since data sources could only be linked for five students, it is important to know whether these five students were significantly different from the rest of the sample. Knowing, for example, that these five students had much lower satisfaction with feedback would require compensating for this bias during coding of other students' narratives. Student's individual ranks, already considered individually, indicated some rather extreme scores on some variables (compiled below). However, it is the distribution of these scores that is relevant for generating themes: we would expect some high and low scores to occur at random since we are considering nine different variables from five different students.

Matched student narratives

Student	Learning intention	Self-confidence	Consistent hard work	Fitting into school	Feedback dominated by	Performance perception	Best interests of student	Strategic use of feedback	Satisfaction
Mary	21.94	7.75	56.61	37.77	76.84	83.61	17.05	43.07	22.76
Rachel	7.34	17.62	72.02	37.77	76.84	59.22	13.05	18.11	8.89
Bella	84.26	32.95	95.92	16.8	25.77	8.32	97.31	43.07	74.39
Josh	36.79	17.62	42.66	84.58	68.68	59.22	55.71	59.79	38.66
Meg	18.43	52.2	56.61	74.63	58.65	27.57	44.13	59.79	38.66

Table 21 Component percentile ranks for all five students

The distribution of these scores is represented below in a scatter plot, where each student's percentile rank is represented by one of five different coloured shapes, with nine variables running from left to right.

Matched student narratives

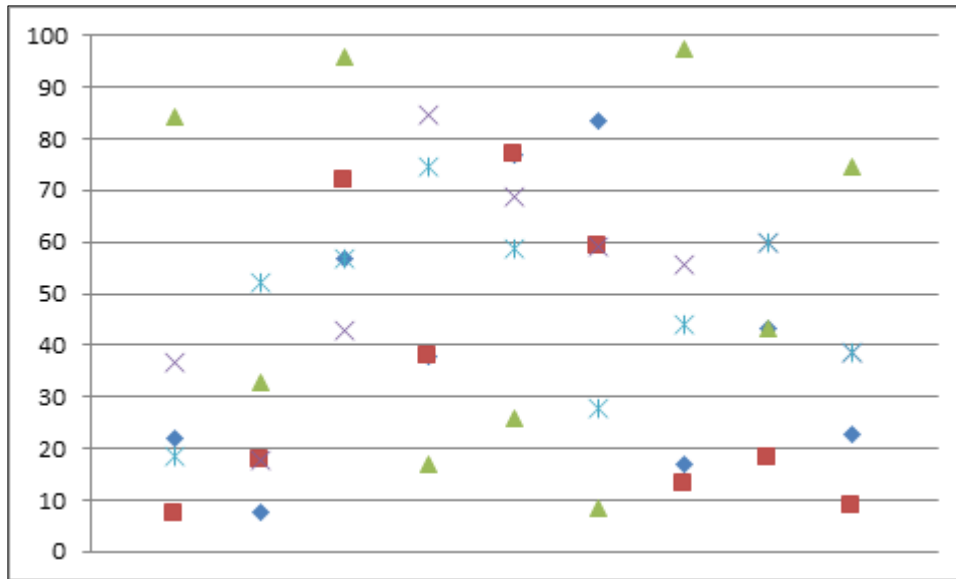


Figure 5 Scatter plot of percentile ranks

As a simple visual check, this has a fairly well-spread distribution although there is some clustering around low scores with one outlier on the first variable (learning intention) and a limited range for variables seven and eight (best interest of student and strategic use of feedback). For such a small sample, however, this appears to be a good spread of responses.

A more formal check can be performed by creating three groups and using ANOVA. I created a new variable to create three groups: survey respondents who I knew had been interviewed ($n=5$), students who volunteered for interview but did not participate further ($n=195$, which may or may not include the other eight students who were interviewed but did not give contact details on their surveys), and students who did not consent to being interviewed ($n=168$). Whilst it could be inferred that leaving the contact box blank implied a lack of consent, these students were left out of this analysis.

Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found for only two of the variables: performance perception [$F(2, 360) = 3.118, p = 0.045$] and feedback serving the best interests of student [$F(2, 360) = 3.135, p = 0.045$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test

indicated that the mean score was significantly different in two cases within these variables. Those who volunteered for interview reported statistically significant lower means for performance perception (Mean=48.46, standard deviation=29.2) than those who did not volunteer (Mean=55.72, standard deviation=28.07). Similarly, those who volunteered for interview reported higher means for best interests of the student (M=50.9, SD=28.32) than those who did not volunteer (M=43.37, SD=29.0). Taken together, this suggests that students who volunteered for interview were more likely to report positive experiences of feedback: they were less likely to report feeling the need to perform for assessment and were more likely to report that feedback had their best interests at heart.

Whilst not statistically significant, students who were actually interviewed continued this trend with a much lower mean for performance perception (M=39.83, SD=39.11) and a slightly higher mean for best interests of student (M=52.83, SD=40.83). The small group size and high standard deviation for this group may well be the reason for the lack of statistical significance, but taken together the ANOVA tests and post-hoc comparisons demonstrate that students who volunteered for interview were less likely to report feeling a need to perform for assessment and more likely to report that feedback had their best interests at heart. Students who were actually interviewed also report much lower means for performance perception (nine percentile points lower than those who volunteered, and sixteen points lower than those who did not volunteer) and higher means for their best interests being served (only two percentile points higher than those who volunteered, but nine points higher than those who did not volunteer), but this is not statistically significant.

In summary, it is important to know that students who volunteered to participate further in the research were more likely to have had positive experiences of feedback. This suggests

that themes reported in this thesis might not take full account of negative experiences of students (perhaps surprising given narratives such as Meg's and Mary's), so the description of feedback might be slightly more positive than it is in reality. This might be particularly true when discussing the perceived need to perform or the feeling that feedback serves each student's best interests.

By the very nature of consent, interview sampling was partly self-selecting and I interviewed everybody who was willing and able to be interviewed. It is important to realise that such self-selection might go completely unrecognised in solely qualitative studies, so being able to use numerical data to be aware of this bias is a strength of this study. I also raised concerns in the first chapter that my personal interest in the more dramatic negative stories might skew my analysis, so it is interesting to note that the data reported here is actually more positively skewed. As each theme is now taken in turn in the next chapter, these potential sources of bias will be important for keeping a balanced description of how feedback is experienced by all 13 students.

8 Thematic analysis

The previous chapter considered data from five students who were selected because their numerical data could be matched with their narrative data. For each, their scores on components from the numerical data were used to identify likely explanations. This chapter describes a more general thematic analysis of each student's interview data. This process helped the narrative data to either exemplify the component, expand or alter its definition, or suggest whether an additional component is needed. At the end of this process, the component led into themes which informed a thorough "second cycle" coding (Saldaña, 2015, p. 233) of all 13 narratives, described in chapter 9, so that analysis focused more around themes than around individual students.

8.1 Mary

Mary's narrative suggested that she did not see feedback as particularly important since it would neither give her anything of great importance nor require much of her input. Instead, feedback was a chance to show positive values: a grateful acceptance of feedback, and a reflective character. This attitude seemed to stem from university tutors who emphasised that this was an important aspect of receiving feedback during placement, although other students did not report being told this. Taken together, I summarised these points with the theme 'relational function of feedback', linking to Mary's description of being "eager to please" or trying to "second guess" tutors' expectations.

Mary's description of feedback suggested that she saw the whole school-based experience as a somewhat artificial performance, which would make sense with her survey responses indicating very low scores for feedback having a learning intention or her general best

interests at heart. For this, the component 'performance perception' from the numerical analysis seemed a good fit, particularly given Mary's very high score on this component in the survey data.

When describing her expectations of feedback, Mary emphasised honesty and bluntness, but only from people who genuinely cared about her and made an effort to understand the context of the observation. Mary had a very low score for self-confidence, but this did not seem to come through in her interview: she seemed happy to reject feedback if it did not seem useful, and was confident in her own work ethic. Her narrative contained a strong sense of hard work and self-sacrifice linked to her sense of vocation. However, the theme 'consistent hard work' did not seem a good enough fit as Mary only had an average score on this in the survey.

To try understand this distinction, I looked at how Mary described her expectations for her tutors. They were expected to know the difference between information which was negotiable and which should just be accepted, so Mary expected feedback to make this distinction for her. Mary gave an example of feedback which was poor because her tutor was unrelentingly focused on a fairly minor point. This example drew a few ideas together, since it showed a tutor not making much effort to give worthwhile feedback – reflecting her frustration at poor organisation or effort from tutors and administrators.

Mary's description of "concise but detailed" feedback was a helpful distinction, indicating that she just wanted to be told the right answer if something was a minor point and then spend more time on more important aspects of feedback. Mary made many personal sacrifices and also worked part-time, so was frustrated if tutors did not seem to respect her time. I

considered 'needed to prioritise', but this felt too close to strategic behaviour and did not capture the idea that Mary expected to work very hard and make sacrifices in her personal life. I therefore amended this to 'needed to actively manage workload' to better capture high workload as the reason for Mary needing to prioritise (rather than prioritising being a grade-seeking behaviour). However, this theme still did not seem to fully express Mary's expectation that tutors would prioritise the feedback for her and distinguish which feedback she should just accept and what was open for discussion. I struggled to describe this in a single phrase, but since the view was not shared by any other students it seemed that while this was an important part of Mary's narrative, it would not usefully form its own eventual theme.

I also wondered about Mary's desire for feedback being blunt, but coming from a caring tutor. Mary had a high score for reported tutor-dominated behaviour, which helped to explain some of her preferences for some tutors over others. However, this was also bound up with the idea of feedback being honest, caring, perceptive or balanced. A comment on her survey included the feeling that "it is obvious some schools don't want you there", so there was an element of welcoming or even friendliness. This comment also seemed to relate closely to professionalism, in particular Mary's disappointment at the lack of professionalism shown by tutors or administrators.

The best fit seemed to be about the intentions of feedback, particularly the 'best interests' component from the numerical analysis. This fits well, since Mary seemed to think of feedback as being about managing a positive relationship with a tutor. When a tutor did not have her best interests at heart, this could be a rather cynical and insincere interaction, but seeing feedback as having a relational function can be positive when the tutor genuinely cares. The distinction between "blunt" and "caring" still did not seem entirely covered by this theme, so

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I added this as a separate theme with the intention of trying to make this clearer as other narratives were themed.

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Performance perception (83.61)	Blunt feedback, but from a caring tutor
	Relational function of feedback (from students' perspective)
Feedback with the student's best interests at heart (17.05)	
	Needed to actively manage workload

Table 22 Mary's themes (numbers in brackets indicate percentile rank for components taken from survey analysis)

8.2 Rachel

Rachel's narrative had a strong sense of performance as she described an elaborate activity which she had seen demonstrated at university. This was resource-heavy and impressive to watch, with several simultaneous activities and students either exploring resources or working creatively. Her desire to perform well was not just linked to assessment, however, since it included wanting to impress her tutor without any particular reason being given. Rachel had a high percentile rank for tutor-dominated feedback (76.84), but only a fairly average 59.22 for performance perception and a fairly low rank (37.77) for it being important to fit into a school. A high rank for consistent hard work (72.02) suggested that Rachel's need to impress might relate more to her own work ethic or perceptions of the profession, but this did not seem to match well enough with her using a lesson from the university. I therefore

used a 'hard work' theme for this part of Rachel's narrative, but also added 'desire to impress tutor'.

Reflection was frequently mentioned when Rachel described how she used feedback. She described a need to take feedback on board, but also to see the positives. After some discussion, this seemed to be about finding useful information in feedback, which Rachel explained as finding ways to improve her practice. However, Rachel's response to feedback also seemed bound up in emotions. Rachel described feeling anxious, stressed and pressured as she prepared the lesson and waited for feedback, then upset at one of the comments. She also repeatedly returned to the need for tutors to be positive and approachable.

While Rachel seemed to engage meaningfully with the content of feedback, her role with tutors was predominantly passive. It therefore seemed that she expected that tutors would make the effort to be approachable and show sensitivity when giving feedback. Tutors should also make sure that they give her something manageable to work on, or at least show an effort to get to know her and build her confidence. She did not appreciate negative feedback at all, but still described a detailed example of trying to take it on board and think about what she could learn from it.

This part of Rachel's narrative matched with her very low ranks for feedback with learning as the main intention of feedback (7.34), feedback having the trainee's best interests at heart (13.05), strategic use of feedback (18.11) and satisfaction with feedback (8.89). There seemed to be something very dissatisfying in Rachel's experiences with feedback, which related to her expectations of what feedback would help her to do and how much she would have to work to find something useful in feedback. Her low self-confidence rank (17.62) matched with the

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idea that she found the experience tough, but did not explain her confident reflection on feedback.

Rachel seemed to have a very clear idea of what feedback should be, and that it was reasonable for her to expect that it would come from a caring tutor. A 'feedforward' theme seemed a good fit, and the 'best interests at heart' added some of the personality requirements. However, these did not cover Rachel's description of how she reflected on feedback. I therefore started with the summary 'feedback should give me something constructive'.

The traits Rachel seemed to desire in her tutor did not seem to relate so much to professionalism (as in Mary's narrative), but more that Rachel either wanted a tutor to be helpful or pleasant, ideally both, and that this would be underpinned by them taking the time to get to know her. To try to make this theme more broadly applicable, I therefore changed the idea of feedback giving her something constructive to something personal. The final theme was therefore 'feedback should be tailored to me as an individual', giving a total of three themes to summarise Rachel's narrative and a running total of eight themes for both Mary and Rachel, although Mary's 'blunt but caring' already seemed as if it could be adapted into Rachel's 'feedback should be tailored to me as an individual'.

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Importance of consistent hard work (72.02)	Desire to impress tutor
	Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual

Table 23 Rachel's themes (numbers in brackets indicate percentile rank for components taken from survey analysis)

8.3 Bella

Bella mentioned emotional responses to feedback, but these were only slight feelings of apprehension. Otherwise, she described herself as quite relaxed and confident, based on her self-assessment that the lesson had gone well. This matched well with her exceptionally high rank for feedback having her best interests at heart (97.31) and similarly high rank for feedback having learning as its main intention (84.26). A correspondingly low rank for tutor dominated behaviour (25.77) and performance perception (08.32) tells a similar story – Bella had no need to feel worried about feedback because the feedback was for learning, not for assessment. I therefore kept the component ‘feedback had my best interests at heart’.

Bella noticed several different forms used for giving feedback and described how this affected the structure of feedback as tutors typically “talked through” the paperwork. Bella had no particular preference and gave examples of good feedback in a variety of formats, whether chronological or starting with positives. Instead of focusing on structure, Bella described the manner in which feedback was given. Advice from her tutor was given as suggestions, for example of a few books to read, which Bella appreciated because this emphasised her finding the right advice for her own style. This idea was continued in Bella’s preference for verbal feedback over an extended time, linking this with tutors getting to know her and so being more willing to engage in discussion. She also seemed comforted by the idea that tutors were monitoring her progress over time, trusting them to safeguard her long-term development, reinforcing the ‘best interests at heart’ component. This also seemed to suggest the ‘feedback should be tailored to me as an individual’ theme would be appropriate.

Whilst Bella engaged with every bit of feedback, saying that she could always learn something from it, her trust in the tutors seemed to make her fairly passive. She felt that she could be

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more engaged if she ever felt that she needed it, but had yet to do so. She also had a preference for simplicity, both in being talked through feedback to avoid complex language but also in being given clear targets and grades. This seemed to fit well with Bella's very high rank for the importance of consistent hard work (95.92), rejecting strategic behaviour. As with Rachel, however, this still felt like it was missing the significance of Bella expecting that her tutors should make the effort to get to know her, tailor their feedback, and make sure she understands their advice and targets – there is very little mention of dialogue other than Bella knowing that she could have it if she wanted. To try to cover this idea, I added the theme 'tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next'. This theme developed from the 'feedback should be tailored to me as an individual' theme, but had a much stronger tone in putting the onus on tutors, so I suspected that as more themes were added only one of these would be kept.

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Feedback with the student's best interests at heart (97.31)	Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next
	Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual

Table 24 Bella's themes (numbers in brackets indicate percentile rank for components taken from survey analysis)

The running total from three students was now three themes adopted from the numerical analysis and six new themes, although some were already starting to suggest ways they could merge.

8.4 Josh

Josh's narrative was poorly summarised by his component scores, which I attributed mainly to the transformation in his approach to learning which occurred between completing the

survey and interview. Josh went from being a weak, rather disaffected student (receiving a formal warning), to absolutely devoted to a teaching specialism. He was reading widely and volunteering on a weekly basis at a local special school, earning praise from his tutors for his new work ethic. With such a complete transformation, it is little surprise that he went against the overall trend of very little change over time.

One key feature of Josh's interview was how he often did not recognise feedback until I prompted. For example, he stated that he did not receive feedback from his class teacher but later described the "advice" and "annotations" she gave him on his lesson plans before he taught for an observed class. He described feedback more in terms of procedure, particularly in maintaining paperwork for his evidence file. He remembered very little feedback, or even the general impression of feedback, for example, "I can't remember if she said our subject knowledge was good or we had a few issues with it".

Josh's preparation for assessments suggested a need to perform and impress, including significant preparation of resources and an appeal to novelty. However, he also had a strong sense of contributing to the school and his pupils without seeing this as anything other than altruistic. A good example of this was when he seemed annoyed at having to get someone to cover an after-school club he ran so that he could get feedback on an observed lesson: he clearly saw more value in running the club.

Honesty was regularly mentioned, with Josh aware of some norms such as not wanting to appear over-confident and showing some awareness of his faults. In general, however, he felt that he was honest in his self-evaluation and that the feedback he got was honest and simple enough to understand. It was important for him to receive "constructive" criticism which told

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him “where to go next”. In general, however, he did not really describe engaging with feedback. Instead, he was improving his teaching by doing the job. At times this was entirely without feedback as he described being used like “a supply teacher”, while in other examples he would talk to the class teacher informally, gaining advice and encouragement (again, he seemed not to recognise this as feedback).

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Importance of consistent hard work (42.66)	Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next
	Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual
	Desire to impress tutor
	‘Advice’ distinct from ‘feedback’
	Tutors should care about me and make an effort to understand my experiences

Table 25 Josh’s themes (numbers in brackets indicate percentile rank for components taken from survey analysis)

The above table shows how Josh’s narrative seemed a poor fit with the components, retaining only the importance of consistent hard work (with a misleading score). I also considered the importance of fitting into the school, but Josh’s efforts here seemed more about his values as a teacher than trying to become one of the team. His narrative fits quite well with themes developing from other students’ narratives, particularly the idea that tutors should make an effort to understand his experiences (the care element seems less important). I added the idea of advice being distinct from feedback, which might develop into a theme around professional learning.

8.5 Meg

Meg’s narrative was dominated by her tutor seeming to obsess on a minor spelling mistake,

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so immediately the theme of 'tutor dominated behaviour' seemed appropriate. However, Meg's rank on this was only 58.65. The only survey theme on which Meg had a noticeably strong rank was 'feedback had learning as its main intention', which was a low 18.43. This seemed a better fit for describing Meg's problem with this tutor, as she went on to reflect that the tutor may have behaved so poorly because he had not paid close enough attention to say anything important and felt that he needed to be negative. This also reminded me of Rachel's requirement that a tutor be either useful or pleasant, since Meg's tutor was apparently neither.

Self-evaluation was also a recurrent theme in Meg's narrative, as she described several ways in which she felt confident that a lesson had gone well or ways that she worked out what was necessary to improve. Her rank for self-confidence was unremarkable at 52.20, but her narrative shows her to be very confident in speaking her mind and drawing on a range of tutors for support.

I was also drawn to the idea of a moral judgement since Meg's tutor told her that she would "never be a teacher", seemingly based on her spelling mistake and her resistance to him reprimanding her for it. Meg instead described this in terms of professionalism, in this case her tutor's professionalism "dropping" and him "shattering" their working relationship. Professionalism was also evident in Meg's expectations for the tutor, particularly when she felt that another tutor was "doing his job for him" by giving her targets and more "transferable" suggestions.

In terms of making a good impression, Meg described wanting to show that she could take risks and use creative approaches, but this was mainly discussed in the context of benefitting her learners. Meg's fairly low rank for performance perception (27.57) seems to support this.

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Later, Meg described very thorough proofreading of her plans which did suggest a need to ‘play the game’ and give a good performance, but she described this more as pre-empting the pettiness of a tutor she had complained about who might make a sudden spot-check of her file.

Meg repeatedly praised tutors who knew her well during her repertory grid exercise, but wrote on her survey that observations should be “random”. This seemed to contradict her preference for tutors to know her well and be approachable, and may have been based more on her anxiety about being observed by a tutor who she had formally complained about. Friendliness was repeatedly emphasised, but so too was professionalism – Meg preferred a friendly personality to a professional personality, but was very critical if she felt that personal opinions got in the way of professional judgement. This seemed rather contradictory as a theme and could be interpreted quite cynically, that tutors had to maintain high professional standards unless they obviously liked her. However, Meg later described tutors who were “supportive” and had empathy, which seemed to offer a better explanation. If a tutor could not deliver on this, then Meg would at least expect professionalism, particularly in terms of objectivity and politeness.

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Feedback with the student’s best interests at heart (97.31)	Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next
	Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual

Table 26 Meg’s themes (numbers in brackets indicate percentile rank for themes taken from survey analysis)

The most useful component for Meg seemed to be feedback with her best interests at heart, which was all the more convincing for her exceptionally high score on this component. I also

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included that tutors should tell her where she is and what to do next and that feedback should be tailored to her as an individual. I considered a theme to do with caring, but her narrative seemed that it was more important to not have an uncaring tutor rather than seeing caring as particularly important. It is challenging to find themes to describe what is essentially odd or deviant tutor behaviour, since themes should try describe something more generalisable. In Meg's case, the key concern with this tutor seemed to be that he did not seem to have her best interests at heart.

8.6 Drawing themes together

The process described above continued for the remaining eight students in the sample to see if any new themes needed to be added or amended. Already there seemed to be some consensus on major themes, and since I could no longer draw on component scores for guidance I was mainly looking for ways to enrich the existing components rather than expecting anything completely new to emerge. After working through the remaining narratives, I compiled the components and themes into a single table, shown below.

Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Feedback with the student's best interests at heart	Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next
	Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual

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Adopted from numerical analysis	Added from narrative analysis
Importance of consistent hard work	Desire to impress tutor
Performance perception	Blunt feedback, but from a caring tutor
Feedback with learning as its main intention	Relational function of feedback (from students' perspective)
	Needed to actively manage workload
	Tutors should care about me and make an effort to understand my experiences
It is important to fit into a school	A range of feedback helps me to reflect on my experiences

Table 27 Compiled components and themes

This gave five components and eight themes. The next stage was looking for any opportunities to simplify these components and themes and look for connections between them in an attempt to describe a model of feedback. First, however, it is interesting to see which components have been lost from the numerical analysis or replaced with narrative themes.

Component 1, learning-focused feedback, has been amended to 'feedback with learning as its main intention' to recognise that there was no strong sense in the narratives of feedback only being able to serve one main purpose. Component 2, students' self-confidence, has been removed. Since the component had no correlation with any others, it seemed to be largely irrelevant. Students also seemed to discuss it only in terms of their emotional response, rather than their confidence having an impact on how they engaged with feedback.

Component 3, consistent hard work was important, seemed to be very useful, so the phrasing

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was just slightly changed to 'importance of consistent hard work' to remove the sense of this being a requirement imposed on the student: this was very much their decision and related to their values as teachers. Similarly, component 4, a need to fit into a school culture, was retained but rephrased to 'it is important to fit into a school' to remove the strategic or domineering sense of 'need'.

Component 5, an experience dominated by the tutor, was a very useful component for explaining negative sentiments and poor engagement with feedback. However, this seemed more to do with unclear or poor intentions, so was covered by 'feedback with learning as its main intention' or 'feedback with the student's best interests at heart'. The narrative themes also covered this by setting clear expectations for what a good tutor would do, such as tailoring feedback to the student as an individual or showing that they care about the student in general. Desirable actions which could be dominating if taken too far included telling students what to do next and students' desire to impress their tutors, which seemed to better express the need for tutors to be engaged but not in control.

Component 6, a need to perform in assessments, was amended since summative assessment was surprisingly rarely mentioned. Instead, the ongoing formative assessment seemed to be high stakes in terms of making good impressions, establishing a student's trustworthiness to teach independently or showing professional values such as hard work. Very few mentions were made of grades, so I amended the component to simply 'performance perception' to include those times when a tutor needed to be impressed even though there would be no direct link to a student's grade.

Component 7, feedback focused on the students' overall best interests, was clearly important, but needed to include more of a sense of caring. I had originally thought of this component

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as relating to a student's need to develop practical teaching skills as well as more general knowledge or confidence, but the narrative drew this idea more towards a student's holistic development so 'at heart' seemed a better expression of this than 'focused', since it was more about the sentiment than a deliberate intention.

Component 8, strategic use of feedback, was cut as it seemed partly covered by 'performance perception', while the rest of the sentiment from this component was better expressed by the theme 'needed to actively manage my workload'. This related back to professional values and the relative unimportance of assessment: being strategic was about managing the overwhelming workload of a dedicated teacher rather than maximising an advantage.

Finally, component 9, feedback as measured in satisfaction surveys, was cut. This did not emerge from the principal component analysis, nor did it seem a useful expression of narrative. As I argued during numerical analysis, this measure is an excellent proxy for more meaningful themes, which makes sense as it is so frequently used in student surveys. However, the narratives seemed to consider satisfaction in terms of how different needs were met by feedback. Differences between tutors were also so significant that there was really no sense of overall satisfaction since this was so bound up in the individual tutor, and other tutors would often try to compensate for any shortcomings anyway.

To recap, new themes added from the narrative were:

- Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next
- Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual
- Desire to impress tutor
- Blunt feedback, but from a caring tutor

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- Relational function of feedback (from students' perspective)
- Needed to actively manage workload
- Tutors should care about me and make an effort to understand my experiences
- A range of feedback helps me to reflect on my experiences

As already mentioned, some of these combined to replace components from the numerical analysis. For example, tutor dominated feedback (component 5) is better expressed in these themes which explain student's expectations of a tutor's role in feedback. Some seemed to share similar sentiments, such as the 'best interests at heart' adapted component and the 'feedback should be tailored to me as an individual' theme. Similarly, the importance of consistent hard work seems influential in needing to actively manage workload.

As I attempted to draw these together into a smaller number of themes which could be used for re-coding the narratives, I reflected on questions raised from the narratives. There seemed to be a strong sense of expectation and structure, particularly in how feedback should be balanced or how formality is affected by the type of form which needed to be completed. Feedback also seemed strongly associated with tips and improvement, but at the same time students asserted their own personal style (often as "child-centred" compared to "traditional" styles of their tutors). There was a strong emphasis on support and encouragement, including caring and personalities. This interacted with the manner of feedback, so that blunt or honest feedback was generally sought when students knew it came from a caring tutor. Similarly, overly positive feedback might lead to students questioning the motives of a tutor – either that they want a good evaluation themselves or do not want to spend much time engaging with feedback.

Assessment seemed not to be a concern unless something was going very wrong. Usually this

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was attributed to a tutor behaving oddly or lazily ‘feeding the machine’. Strategies such as ‘two stars and a wish’ or ‘what went well and even better if’ seemed to be mostly appreciated, although not when this obviously restricted the honesty of feedback (for example by giving unimportant positives or negatives). Nevertheless, assessment at least protected time for feedback and ensured that tutors took the time to give detailed written feedback.

Students’ descriptions of their role in feedback seemed mostly passive. Even when dialogue was initiated by a tutor, it was very limited. Students were also divided on the need to perform – some see receiving feedback as part of the performance to show their engagement, others see themselves as an arbiter but have to maintain politeness. One significant difference was when discussing reflection. This was widely described as very important, even though few students seemed to relate this to feedback. Reflection would use feedback as its starting point, and might even prompt some discussion which could be called feedback. However, students saw this as reflection and advice – not feedback. Survey questions may fail to pick up on this, emphasising the importance of asking more general questions about learning or even targeted questions about reflection. Finally, students seemed to see themselves as using feedback as well as it could be used. When feedback was difficult to understand, they generally did not see trying to understand it as their responsibility. This might relate to the variety of feedback available to them, that there was usually another opportunity for feedback soon anyway.

Summarising my overall impressions of the narratives was useful for trying to group similar ideas together, so that I had five themes for re-coding. These were:

- Assumed intention of feedback
- Managing relationships

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- Manner of feedback
- Students' role
- Assessment

Each theme covers different aspects of five components, except for student role, which draws on nine components as shown in the table below.

Original component or theme	Simplified theme				
	Intentions of feedback	Managing relationships within feedback	Assessment	Manner of feedback	Student role
Feedback with the student's best interests at heart	✓				
Importance of consistent hard work			✓		✓
Performance perception	✓		✓		✓
It is important to fit into a school		✓			✓
Feedback with learning as its main intention	✓				
Tutors should make sure feedback tells me where I am and what to do next	✓		✓	✓	✓
Feedback should be tailored to me as an individual				✓	✓
Desire to impress tutor		✓	✓		✓
A range of feedback helps me to reflect on my experiences				✓	✓
Blunt feedback, but from a caring tutor		✓		✓	
Relational function of feedback (from students' perspective)		✓			
Needed to actively manage workload					✓
Tutors should care about me and make an effort to understand my experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 28 Mapping components and narrow themes against broader themes

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The theme of student role including the majority of components seems reasonable given that only students were interviewed, so their understanding of their own role in feedback would be expected to touch on most areas of their experience of feedback. The component 'tutors should care about me and make an effort to understand my experiences' similarly influences all five themes since the description of a caring tutor seemed to touch on every part of the way feedback was experienced. Each of the five simplified themes was coded separately, meaning that I went through all the transcripts a further five times. In total, this involved creating codes which covered 85,285 words over a total of 674 coded quotations. A breakdown of how each code was used is given in the sub-sections of the next chapter. The most frequently used theme was manner of feedback (243), followed by assumed intention of feedback (201), students' role (85), managing relationships (75) and assessment (70). This made the data more manageable, so I could go through the coded quotations in a single file and assign sub-codes. I decided that four students would have to mention a sub-code for it to make it into the final analysis, and was generally guided by the frequency of each code to decide its importance.

9 Applying the new model to students' narratives

The previous chapter described the five themes which I constructed from a combination of the components from my numerical analysis and line-by-line coding of some narratives. Each student's narrative was then taken in turn to see how well their overall sense was captured by existing components and new themes, which were eventually refined and re-organised through a process of focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) into five theme headings. These were:

- Assumed intentions of feedback
- Managing relationships within feedback
- Assessment
- Manner of feedback
- Student role

In this chapter, each theme is now taken in turn and used to re-code the narrative data for all students. This provides a simple numerical estimate of the frequency of the theme, for example how much it is mentioned and if it is mentioned equally by all students. Re-coding also helps to explain the meaning of each theme, giving key examples of narrative in context. The main aim of this chapter is to draw out the meaning behind the five themes so that links can be explored, contributing to the building of a coherent model of placement feedback.

9.1 Assumed intentions of feedback

Askew and Lodge (2000) argue that intent is the most important element in defining different types of feedback, so this is a good place to start. Since all the data is from students' perspectives, their descriptions and assumptions of the intention of feedback relied on their inferences based on how their different tutors behaved. Students described a range of

purposes explicitly, such as feedback helping with their assessment or giving them specific strategies for behaviour management. Their use of feedback also suggested what purpose they saw feedback as serving, which in turn had an effect on how students saw their own role and that of their tutors.

The theme was used 201 times for coding across 14,126 words, with the fewest uses on the transcripts from Rachel and Dawn (seven each) and the most on Mary's (34). The mean use was 15.5 with a standard deviation of 7.3. This was later divided into seven sub-categories as follows: general learning (60), getting different perspectives (59), affective (55), simple correction (40), no clear purpose (38), help with assessment (23) and finding all the faults (23).

The largest sub-category, general learning, was mentioned by every student. In some cases, this was inferred from a tutor drawing on general impressions rather than, for example, using set observation criteria (of which many versions are available). Most students described tutors getting a general feel for the class, so feedback would tend to share these overall impressions and give the student some reassurance such as in this example from Rachel: "just general, getting a sense of what you've done, engaging and an idea of what you've tried to portray". The opposite to this was frustration, anger or upset when students felt that tutors had too narrow a focus or were picking on faults too much rather than giving encouragement:

She just observed mostly behaviour as that's what people seem to focus on in an observation, it seems to stem from behaviour and that's where their comments come from, so they seem to say the work wasn't erm relevant or the work wasn't exciting enough, or your behaviour management was bad or your timing was off so instead of getting information from each of the different parts... (Rachel)

Concentrating on one thing that as a general progression as my personal development didn't really matter... (Lisa)

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Her favourite phrase was 'in a real classroom'...she just didn't mention anything [constructive], she was going "yes [harshly] but in a real classroom you wouldn't be able to do that". And I was thinking that's great, but here I can, so I've done it. (Mary)

Another example included a tutor who did use assessment criteria to supplement his "generally getting a feel", which Tracy found helpful because it let her "pick up the key areas for myself". Similarly, Tom described feedback as a "learning curve" which gave him areas to work on and Mary described feedback giving "a general impression of where you're heading". This was different from simple correction, however, since it had "deeper meaning" (Rose) behind it. Overall, there seemed to be strong support for feedback being used for general learning by incremental improvements and regular holistic feedback. Students relied on a tutor's general impression to shape their development, with a long-term focus on improvement rather than just remedial support. It was significant, for example, that no students referred to their weaknesses, so they seemed to conceive of every part of their teaching as open to improvement. This is nicely exemplified by Liz, who was frustrated when she was told that she no longer needed support because she had been given exceptional grades:

It just felt silly because I was like, I know there is a way I can improve. It's not like I'm at a masters level, you need to tell me how to improve. It was more frustrating than anything else because I wanted to know how I could get better so I could get better grades...I was like a first but I want to get more, I want to be sky high.

Liz's desire to achieve above the top grade standard seemed less a desire for grades (since she already had the best she could get) and more about continuous improvement.

It is curious to note Liz's sense of reliance on her tutor, which is discussed more when looking at how students described their roles. A similar sentiment was expressed in the smallest sub-category, finding all the faults. This was mentioned by ten of the 13 students. Whereas

examples in the general learning sub-category suggested a desire for holistic improvement, this sub-category was more about addressing weaknesses and getting a high level of detail in feedback. For example, Rose described how “she could’ve said more and I’d have liked a bigger observation as I am one of those people who like to get it right, so I need to know everything that happened”. Liz similarly described acting on every bit of feedback, including “something as little as changing the font on the plans, stuff like that, and we had done everything she had suggested”. This seems to contradict those students who were frustrated by tutors who focused on minutiae, as Meg put it, “if it doesn’t matter, why mention it?”.

A similar divide was apparent between a desire for simple correction and feedback which was about getting different perspectives and then students reflecting on how to improve. Again, it is the general feedback which seems to be preferred, although every student gave examples of both. Mary offered a useful way of seeing this apparent contradiction, explaining it through different types of knowledge:

If it’s something where they’ve got the answer and it’s just something I completely missed, “here do this” is very helpful. If it’s, like, you know, something like behaviour management, you know that worked alright, but there might be another way round it. You know, try figure that out, and that’s something you look for yourself because you can’t be told how to do a behaviour management strategy because if it doesn’t work for you then it’s not going to work for the kids. You’ve got to figure that one out for yourself.

Sometimes wanting to be told what to do came from frustration at lack of tutor contact, such as Anna who struggled to see a part-time mentor, so “I’d come in on the Monday and she’d be like “ooh no, that’s not right” and you’d be like “well what do I do then?” so she didn’t, there was no-one there to help you and feedback you as you’re going through it before the lesson”. Other examples of simple correction from other students similarly focused on feedback on lesson plans, with simple tips to make the lesson easier to manage such as

adjusting timings or instructions. Often, this would be through annotations on the lesson plan. Simple corrections were also welcome on more routine tasks, particularly the evidence file. In each case, the response to these simple corrections signalled the inferred intention: students did exactly what they were told.

The 'getting different perspectives' sub-category gave different examples of feedback, in which it was more a suggestion for the student to reflect upon. The repertory grid task was useful for finding examples, such as Mary who contrasted feedback "with that school in mind, and their perspective on good practice for that school, specifically" against "feedback more tailored to you". Rose similarly contrasted feedback based on a tutor's level of experience, so while she valued "real" feedback from a very experienced tutor, she saw problems of transferability: "at time same time you worry about the relevance of the recent teaching standards and wonder if she's the best person to be giving a student advice, as I will be going into a different environment then she went in". Anna similarly valued feedback "from a teacher's perspective" over that of her university tutor, and also valued the different perspective offered in peer feedback. Tom described how his response to this type of feedback changed as he grew in confidence:

Certainly on my beginning placement I couldn't really disagree with things because I didn't know really what was right from wrong, but on the developing placement erm I wouldn't say I disagreed with things, I understood erm where my class teacher was coming from, I just don't think I had the same like teaching philosophy as they do, so it was, my lessons were slightly different from how they'd do so they were trying to suggest ideas that would work well in their way of teaching but not necessarily how I see myself teaching. So I wouldn't say I was disagreeing as such, it was just different ideologies.

The intention behind this type of feedback was not therefore seen as trying to change how students taught, but simply to help them reflect on how to improve within their own

preferred style of teaching. Both male students gave simple examples of feedback from male tutors giving them different insight than that from female tutors, again without seeing one as necessarily better than another. Again, the value seemed to come simply from a range of perspectives rather than one being more helpful than another. Tracy even linked this to having a well-rounded evidence file, where it would be good to have "observations from different sorts of people".

The majority of examples of feedback were about drawing on different perspectives with the inferred intention that this would prompt students to reflect, or simple corrections with the inferred intention that students would simply adopt an improved strategy. Three other types of example were also given which, whilst mentioned less, were still given by a majority of students. Every student mentioned feedback with an affective purpose (usually encouragement or reassurance), while 11 students mentioned feedback which was intended to help with assessments and ten gave examples where there was no clear purpose to feedback (usually to complete paperwork).

An affective intention seemed most obvious when a student had received overly negative feedback from another tutor, such as Mary's description of a class teacher giving feedback to show "it went alright and I shouldn't let her get to me that much...to make me feel better". This reassurance and signalling of support was particularly valued by Anna who had a negative first placement and was thinking about leaving her course. However, at the start of her next placement her new mentor "said that she'd had a really bad time at uni so she was going to make all of her students have a good time and help them as much as she could, and she really did".

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As well as offering encouragement, some students felt that their tutors might hold back criticism if they thought the student was too fragile. Sarah described how “they were less likely to criticise you...they may pick up on one or two things really minor as they know how you would take the criticism”. Tracy similarly described very reassuring feedback after she had decided to withdraw from her course but still stayed at the school for the rest of the placement time. This could also be seen to praise her professionalism and hard work in choosing to stay voluntarily, a similar sentiment to Anna who was told to “be proud” of what she had achieved despite nearly failing her placement.

In contrast to general emotional support, a few examples gave clear indication that feedback was intended to help with an upcoming assessment. This was also the case where students had gaps in their evidence file, which again was a major topic of feedback for the male students since there seemed to be a common belief that male students would be less organised with paperwork than female students. This type of highly focused feedback also seemed to come later in the placement as formal targets were set or evidence was needed of achieving earlier targets. Much more use was made of assessment criteria, but only where students had yet to meet that criteria – there was only one example of a tutor using criteria to show where a student had already performed well.

Finally, 38 examples of feedback across ten of the students just seemed to lack any clear intention. Sometimes this was simply routine, such as students giving standard responses to the common “How do you think that went?” opener. Some examples suggested this was almost like small talk asking how someone is, with students expected to say the lesson was generally OK but they noticed a few issues. Other examples, such as from Rose, extended this to the routine elements of paperwork, so a tutor who was pressed for time would give very

standard or repetitive feedback without time for discussion. She explained how the tutor seemed to treat feedback as “a bit of a rigmarole...[it] doesn't give anything to them”. Other examples suggested tutors were almost bored and “couldn't be bothered” in their feedback, such as Anna's tutor “giving me the same sort of like general like ‘this was good, this was good, you had the...you know, your lesson objective was very clear’ and stuff”. Other examples suggested that feedback was decided in advance. Different students described tutors who would always just give feedback on one topic, the three examples being behaviour management, creativity, and information technology. The lack of intention behind such feedback led, without exception, to the same response from the students: “they are just sat in my file now” (Dawn).

Overall, coding for this theme suggested broad consensus that feedback should specifically tell students what to do or how to do it. Alongside this desire for specific tips, discussion of reflection suggested a more long-term approach to using feedback, although this was typically mediated through targets: feedback informed targets, then targets informed reflection. None of the participants described looking back over written feedback, and very few even knew whether they had kept the forms. Even those students who did keep the forms did not refer to them, but simply saw it as part of keeping a well-organised file.

One of the components from the numerical analysis which led to forming this theme was the idea that good feedback had a student's best interests at heart. I therefore hoped that exploring this theme in the narratives would help me to describe what type of feedback led to this feeling, but this seems like it may be more to do with the individual tutor rather than the feedback itself. However, some general conclusions can be drawn. Good feedback is required to give specific advice when there are clear flaws in a student's teaching, but should

balance this against an overall judgement and reassurance. Good feedback must also lead to targets which the student can reflect on, giving them something for the longer term.

Finally, good feedback should make use of the tutor's experiences, but should not be too narrowly focused on their personal preferences. The repertory grid task emphasised a deep respect many students felt for their tutors, particularly those with experience in Special Educational Needs, but there was also frustration if feedback became repetitive or too narrowly focused. This was not only problematic when the narrow focus was trivial, but also when it was on a significant topic such as behaviour or creativity because the student had plenty of previous feedback on these points. A tutor therefore needs to either know the student well or at least know about their previous feedback to avoid repetition. This last point seems to link with the idea that a tutor should know the student well, which I coded under the theme of "managing relationships within feedback".

9.2 Managing relationships within feedback

This theme had significant overlap with the manner of feedback since students typically had a passive role, so it was the tutor who managed relationships with feedback. Passivity has been referred to throughout the analysis and in the ways the literature review found students to be dependent on their tutors. As the relationship management theme developed, however, passivity took on more significance in describing students' roles. In particular, the few meaningful examples of students engaging with feedback were all described as reflection. This meant that their engagement with feedback was private and occurred some time after the meeting with their tutor. One of my earliest field notes mentioned that students seemed to describe using feedback as well as they thought it could be used, that they did not seem to see any problems in what they did with feedback. Reflection therefore drew this idea into the

topic of passivity, suggesting that students were passive in their engagement with their tutor since students thought that their engagement with feedback should come later, through reflection. While 'passive' and 'dependent' are quite pejorative terms, it is worth highlighting the nuanced argument that passivity or dependence might be more to do with how students see feedback informing their practice (i.e. through private reflection) rather than being the result of laziness or lack of confidence. They are passive in feedback because engagement is not expected or required for the type of reflective learning students intend to do.

The theme of managing relationships was used 75 times for coding across 6,481 words, with the fewest uses on the transcripts from Dawn (just once) and the most on Sarah's (12). The mean use was 5.77 with a standard deviation of 3.4. This was later divided into four sub-categories as follows: dialogue (38), reassurance (16), holistic view (15), and eagerness to please (9).

The largest sub-category, dialogue, was mentioned by every student. These included examples where a poor relationship meant that dialogue was not considered an option, such as Mary's tutor who "wasn't the kind of woman you spoke back to" so "I just kinda sat there and went 'yeah, ok'". Mary also related dialogue to honesty with an example of a tutor who was initially "timid" until they knew each other better and Mary could invite negative comments. Other students described very similar senses of being intimidated by a tutor or feeling that it would be rude to 'talk back' to them. Rose expressed this in a more nuanced way, that "you shouldn't be negative about somebody's observation or feedback because it's their opinion, however, I still feel like you should be able to converse about it and not necessary agree all the time and explain a reason".

Dialogue was also limited by a sense of being unwelcome, particularly if tutors seemed too

busy. A clear example was Anna, who felt that "they weren't interested in us". She also described how building a relationship with tutors made them more open to explaining their feedback:

If it was [tutor 1] giving me advice on pupil profiling she'd say, maybe say like "ooo you need to do this, that and the other" where [tutor 2] was just like, because he doesn't know, me he's just like "oh, it's not strong enough". Just very blunt, to the point, but then he didn't help me on that...I'm not bothered if people hurt my feelings as long as I get the truth. But it'd be nice for them to explain why they're saying it as bluntly or as harshly or whatever. 'Cos if you've already said something sharp to someone you might as well carry on with the rest of the tale.

In this example, a relationship with a tutor is required to talk honestly about feedback. Similar examples included students feeling better about negative feedback because they knew the tutor, such as Sarah who explained "I already knew her which made it easier. She criticised me, but it didn't bother me as much as if it was somebody who I had never met before".

Other students described how relationships changed their feedback in other ways. The two male students felt that they received very different feedback from male tutors than from female tutors, including some female tutors who seemed almost "anti-male" (Tom). Sarah felt that being older also gave her a different relationship, which led to different feedback: "when [tutors] are the same age it makes it easier for me because when students and somebody younger they usually make them do all the donkey work, which I've seen with my own eyes. But if you are older and so are they, you seem to be able to have a conversation with them and hold your respect more with them and treat you a bit better".

Relationships could also be built through feedback in a positive way. Lisa described how she initially felt intimidated by a headteacher, but felt more comfortable with him after receiving feedback "in an informal way". Similarly, students described "getting used to" (Tracy)

frequent, informal feedback and relaxing more about assessments. This could even have a longer term impact as several students described how receiving feedback from some tutors made them more approachable. Rachel gave a good example of this as she felt more comfortable going to a tutor for support instead of her own tutor. This was particularly important to Meg, as she felt that her relationship with her assigned tutor was damaged by his poor feedback so she appreciated the informality of two other tutors who supported her in their free time.

The idea of approachability increasing dialogue opportunities related closely to another effect of relationship-building in feedback: reassurance. Eight students mentioned this, mostly in positive terms that their tutors knew when to stop finding faults and just give them some comfort. For example, Mary's tutor "could see by my face that I was sort of a bit confused and a bit shocked and I didn't know what to think, and she was 'it's alright, actually that went OK'". However, some students found this reassurance annoying if it meant that feedback was less truthful. Rose was a rather extreme example as she talked about preferring a tutor who "didn't really care, but I liked that, I'd rather hear the truth". In general, however, sparing reassurance and caring was very welcome – Dawn even praised "maternal" tutors, while a semi-retired tutor was frequently described in maternal terms. This seemed more about caring than familiarity, however – Meg responded quite angrily to banter from a male tutor with the comment "I'm a student, not your daughter".

As well as relationships helping feedback to be more sensitive or even more honest, seven students mentioned how it helped tutors to have a more holistic view of their progress. Four students also mentioned how this increased the respect they felt for a tutor, which seemed to relate to appreciating the tutors' work ethic. For example, Anna appreciated how tutors'

feedback would acknowledge “if I was having a bad day”. The opposite could also be true, where a poor relationship meant that a tutor’s overall impression of a student being poor meant that they could never get any praise. Josh described how a tutor who “everyone hated” would “always shoot you down”. In such extreme cases, students seemed to have different ideas of what was fair – Meg had personal problems with a tutor and later described the importance of “random” observations, but this was against the consensus of students who liked being visited by a familiar tutor.

Finally, four students described their eagerness to please tutors by trying to show agreement with their feedback. Mary described trying to “second guess” a tutor so she could make their points before they did, while Liz had figured out preferences of a tutor who would want to see “creative approaches”. Sarah described this as a kind of loyalty to the school, including lying about the support she received so that her tutor would not “get into trouble” with the university.

In summary, relationships seemed to be important for encouraging honest feedback, but could also mean that tutors know when to soften their feedback, in which case a little editing is mostly appreciated. Students particularly valued tutors getting to know them since feedback was more personalised and the tutor was more approachable and open to dialogue, in some cases months after their official responsibility for the student ends. Unhelpful effects of poor relationships include faking dialogue in an effort to show agreement with a tutor, or feeling too intimidated so that dialogue seems rude.

9.3 Assessment

Despite the strong links between assessment and feedback in the research literature, this was the least used theme with 70 quotations across all students. Every student mentioned assessment, although their emphasis varied from 12 mentions (Rose) to just two mentions (Lisa, Rachel, and Bella) with a mean of 5.38 and a standard deviation of 3.0.

The most frequent comments related to assessment concerned its emotional impact, usually before the assessment and feedback. Most commonly this related to the stress of being observed teaching, such as Mary who described having “stress dreams” as “the usual”, or Anna, Tom, Sarah and Rose who each described feeling “nervous” beforehand. Others felt more confident, particularly when they felt that assessment was more formative. For example, despite Mary feeling very stressed and anxious ahead of some teaching observations, she described a very different situation with a tutor who emphasised the formative element of observation:

It took the pressure off them [assessment] almost because you'd get a constant feel of where they think you are and how they think you're doing and little things you know you can improve to please them. Rather than just “oh god, it's observation day, I've got to be a performing seal”.

Despite this more formative observation, Mary's emotional response is less to do with feeling confident in her own ability and more about the predictability of the assessment: she knows generally what the tutor already thinks about her and has a better idea of how ‘to please them’. She later linked this to the individual observing her, that her class teacher would be

happy to see her normal practice but a university tutor would expect “something big and special”.

Other mentions of emotional responses included frustration or anger, particularly if a student felt that feedback on an assessment was unfair or their previous feedback did not prepare them well enough. Liz described feeling “pressured and scared” after being told that her plan was “all wrong” even after she felt that she had “done everything she [the tutor] had suggested”. It was important to her that she “change it again to what she wanted”, otherwise she would get “a crap grade”. This builds on Mary’s description, where the student feels anxious about giving a tutor what they want. Rather than finding confidence in their own sense of quality, students seem to only feel confident when they know that a particular tutor will assess them, particularly when that tutor has seen them teach regularly in non-assessed situations. In contrast, the university tutor was likened to a panic-inducing OFSTED inspector (Josh) or just the pressure of a “new person” (Dawn).

Other students did not express this desire to please, such as Meg who felt “angry” with a tutor’s assessment feedback which focused on just one minor part of her planning rather than the whole lesson, that “he had the cheek” to give such poor feedback. Lisa similarly expressed anger at “unjust” assessment feedback which “was not a fair representation” of her teaching. Rose also resented the one-off nature of assessment and the risk of a tutor focusing on minor points, but her emotional response was more guilt than anger:

ROSE: Sometimes I find myself in the classroom making a bad decision as a teacher but good decisions as someone who wants a good mark. That’s really bad, isn’t it? What do you think?

MC: Can you give me an example?

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ROSE: when you know that a child would benefit from five minutes of peace and quiet but you know that would be picked up on in the behaviour part of your observation, you tend to carry on the normal behaviour strategies even though you know that may set the child up for a bad day. But for my observation, I know couldn't risk it, so that's horrific, but I think what really challenges my teaching when the pressure is to come back with a really high mark, that's it...if I hadn't have done them I would've been marked down in my observation.

Assessment was discussed more positively when students felt more comfortable with a tutor.

This seemed to reduce the perceived need to 'perform' and encourage students to think more about their learners. Tom was a good example of this, explaining that it was "nice" to get a good grade, "but I think the motivation really is to have the impact on the children, rather than what your grades say...I want to develop myself, but it's the children's development that's more important". Meg had a more balanced approach, first joking that she included creative activities "to get a better mark", but then laughing before saying "no, to benefit the children". Sarah linked this to her own emotional state: "I didn't really notice [the tutor] as my nerves went and I focused on the children".

Finally, some students described feedback being different when it related to an assessment. In Liz's case this was negative, because once she met the assessment criteria for a top grade her tutor said "you'll be fine with no further support", which Liz found frustrating since "I know there is a way I can improve". Assessment feedback also differed as it was always written rather than verbal, which led to an extreme difference in feedback Meg received from one tutor. After telling her "you'll never be a teacher" and reducing her to tears, her tutor's written feedback on the same assessment was entirely positive. Meg commented that this contrast was quite common for this tutor: "he almost always criticises what I do but then on paper he gives me a grade 1 [top grade], so it doesn't match up with what he is saying verbally".

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Other students also picked up on differences between verbal and written feedback with less dramatic examples, typically commenting that feedback was more formal, would make more explicit reference to assessment criteria (rather than being a general impression), longer, more detailed, and would be much more positive. Rose explained this as relating to quality control or even student satisfaction surveys, noting that "I think you sometimes get fake positive feedback from someone if they need to get feedback themselves". Complaints that feedback was too focused on narrow aspects of teaching or a tutor's own ethos did not occur when discussing feedback on assessed observations, further indicating that many idiosyncratic feedback practices do not occur when feedback is on a formal assessment. In many cases this was positive, and having a grade was particularly welcomed for its honesty. However, some students also noted that such formal feedback failed to make use of the tutor's in-depth knowledge of the student's overall journey or the tutor's own area of expertise. In these cases, feedback risked being too generic.

Other students simply focused on the effort tutors put into feedback on assessed tasks. For example, Rose felt that being formally assessed meant that she would be guaranteed enough time for feedback rather than the usual "when she had five minutes...it was a rushed thing...she wasn't a bad teacher or horrendous at giving feedback, but it's a constraint... I feel that she thought that I better do a good write up as someone else would read it". The reason for feedback being different for formally assessed observations could also relate to the students thinking about these differently. For example, Rose described this as the only time she "would jump in" and engage in dialogue, but this was restricted to the specific situation: "I wouldn't jump in if I didn't think it was unfair".

To summarise, assessment was discussed in relation to feedback in four key ways:

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First, the assessment itself can create anxiety or stress. This is more likely with an unfamiliar tutor. It is less likely when students focus on their pupils' needs rather than seeing themselves as performing, or if the student receives regular feedback. However, some students do not share a formative understanding of regular assessment. This risks low-stakes assessments being seen as high-stakes, where one poor performance can result in a student being seen in a particular way for the rest of their placement.

Second, students are more likely to engage with unfair feedback related to an assessment than they are to unfair informal feedback. They expect feedback to take into account their overall progress, not just the particular assessment, which might explain the perception of being treated unfairly.

Third, assessment can help make time for feedback, particularly written feedback, but this can be at the cost of feedback being more generic or overly-positive. Despite this, having a grade alongside feedback makes the feedback feel more honest.

Finally, possibly due to assessment feedback opportunities being rare, some students are wary of feedback which might focus on narrow topics – especially behaviour management or record-keeping. Some students described playing safe to avoid these repetitive comments, while others directly challenge what they see as too narrow feedback.

9.4 Manner of feedback

This was the largest theme, used 243 times for a total of 20,293 words. However, 44 of the 243 quotations also overlapped with 'managing relationships within feedback'. The fewest uses were on transcripts of Dawn and Lisa (ten each) and the most were Mary and Liz (27 each). The mean use was 18.7 with a standard deviation of 5.6. Due to the size and range of

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the theme, there were eleven sub-categories: negative (63), routine (55), gentle (54), formative (48), personalised vs. generic (36), positive (35), too brief (34), too assertive (25), detailed (24), easy to understand (14) and honest (13).

Some of these categories showed different ways students described similar examples, with a key problem being their use of 'constructive' to describe feedback. Mostly this simply meant negative comments, but others used it to mean developmental or formative feedback. Others clearly relate to each other, such as 'too brief' being almost an opposite of 'detailed'. Similarly, honesty seemed like a major theme in the narrative analysis but the second cycle coding suggested that many comments related to honesty fit better into 'negative' or 'routine' sub-categories. 'Honest' therefore became a much smaller sub-category with only some very clear and strong examples using this code (e.g. Liz's tutor is described as dishonest because her feedback is negative in private but positive when another tutor is present). What seemed like a very strong theme from my overall impression of the narratives found a different expression in these themes: it was not so much that honesty was important, but that dishonesty was highly detrimental.

Negative descriptions of honesty tended to focus on the 'bluntness' of feedback, that the tutor took no account of a student's emotions. However, it is important to note that some students strongly valued blunt feedback since it took away their need to decode or interpret feedback. Mary and Rose both used "blunt" positively, relating it to truthfulness, although Rose did wonder if there could have been a "nicer" way to be blunt. In positive terms, feedback was simply more meaningful when it came from tutors who were seen as honest. Dawn describes a moment of low confidence where feedback is reassuring because "someone

who is then is so honest said, like, what I did was good. It is like you think that you can do it, so maybe it is the recognition from who it has come from rather than what they said”.

These ideas related closely to the largest sub-category, negative feedback, since negative included “not being afraid” to tell students the truth (Dawn and Mary) as well as the more conventional meaning of telling students what was wrong. This was the sense in which most students used the word negative, including examples of negative language use as well as negative content. In terms of negative language, some phrases caused significant upset for the students, several of whom described remembering these phrases in moments of doubt even years later. Mary’s tutor responded to her “I think it went OK” with “well I don’t think that at all”, Anna’s repeatedly told her that “it’s not strong enough”, Liz’s tutor told her that her plans were “stupid” and then “scribbled all over them” with red pen, while Meg’s reduced her to tears when he told her “you’ll never be a teacher”. Remembering from the statistical analysis that there was a positive bias to the interview sample, the long-term impact of so many negative comments in nearly a third of the sample is a major concern.

As well as negative language, feedback was described as negative based on its content. In many cases this was appreciated for, as Tracy put it, a sense of “getting the balance right”. As well as giving information on what to improve, the experience of receiving negative information was also welcomed as a professional value by students who saw it as part of the way teachers develop after qualifying. For example, Liz described it as keeping teachers fresh as it “sharpens you professionally”. However, negative comments could also have a cumulative effect. For example, Rachel asked herself “Am I doing anything right?” after

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receiving “so many negatives”, while Sarah felt that the same negative comments “always pick up on that aspect of your personality, and you take it personally”.

It was interesting within descriptions of negative feedback how the word ‘constructive’ was used. In some cases this was simply a euphemism for negative, but several students had more nuanced use of the word. Dawn saw negative and constructive as different ideas, as shown in describing her preferences:

DAWN: Rather than having negatives, having constructive. So instead of having ‘you did this wrong’, saying ‘next time if you did that, then that would improve this positive to be even better’ if that makes sense. So having something constructive instead of something that is negative.

MC: So why is negative bad?

DAWN: Erm, because what are you getting from just telling you that was wrong? Because if I thought it was wrong, would I have done it? So I would rather the person said to me ‘that didn’t quite go right, you could do it this way’ or ‘have you thought about doing this because that would make this better?’ rather than just saying ‘you did that wrong’. Well if I thought it was wrong would I have done it?

A similar sentiment was expressed by Rose, who felt that “you should get positive feedback when you’ve completed a piece of work, or at least constructive”. Others, such as Tom and Liz, had a clear sense of constructive feedback being negative comments with something to help them understand how to improve, so Liz described some constructive feedback as “great” while Tracy described “good constructive feedback” on how to improve some resources.

Overall, negative feedback seemed to be appreciated provided it was constructive and given in the spirit of improvement. Negative language was very unwelcome, but so too was holding back negative comments since this was dishonest. There was a strong sense that negative

feedback had to give something to the student – it should always come with a suggestion or a way to understand why it had been given.

The second sub-category, routine feedback, had a very similar sentiment. Following set patterns such as university paperwork or two stars and a wish were appreciated when they helped focus feedback, but were not appreciated when it made feedback too generic. Often formulaic feedback became a kind of politeness, with all but one description of the start of feedback meetings being described in the same way: the tutor asks the student how they felt the lesson went, the student says something brief and humble but not too self-critical. The tutor then says what they thought, which is unlikely to take account of what the student thought for two main reasons: the student gave such a bland response, and the tutor had already written down their feedback anyway.

The influence of written feedback on dialogue was similarly described. It was a positive influence since it protected time for feedback, but it became more a justification of a tutor's written comments rather than an actual discussion. There were notable exceptions, such as Rose's tutor who "would have a kind of conversation with herself while talking to me", inviting Rose to comment while she was completing the form. Forms and structures also affected the balance of positive and negative comments. In structures such as 'Two Stars and a Wish' this was clear since it gave twice as many positives as negatives (though Tom's tutor "flipped it round"). The standard university form also generally resulted in general, holistic positive comments followed by more specific negative comments. Even so, feedback on teaching was generally compared favourably with feedback on university assignments which seemed much more generic. For example, Tracy described receiving "this was a pleasing read" on several

essays, while Lisa gave an extreme example of a tutor who “just changed the name and sent it to everyone”.

The discussion of feedback being constrained by forms also related to a smaller sub-category, though still mentioned by 12 students, contrasting personalised against generic feedback. Here there was an obvious preference for tutors who got to know students well since their feedback would take greater account of their overall progress and a students' personal style of teaching. For example, Liz appreciated tutors who “know what journey you want to go on, they know where you want to be in the end, so they can help you get there”. Similarly, Rachel described feedback which was “more personalised because I sort of spent more time with them”, which Bella described as making feedback “easier to listen to”. This was particularly valued by Josh as he was visited by a tutor who remembered him from a previous year, so she could help reassure him about the progress he had made.

Personalised feedback was also likely to vary linguistically, either being gentler if a tutor felt their student needed some reassurance or being blunter if the tutor felt the student was resilient enough. Almost every student gave an example of a tutor who had held back negative or constructive comments and instead given some encouragement or gentle reassurance. Often this would be to rebalance a negative classroom experience, negative comments from another tutor, or occasionally a student's own negative self-evaluation. For example, Liz described how a gentler approach helped her to recover from a previous placement, as the new tutors “built up my confidence again...I don't know if it was kind of to prove like the other one was wrong”. Lisa similarly received much gentler feedback after withdrawing from the teaching component of her course, including from tutors who she previously found “intimidating”. Gentler feedback, particularly in Lisa's case, was also more likely to be general

or about the student's overall approach or personality (particularly how well they interacted with pupils), whereas harsher feedback was much more specific.

Other sub-categories seemed to fit within the broad themes already discussed. Comments related to positive and formative feedback related closely to the comments already discussed relating to negative feedback, while examples of feedback being too brief or too assertive were really just more detailed descriptions of relationships with tutors. However, some points are still worth drawing out in more detail. While an artificial balance of positive and negative comments seemed disingenuous, it was still very important for some students that they receive at least some positives. For example, Mary described it as "heartbreaking" to not receive any positive comments, while Rachel was left wondering "What was I doing right?".

As might be expected, brief and detailed feedback were almost opposites, with the notable exception of Mary who praised feedback which was "detailed but concise". This nicely summarised the overall impression that students appreciated detailed feedback but only where the extra detail was constructive. Detail could go "over the top" (Tom) and have little impact. Opinion was fairly evenly split on format, with equal preferences for bullet points or continuous prose in written feedback. This also related to the 'easy to understand' sub-category, with too brief feedback or too detailed feedback needing to be deciphered or interpreted.

Finally, a sense of dialogue came through comments in the 'too assertive' and 'formative' sub-categories. Where tutors were too assertive, dialogue was either implicitly prevented or a student's comments attacked. This might also be achieved by a lack of interest on the tutor's part, such as one of Lisa's who she described as just "making statements" rather than going

into any depth. However, a few students did give examples of dialogue. Crucially, all of these examples of dialogue came from tutors who the students knew well and who gave informal feedback opportunities. Only Rachel described a proactive approach in which she would “ask questions”, although a few students also discussed lessons they were planning. Otherwise, dialogue was limited to informal discussions with familiar tutors, and even then was fairly rare. Students also rarely mentioned dialogue by name, including a few who did not know the word when prompted, which is surprising given the expectation that they will engage in dialogic feedback with their pupils.

Overall, the theme of the manner of feedback emphasised six points:

- A need for honest, constructive comments, balanced against awareness of the emotional impact of feedback.
- A need to consider the profound impact language choices can have on students, whilst still allowing for feedback to be informal and relaxed.
- A recognition that feedback might just be to satisfy paperwork requirements, though this is less restrictive than similar situations at university.
- A strong preference for feedback being personalised, particularly to reassure students that they are making progress. The most crucial element of this is understanding the students' longer-term goals and teaching preferences.
- Detail is needed, but can also be overwhelming.
- Tutors almost always need to take the lead in dialogue, but too often can restrict it either by being too assertive or giving the impression that they are too busy.

9.5 Students' roles

In addition to inferring the purpose of feedback based on their tutors' actions, students also described their own roles in feedback in a range of ways. Each student made some mention of their role, with the code used 85 times across 8,536 words. Mentions ranged from 13

(Mary) to one (Anna), with a mean of 6.54 and a standard deviation of 3.39. There were four sub-categories: learner role (45), passive role (22), managing assessment (21), and teacher role (18).

The most frequent comments related to students seeing themselves in a learner role. In some cases this was very passive, such as Anna who described being “left with” feedback and not knowing what to do other than “Googling it” months later to try find advice online. More commonly, however, students described engaging with feedback as a way of getting to know “where I’m going” (Mary).

Mary had some insight on different types of feedback requiring different responses, reasoning that:

If it's something where they've got the answer and it's just something I completely missed, “here do this” is very helpful. If it's, like, you know, something like behaviour management. You know that worked alright, but there might be another way round it. You know, try figure that out, and that's something you look for yourself because you can't be told how to do a behaviour management strategy.

Others saw themselves as needing to gather lots of feedback so that they could improve by reflecting on their experiences. In some cases this was a token effort for their file, but mostly this was seen as a very important learning tool and professional value. Rose and Sarah both described writing evaluations for every lesson and using these alongside their feedback for reflection, Rose reasoning that “I am one of those people who like to get it right so I need to know everything that happened”. Tracy and Tom similarly saw themselves as improving through reflection, which Tom described as knowing “what level I’m working at and where I need to improve...I just view the feedback we’re getting as a learning curve for myself, so you know what you need to work on to progress further”. Tom gave examples of feedback helping

him to understand why some activities worked with one group but not another, as well as drawing on a range of ideas to integrate into his overall approach to teaching, whereas Tracy's reflections seemed more broadly focused on her own developing identity as a teacher. Others were less detailed in their description of reflection, with Josh's description being typical: "no matter where you are in your teaching career, you are constantly looking to improve and if you don't get that constructive criticism you won't know where to go next".

Taking feedback "on board" was frequently mentioned, but the meaning differed significantly. Liz referred to incorporating feedback into her approach and "being brave enough to clarify", being careful not to "do the complete opposite of what they say" whilst still retaining her own values. Tracy similarly described needing to first listen and be respectful, waiting for the tutor to finish before raising any of her own points. Rachel was more passive, simply describing a need to "take on board all the feedback and try and put it into practice".

Liz's description of being careful not to annoy tutors by ignoring feedback touched upon the tension between her role as a learner and her role as a teacher. Both Lisa and Sarah seemed to see themselves much more as learners, which gave them confidence to reject feedback which they did not feel was helpful. Sarah described being in a "failing school" so relying more on her university tutors for feedback and ideas, while Lisa tried (unsuccessfully) to set the topic for her feedback:

I said I appreciate the comment but I don't think it's something that needs looking at over time and I think it's just something that happened in this one lesson and we can move on from it and maybe observe it again but it doesn't need to be a priority...it ended up he wrote it down as something we needed to consider.

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Bella had a similar experience, but successfully set the agenda by asking for feedback on a particular point (perhaps a more useful strategy than rejecting feedback on an unwelcome point). Both Dawn and Meg seemed to draw on their learner status to gain confidence to engage in dialogue about their feedback, often being quite challenging. More generally, however, students tried to avoid confrontation either because they saw their learner role as low-power or passive or saw themselves as teachers who needed to “fit in”.

Passive roles were described by 11 of the students. This included simply putting written feedback into their file, but was also evident during oral feedback. Mary repeatedly described how she “just sat there”, matching Liz’s expectations:

MC: And what was your role in that conversation?

LIZ: Just listening really, kind of like, erm, taking on board.

Rose attributed passivity more to her being too timid: “we could’ve talked about it and got more out of, but we couldn’t because...I couldn’t”. Tom similarly started timid, stating “Certainly on my beginning placement I couldn’t really disagree with things because I didn’t know really what was right from wrong”, but later developed a more active and dialogic role as his confidence grew. Others felt that they were forced into a passive role by their tutor, such as Dawn who felt that she “would feel judged if I would’ve said something wrong”. This suggested another common experience, particularly when prompted with a question of how they felt the lesson went, for students to try to guess what the tutor was about to say in order to show agreement.

Other descriptions of passive student roles seemed to link the value of ‘taking on board’ feedback with the need to be well-prepared. This was particularly important for both male students, who described being “picked on” about their paperwork and files. Tracy described

needing “general listening skills” and politeness, showing that she had listened carefully before responding and engaging in dialogue. Similarly, she made sure to show in her lesson plans that she had “taken on board what he said”. Five students also related this to their role as a teacher, that being passive was part of fitting into the school. Tracy explained how she felt conflicted as she lied to her university tutor about the support she was getting in school: “you’ve got this loyalty to the school as they are going to write your report, then you have this sense of I need to tell, I need to be honest”. She later linked this to a more general professional identity, that “teachers stick together no matter what”. Other students described how they put their pupils’ needs before their own. In two cases this was resented, such as when Josh was covering for an absent teacher rather than the school paying for a supply teacher, but generally students appreciated the trust and responsibility. Mary even described feeling reassured by feedback from her pupils showing that they had learnt something from her lesson, which helped her to feel better about negative feedback from her tutor on the same lesson.

To summarise, students’ description of their role in relation to feedback suggested a tension between seeing themselves as learners and seeing themselves as teachers. This impacted particularly on relationships with school tutors and whether they were seen as peers or superiors. The role of university tutors seemed much clearer as an assessment role, although the school tutor was occasionally regarded as superior to the university tutor depending upon how the student rated their relative competency. All this affected feedback since it determined the extent to which students needed to be respectful of their tutor (i.e. adopt a passive role), which could include strategic behaviours such as trying to second-guess their comments, demonstrate the use of feedback, or just showing polite agreement.

The conflicting student/teacher role occasionally represented an opportunity cost in assessment, so that students might have to sacrifice assessment performance to ensure good outcomes for their pupils, or vice versa. Generally, however, the conflict in this role seemed to help students to see their performance more holistically and use feedback to both improve their teaching and prompt further reflection. Students rarely described engaging with feedback beyond passively 'taking on board' advice, but frequently described reflection which used feedback as a starting point – possibly an explanation for the frequent description of passive uses of feedback, since 'reflection' was not thought of as part of the feedback cycle.

Finally, students seeing themselves more as learners seemed to see feedback more as advice and would view it more critically, including drawing on a wider range of sources. A frequent complaint was that feedback did not match the student's own "ethos", indicating that these students saw their learning needs not being fully met by feedback which would only help them in their current placement – for students who saw themselves as teachers fitting into a new school, this was exactly the kind of feedback they valued.

9.6 Summary

The five broad themes in this chapter have helped to look at the narrative data in a different way, in particular helping to reconceptualise how students described honesty or positive feedback. It has also drawn attention to how students understand their own role in feedback. Taken with what they see as the intentions of feedback, this has helped to explain why so few students mention dialogue since they perceive a need to show respect for a tutor by 'taking on board' feedback. A second coding of the data has also helped to explain this shortcoming in a more positive way, that while few students seem to engage with feedback in terms of dialogue there is a strong level of engagement with reflection, which could be considered a

type of self-feedback. Students might therefore adopt a passive role in the generation of feedback, but are still active in using feedback to improve both their performance and overall learning.

In general, students describe intentions of feedback as either giving them specific ways to improve on particular tasks in the short term or giving them general opinions to reflect upon for the longer term. Other functions were less important but still had to be done, especially those related to assessment or keeping a well-organised evidence file. No student ever seemed to look back on their feedback or use their files for any learning purpose, calling the usefulness of these files into question. Within the context of reflection, however, some of the tasks in the file provided vital starting points in helping students to take longer-term approaches.

Feedback was also more prized when it took account of a student's own style or their own goals for the long-term, which is very different from the short-term targets they formally record. While some tutors might be resented for "banging on about" their own interests, particularly if these were seen by students as petty concerns, there was a deep respect for tutors with specialist experience. This did not necessarily mean that teachers were much older or had taught for a long time, since their knowledge could lack transferability. Experience in Special Educational Needs, however, was valued by every student, and completely transformed the career of one student in the sample. The value of retaining tutors able to engage students in discussing and reflecting on their experiences of Special Educational Needs cannot be overstated.

Feedback has also been described as having a strong relational aspect, especially in terms of

reassurance. Students' strong work ethic has been a recurrent topic, but this can make them surprisingly fragile. Students want to know how to improve and do not want to feel as if they are being protected or pandered towards, but still appreciate tutors who know when to ease off with criticism or just give some verbal comfort. Ultimately, this relationship work still serves an important learning function as it makes negative feedback given later much easier to listen to, reinforcing the positive spirit in which it is intended.

When outlining my own interest in feedback, I noted that I would have to be careful not to be distracted by interesting stories of very poor feedback experiences. I was partly reassured by the slightly positive bias found in my sample. However, even if I was guilty of deliberately looking for negative examples, they were not difficult to find. Poor feedback is not just ineffective, it can be highly damaging both in terms of a student's learning and in their emotional state. Several students in the sample considered leaving the course, and one did. Similarly, many students had to be comforted and reassured by other tutors, friends and family, and even a professional counsellor.

More positively, some tutors clearly take an interest in their students' longer term development and engage with them long after their official relationship ends, supporting and giving feedback in their free time. The respect for these tutors filtered down through other years, with considerable value placed on their caring nature and strong work ethic. The statistical analysis showed no significant change in how different year groups saw feedback, which was initially taken as an indication of a lack of development in their views. This is still the most likely explanation, but it might also be that students talk to each other more than might be expected, and expectations permeate different cohorts. This seems to be evident in tutors' reputations – good and bad – so it might well be true for expectations of feedback

more generally.

Assessment can be useful as a formal check on progress, in which case a grade is very highly valued, but seems to be far less of a concern than predicted. Students have a strong sense of what they want to achieve and their duty to their pupils, compared to which the grade seems incidental. Certainly a poor grade will get a student's attention, but otherwise there seems to be little incentive to focus heavily on assessment. A clear example of this is Liz, who seemed annoyed when she was awarded the highest grades possible because this meant she no longer received much feedback.

Otherwise, assessment seemed to have a negative, distracting influence, particularly with unfamiliar tutors where students would have to worry about what they might want to see. Assessment was much less of a concern when it was given regularly and by a familiar tutor, since students expected this to take account of their overall performance rather than just that day. A similar sentiment was found in Meer and Chapman (2014), where students needed to be dissuaded from this view, but in my sample it seems that tutors did actually assess in this way even if they were using formal assessment criteria.

Finally, students seemed to balance very different identities when engaging with feedback since they were both learners and teachers. In terms of dialogue, however, their role was almost entirely described in passive terms from a low status. Some tutors were able to effectively invite students to join in with discussion, but often this seemed to require a great deal of effort from the tutor. As respectful junior teachers, students seemed to find it more important to be polite and "take on board" feedback, but occasionally they might ask questions. This seemed to be prompted by reminders of their learner role, such as when a formal assessment was being written or if feedback seemed too specific to a school's ways of

Applying the new model to students' narratives

working rather than to their own development needs. These five themes will now be considered by returning to the research questions. This will be related back to some of the key literature as these five new themes are evaluated for their potential contribution to the research literature.

10 Conclusions

10.1 Overview of the thesis

This thesis began with a literature review which articulated a range of definitions of feedback and some of the problems student teachers might experience when managing the pressures of a professional placement in a school workplace. This review established the broad constructivist underpinning of how feedback is currently understood in higher education as well as common explanations for when feedback fails to live up to expectations. Exploring these explanations led to two similar areas of the research literature. First, the literature on students' approaches to learning suggested ways in which assessment might relate to how students engage with feedback as well as their learning more generally. Second, the literature on how student teachers relate to their tutors suggested a range of subtle expectations and habitual practices which could restrict feedback to a simple transmission model.

This literature review also informed the design and analysis of a large-scale survey. Two separate analyses of the survey results were conducted. The first analysis used anticipated scales drawn from the literature review, for example components related to feedback being used strategically to improve short-term assessment performance or a general measure of satisfaction with feedback. A second analysis used the same data but without pre-determined components. This used factor analysis to look for patterns in responses to single items (rather than multi-item scales), with rotation being used to avoid factors either overlapping or becoming too complex. Interpreting the patterns of responses suggested approximate narrative labels for each component, which were then approximated using simple means. Comparing the two types of component suggested a range of themes which formed an analytical framework which could be applied to narrative data.

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The first stage of narrative analysis drew on knowledge of the survey responses of a small number of interview participants, meaning that their survey responses would help to guide the narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives could also be compared with students' own conceptual maps as elicited in the repertory grid tasking, providing a useful check that my interpretation remained faithful to how students explained feedback in their own words. Components were then refined and developed into themes before being used for a second thematic analysis of all the students' narratives, giving five broad categories from which to draw conclusions and build explanatory claims.

This final chapter returns to the research questions to look at the contributions this thesis can make to the existing literature. By taking each research question in turn, this chapter also draws together the themes from the previous chapter and looks for relationships between these themes, suggesting a model for how student teachers experienced feedback during their school-based practice.

10.2 Central claims made in this thesis

This thesis has argued that student teachers in this sample had a surprisingly sophisticated understanding of feedback, but that their understanding had to be drawn out. By challenging the idea that students only had superficial understanding of feedback, an alternative explanation became necessary for students' superficial engagement with feedback. I have suggested that the most likely explanation is that constructivist models of feedback are a poor fit with the oversimplified way that many student teachers expect their own learning to occur. In particular, student teachers' repeated emphasis on learning through reflection suggests that these students view their own learning as a largely private undertaking. Dialogue in feedback is further restricted by the power relationships between student teachers and their

tutors.

Despite these two main problems of failing to seek or engage with dialogue, student teachers' experiences with feedback are largely positive. The key criterion seems to be the perceived genuineness of the tutor and faith that feedback is given with a student's long-term needs in mind. This criterion places a strong onus on tutors to personalise feedback and give freely of their time, which is problematic in England's current teacher training provision – more so if tutors lack confidence that students are engaging with their feedback. This thesis attempts to break the standoff by reassuring tutors that student teachers have a better understanding of feedback and pay closer attention to it than it might appear. Similarly, student teachers should be challenged to think about their own learning in the same terms as they think about the learning of their pupils and realise the value of engaging in co-creation of feedback.

This final chapter expands on these claims by referring back to the original research questions and the existing research literature. In particular, this chapter makes the case for accepting these claims as having more warranted assertability than the alternative explanations which could be formulated from the literature.

10.3 Learning needs

The first research question was:

How do student teachers understand the learning required to gain their teaching qualification compared to the learning required to become established as an effective teacher?

The two components of this question concerned what students saw themselves as needing for their long-term needs and what they saw as necessary to satisfy their short-term needs or assessment pressures. This question was developed from the literature on students'

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approaches to learning. I reasoned that students might take deeper approaches to engaging with feedback if they saw it as serving longer-term (i.e. vocational) needs. In contrast, feedback which was only seen as serving short-term assessment goals would be treated much the same as HE students in general treat feedback.

Analysis of the numerical data, particularly the factor analysis, suggested that students made a distinction between feedback which served their immediate needs and feedback which helped their overall long-term development. Three different factors seemed to emerge, which I labelled as feedback for assessment, feedback for learning, and feedback for long-term professional development.

Of these three factors, it was feedback which assisted students' overall professional development which seemed to be most valued. Students would still have to engage selectively or strategically with feedback, but in general the correlation between factors suggested that general feedback was the most useful. This preference suggested that students generally gave priority to their long-term learning needs instead of their short-term assessment needs, and that working out how to use feedback was part of a useful learning process. This was supported in the narratives with the idea that sometimes students need to just be told what to do, but mostly there is value in working through problems for themselves. The importance of hard work was also related to students' prioritisation of their longer-term development. Strategic use of feedback was therefore not about maximising marks or minimising effort, but about managing the demanding workload of a teacher. Students' views of their own professionalism were expressed in two main ways. First, there was a strong sense of students making sacrifices in their personal lives for the sake of their pupils. Second, unfavourable comparisons were made with shorter training routes such as postgraduate

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certificates or school-led training. Students' learning needs were not therefore to strategically engage with feedback to avoid having to work hard, since hard work was part of them becoming a professional teacher.

Some students prioritised their own immediate assessment needs (in one case, feeling guilty for doing so), while others prioritised their pupils' learning. The latter was the much more commonly expressed view, with students putting all remaining efforts into improving their pupils' learning. This seemed a very widely held norm, with examples including a student who had already been assured a passing grade and another who had already failed. The dominant focus on pupils' learning suggests an explanation for student teachers' poor articulation of their own learning needs, since they are not focused on assessment criteria but on the more holistic outcome of improving their pupils' learning. It is also noteworthy that pupils' learning was similarly seen in general terms, with none of the student teachers referring to assessment levels or grades. Student teachers' seeing their own learning needs in very general terms may well therefore be rooted in their understanding of their pupils having general learning needs.

I argued in the literature review that the literature on students' approaches to learning was roughly split between studies in the UK and Europe which saw students as adopting poor approaches to learning because of structural problems in assessment and US studies which saw students adopting effective strategies to assessment depending on how well their goals aligned with their course. The findings in this thesis support the latter view: students were not grade maximising so much as pursuing their own goals whilst maintaining required standards more generally. This summary fits well with Horowitz's (1988) label of the 'New Outsiders', who value hard work and align closely (if passively) with what their faculty demands.

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The only source of conflict, and therefore a reason for students not behaving as New Outsiders (i.e. uncritical hard workers), would be if a tutor was perceived to hold different values from the student. Some narratives suggested sources of tension around values, either that tutors were too traditional, treated pupils disrespectfully, failed to care for pupils with special educational needs, or even if the tutor had qualified as a teacher through what was seen as an inferior route (most notably, overseas training). Students seeing tutors as having these different values or inferior expertise might help explain the correlation between tutor-dominated experiences and much lower reports of feedback being focused on learning and consistent hard work being important. When a student perceives misaligned goals with their tutor, that tutor's feedback would be seen as a distraction, meaning in turn that their feedback must be treated strategically rather than simply accepted.

On the rare occasions when students did refer to more specific learning needs, the most frequently mentioned related to behaviour management, although this was much less often than I had expected. Aside from feedback which simply pointed out mistakes and their solutions, feedback was given in general terms because students needed to learn in general terms.

It seemed not to be the case that students saw their learning needs in general terms and their assessment needs in specific terms, but rather that most students had a high level of trust in their tutors' assessment. Regardless of the actual assessment criteria, there seemed a general sentiment that good pupil learning would ensure that student teachers would receive a fair grade. Some strategic performance might be required later to cover any gaps in a student's evidence file, but otherwise students mostly saw themselves as on the right path to general improvements in their teaching skills.

10.4 Intentions of feedback

The second research question was:

What intentions do student teachers assume are behind the feedback they receive?

Students generally saw a close link between the person and the feedback: nice tutors gave good feedback, mean tutors did not. Students' assumptions of their tutors' intentions when giving feedback therefore generally followed this moral argument. Feedback was less about specific intentions or distinguishing between short- and long-term needs, but rather feedback showed that a tutor was on the side of the student teacher and wanted them to do well. This fits well with the previous section on students' views of their own learning needs. Since students rarely saw the need for feedback which targeted specific learning needs, there is an implicit assumption that tutors were giving feedback with the intention of promoting a student's general improvement.

The narratives suggest that it is worth adding that a tutor's feedback needs to be compatible with, or at least acknowledge, a student teacher's own goals and preferred style of teaching. A tutor-dominated experience can therefore be seen as lacking the intent of supporting the student in what they want to do. One of my earliest field notes was that student teachers seemed to describe using feedback as well as it could have been used. At the time, I took this as an indication of passivity: it was the tutor who gave good or bad feedback, and students made the best they could of whatever they were given. Thinking about this from the perspective of intent, however, suggests that students rarely saw feedback as having a single, specific intention which required them to engage proactively with their feedback. Instead, students trusted in their tutor's regard for their long-term development, which in turn meant that students needed only to passively accept ('take on board') feedback. Part of the reason

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for students being passive in feedback could therefore be that they already saw their feedback as relating closely to their own goals and serving their long-term development needs.

While the majority of feedback seemed to be assumed to have a general learning intention behind it, general intent was clearly distinct from having no clear intention. The latter was consistently described by student teachers in negative terms: it suggested tutors who did not have (or give) enough time for feedback, or were not paying close enough attention. It is therefore very important for tutors to signal that their feedback has an intention, even if that is articulated in general terms.

As well as general intent, a strong theme in the narratives was the reassurance aspect of feedback. This was not picked up in the survey, with the only relevant item being the extent to which students' contributions seemed welcomed by a tutor (item 1). The narratives, however, suggest that affective intention is an important aspect of feedback and one which should be included in future surveys. Sometimes the only intention of feedback was to make a student feel better or give reassurance, particularly if they had a negative experience in the classroom or had overly-critical feedback from another tutor. Students varied in their response to reassurance, with some appreciating it as a kind gesture, others seeing it as a way of finding the middle ground, while some students saw it as lacking genuineness. As with intent more generally, feedback intending to give reassurance needed to come from a tutor who was seen to care in general and had already built a reputation for honesty. Tutors who shifted purposes in feedback risked being seen as inconsistent or as over-correcting for earlier faults.

It is also important to note that students did not seem to think feedback was given with the

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intention of engaging in co-creation of knowledge or any kind of dialogue. This returns to Copland's (2011) attempt to outline the tacit expectations in giving and receiving feedback, which I would reframe as relating to the signalled intentions. For example, Copland refers to the rule that "Trainees take on board feedback 'gracefully', demonstrating they are receptive learners" (Copland, 2011, p.3835). I would try to restructure this in terms of a student's intentions and the intentions they infer their tutor has. In this case, the tutor is assumed to intend feedback to offer useful advice, encourage the student, or achieve some administrative purpose. The student then intends to assimilate the advice into their own ethos, signal respect for their tutor, and remember enough of the feedback to later reflect upon it. This reframing therefore has a less strategic sense to it when compared with Copland's "demonstrating they are receptive learners", and highlights how what seems like passive student behaviour might relate more to different assumed intentions in feedback.

Finally, there seemed to be a strong relationship between how a tutor was seen and how their feedback was seen. This was not just in the case of obvious links, such as in caring or genuine feedback, so a tutor whose feedback was poor was invariably also a poor tutor (a notable exception being a tutor who gave poor feedback but was seen by the student as generally good but just short of time). One curious finding is that students rarely saw themselves as part of any problems – their ethos was typically the right one (i.e. child-centred), and they understood the pupils at least as well as school staff. This was interesting given the focus on pupils' learning, as it might be expected that students could rationalise undesirable tutor behaviours as them putting the pupils' needs before their own needs as student teachers. However, no students gave such a rationalisation. Overly-critical, unfocused or incorrect feedback was frequently assumed to relate to a tutor's negative intentions on a personal

level. This in itself could be very damaging for the idea of dialogic feedback, since the feedback is so deeply entwined with the person giving the feedback that it is difficult to criticise feedback without criticising the tutor's intentions on a personal level.

10.5 Students' roles in feedback

The third research question was:

How do student teachers see their own roles and the roles of their tutor in feedback?

My initial interpretation of the data was that students saw themselves as needing to take strategic approaches to how they used feedback because of the workload pressures they faced. A helpful tutor would therefore assist in this by signalling in feedback what was most important, although ultimately it was up to the student to manage themselves. I based this interpretation on the weak agreement with survey item 18, 'I trusted that if I did what I was told then everything would work out in the end'. This suggested that students politely taking feedback on board was not enough for them to learn what they needed to learn, but nor did they need to actively engage with feedback in order to make it more relevant.

Throughout this thesis, I have struggled to describe this aspect of students' roles. I first used the word 'passive' in chapter 1 to refer to how school-aged learners engage with feedback. In chapter 2, I related passivity to Horowitz's (1988) Outsider category of student to mean an uncritical acceptance of feedback based on complete alignment of a student's own goals with the intentions of their tutors. Passivity was not therefore laziness but rather submission to a tutor's values of hard work: it was much more important to obey feedback than to question it. I then described both Rachel and Bella as taking passive approaches to feedback related to their high level of trust in their tutor. This seems very close to my reading of Horowitz's work,

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since Rachel and Bella were happy to accept their tutor's intention and judgement. After using 'passive' as a sub-code in the student role thematic coding, I also included examples from Liz of being "left with" feedback and just "sitting there", reinforcing the submissive aspect of passivity. Other examples, such as Dawn trying to avoid being "judged", suggested that students were expected to adopt passive (i.e. uncritical) roles.

Students' passive behaviour should therefore not be interpreted as disinterest or laziness, nor that feedback is not appreciated (although all of these can still be true). More generally, students' passive behaviour suggests that they do not see learning as taking part during feedback, but much later and in private. The moment when feedback is being given is much more about managing relationships with tutors and signalling acceptance of expectation. However, acceptance of a tutor's expectations is not necessarily submissive or obsequious: rather, students signal the compatibility between their own learning needs and their tutors' intentions.

This explanation of students' views of their own role in feedback is also supported by cases where students described conflict with their tutor. This was often expressed as a conflict between traditional and child-centred approaches, but some students also referred to different values such as how children with special educational needs should be treated or the overall nature of the relationship teachers should foster with pupils. Taking on board feedback, despite being a common expression, was therefore not simply about adopting a passive role as feedback might be disregarded if it does not fit a student's self-image. Rather unhelpfully for tutors, passivity from a student could signal either complete acceptance of feedback or an intention to completely ignore it.

One crucial limitation in the passive role students seem to gravitate towards is that they

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assume that their reflection is asynchronous, and therefore very limited in dialogue opportunities. Reflection was a major consideration, but this meant that critical exploration of feedback would always be a private activity and occur much later, in some cases months later. Students related talking through feedback with their parents or partners far more than they talked about it with peers or tutors, although some tutors were appreciated for being approachable even after their formal relationship with a student ended. This seems a strong suggestion that what I have so far described as a student's passive role is about relationships with tutors as much as it is about how students see their role in engaging with feedback.

Every student described being given feedback immediately after they have been observed teaching, which certainly keeps to the recommendation that feedback should be prompt. However, this leaves no time for reflection, particularly as students typically describe coming off an emotional rush. The "how do you think that went?" prompt has become tired and predictable (and was mentioned by every student, as was some variation of a 'feedback sandwich'), with correspondingly token responses. The narratives in this study make a strong case for changing this practice. Perhaps some general reassurance could be given at the start to prevent students worrying about their grade, but some time should be taken between the observation and feedback – a better initial prompt could then be "talk me through your reflection", which would better align with students' preferences for feedback which matches their own priorities. Contrary to the advice to give feedback promptly, the immediate delivery of feedback could be contributing to students seeing themselves as passive recipients of that feedback.

The narratives also gave a strong sense of conflict between students as learners and students as teachers, which was important for understanding how they approached feedback.

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Students needed to respect schools for inviting them in as guests, and there were no cases where students felt that schools owed them better feedback – there was even an example of a student lying to her university tutor about the support she received (she actually received very little) because she felt that she should be loyal to the school. This is a significant contrast with the assumption that HE students increasingly see themselves as customers.

Students were also rarely concerned about their grades, except for anxiety in the actual moment of assessment. Overall, their role was to develop as teachers both to be competent in ‘the way things are done’ in a particular class or school and, more generally, within their developing sense of ethos. Students strongly identified as child-centred or creative practitioners, and saw their role as building towards these ideals even if these approaches were not always appropriate in the short-term. This reinforces the case for feedback which is sensitive to students’ long-term goals for their teaching as well as helping them to teach the pupils in that particular class. Students are therefore frequently generating feedback for themselves as they reflect on their daily teaching experiences, but this is simply not thought of as feedback and very rarely links with the formal feedback meetings with tutors. Equally, there is a need for questions to prompt in greater detail than asking students how they used feedback since they seem to integrate feedback into their reflective practice, making it difficult to see where a particular piece of feedback had an impact. Indeed, concepts such as feedforward might limit discussion here since students might feel that they should be able to identify specific outcomes from feedback.

10.6 Is feedback in teacher education ‘for learning’?

Returning to the title of this thesis, a better understanding of how students see their own role helps to illustrate what they see as the purpose of feedback. What I have frequently referred

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to as a passive student role in their feedback seems unfair given the active role many students described in how they used feedback. As well as interviews in which students talked about reflection, responses to survey items showed strong agreement with specific uses of feedback such as planning for the next assessed task (item 5, mean=4.45) or the next teaching opportunity (item 4, mean=4.25). Students certainly used feedback, but rarely engaged critically with it.

One of the emerging questions from this study is to look beyond how students see feedback and look more broadly at how they see themselves as learning on teaching placements. There is some indication from this data that students see their observed teaching as different from their non-observed teaching (in particular that the former requires more use of feedback, perhaps to signal compliance). It would be interesting to know how those non-observed lessons were seen and how well this matched with the idea of formative assessment. I would expect that the match would be weak and students would explain it more as practice rather than as an opportunity to generate feedback, but more in-depth interviewing might uncover something more meaningful.

Reflection is another recurrent issue which relates to how students see their role and the purpose of feedback. The only theory mentioned by students was Schon's (1983) distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. However, this seems to be only superficially understood: reflection described by students was almost always retrospective, with only a few cases of students deviating from their plans (and even then, usually after a tutor prompts them to do so). This limited understanding of reflection, essentially lacking the 'in-action' component, helps to explain the way students see their learning role since it is almost entirely a retrospective and private activity. Students are engaged in learning, but

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there is a gap between learning and feedback since feedback is seen mainly as a resource which is used to inform reflection. Students are therefore rarely active in generating feedback, with dialogue almost never used and even then only if the tutor seems to have significantly misunderstood an aspect of the observation or is about to give an 'unfair' grade.

In answer to the title of this thesis, it seems overall that feedback is seen as having multiple valid purposes, but that students' general learning is one of the main purposes. This feedback is widely used to drive student learning, with far less assessment-driven strategic behaviour than might be expected. Crucially, however, feedback is mostly seen as a gift from a tutor and therefore fails to be 'for learning' since learning is mostly seen as a retrospective and private activity. As a result, students fail to engage with the creation of feedback, missing one of the key elements of contemporary models of sustainable or formative feedback.

10.7 Limitations

A recurrent issue in this thesis has been sampling, with statistical tests used to check for any bias in samples. Rather than adding a general caveat about representativeness, this enables me to confidently reject some standard limitations. First, comparing responses to in-person questionnaires completed on paper with online completions showed few statistically significant differences. Since the in-person sampling was entirely random based on timing of lectures, this makes a convincing case for online completions also being sufficiently random: there is no reason to think that students who did not complete this survey were any different from those who did.

Similarly, the sample slightly over-represented students in their second year of study but comparing responses across year groups showed very little difference based on year of study.

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There was a significant sampling limitation at the interview stage, but again this can be put into the context of the sample as a whole. Survey responses were generally more positive from students who volunteered for interviews, and more positive still for those who actually were interviewed. Survey responses from those interviewed showed some extreme views, but taken as a group the group's responses were distributed almost entirely at random across the full range of responses – a strong indication that there might be bias in a particular student but that there was no overall bias in the sample. Whereas a solely qualitative study using a sample of this size would have to accept this as a limitation to the study, the strength of combining methods means that I can confidently argue that this is not the case: the interviewed students had an overall slightly more positive experience than the sample as a whole, but were overall reasonably representative.

Since the students were asked specifically about their school-based experiences, their university based element of their programme would presumably have little impact on their responses. However, students from the special educational needs course volunteered more often than students from other courses, partly due to timing as these students were conducting research at the same time and so wanted to experience a research interview. This could be a limitation in terms of the experience valued by students, such as the repeated mentions of a tutor's feedback being more highly valued if that tutor had experience of special educational needs. However, this sentiment was also expressed by students not on this course, so this may only be a slight limitation.

Finally, the key limitation of this study is based on sampling students from one particular set of programmes. This limitation is partly addressed by adding students from the same programmes but at a different university, particularly as responses were very similar. I have

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repeatedly argued that there is value in this study for workplace-based HE feedback in general, but have not sampled any students from other professional courses. It is also worth highlighting that student recruitment in these two sampled universities is similar, both largely drawing from local populations of working-class students at the lower end of prior attainment. While some courses are in high demand, students were typically recruited to these programmes rather than selected from a large pool of applications. Feedback might be somewhat different for student teachers with stronger entry profiles at more selective universities, although it is worth remembering that all universities use the same schools for teaching practice so this aspect of their experience will still be very similar.

10.8 Reflections on mixed methods

The methodology of this thesis drew heavily on Plowright's (2011) framework for an integrated methodology, fitting into Biesta's (2012, p. 149) description of a "quan → QUAL" design. The intention was that quantitative data collection and analysis would be a distinct stage of the study which would then inform the qualitative data collection and analysis. This is a useful summary of the structure of this thesis, but in practice analysis was an iterative process, particularly as I developed my conclusions.

Such an approach is not without its critics. For example, Pyett influentially argued that "counting responses misses the point of qualitative research" (Pyett, 2003, p. 1174). However, at the risk of being seen to hide behind pragmatism, there is a very different point to mixed-methods research since the aim is to use a range of data types to illuminate different aspects of the research topic. Whether to count qualitative comments or not therefore depends on the research question. The use of repertory grids in the interviews is a good example of where the data is very well-suited to counting, despite being part of a mostly

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qualitative interview. More generally, I would also argue against Pyett's claim because simple descriptions of how frequently a code was used or by how many respondents seems a convenient way to establish credibility and auditability. In the literature review chapter, for example, I noted the helpfulness of this reporting style in the key study by Beck and Kosnik (2002). Whilst I therefore sympathise with the frustration of qualitative researchers who do not wish to be drawn into justifying their conclusions by standards outside of their paradigm, my decision to mix reporting styles was based on what I found helpful as a reader.

Mixed methods was also valuable in drawing together distinct phases of the study. Looking at some of the data as it was generated was helpful in gaining early feedback through conference presentations and journal articles. Looking back at these shows one of the key strengths of mixed methods since this thesis as a whole has been able to make stronger and more developed conclusions than any of my previous smaller-scale published studies did.

My first publication was an analysis of just the numerical data (Carver, 2016b). While this has only recently been published, this paper was developed gradually through several conference presentations in 2013 and 2014. The conclusions to this paper including arguing that students had a reasonably complex understanding of feedback and saw it as relating to learning more than as just another part of assessment. I also argued that tutor-dominated experiences were largely negative, and that the genuine interest of a tutor was vital if their feedback was to be trusted. Overall, this formed an argument for trusting students to engage in more sustainable feedback practices.

As this was published in a practitioner research journal, I also emphasised that well-intentioned traditional approaches to transmitting feedback would be ill-advised, as would attempting to directly address common measures of student satisfaction with feedback: the

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best way to improve student satisfaction was to trust in a long-term, sustainable approach. This advice still seemed valid as my thesis developed, but it was still unclear whether students had a concept of feedback which they could explain or if this had to be inferred from their responses to statements. This seemed a crucial element in my argument that students should be trusted and given a more prominent role in feedback, since it seemed too much asking tutors to trust that understanding was there when students could not demonstrate it directly.

This study was also important for emphasising the need for genuineness in a tutor-student relationship, helping to move on from simply saying that a positive relationship in general was needed. More detail was clearly needed here, for example as to whether these relationships were developed or if they relied largely on chance personality matches or if certain behaviours by the student or tutor could help make these genuine relationships more likely.

The second publication (Carver, 2016a) was written during my literature review and described how feedback as a phrase was problematic. It then drew out some assumptions behind different descriptions of feedback. Published as a book chapter, this made a more general argument for understanding feedback as much more closely related to learning than it is to assessment. To some extent this was an extension of the argument made from my numerical analysis, but it used the research literature rather than any student data. The argument therefore came from what I described as a lack of clarity in the assumptions underpinning how feedback is talked about in various ways. I also argued that assessment might represent an opportunity cost in how students engage with feedback for learning, which is similar to the point made in the literature review chapter that the idea of an opportunity cost seems to have been overlooked in the UK literature on student approaches to learning despite being central to similar US literature.

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Most recently, I published a separate analysis of just the repertory grid data (Carver, 2016c). After giving advice to tutors in the previous two publications, it seemed important to specifically analyse the advice tutors are generally given and to do a simple check of how well this explained students' constructs. A narrowly focused literature review resulted in seven broad themes. I then looked for where students' constructs would add detail to these themes or seemed to require new themes. Overall, there was little evidence that new themes were needed, but that some constructs straddled several existing themes. Again, tutors' intentions and the relationship between tutor and student came out as very important, and there was little evidence for students taking strategic approaches to using feedback for assessment. I concluded that students saw themselves as using feedback as well as they could, without any particular drive to engage in improving feedback. Their largely passive role seemed at odds with their recognition of the value of feedback, especially in terms of dialogue, which was rarely mentioned. This paper built on my earlier argument that statements used to infer student satisfaction ratings were highly correlated with more meaningful engagement with feedback, but were not very meaningful in their own right. Frequency of feedback illustrated this argument especially well, since the impression that a tutor was available and happy to engage in freely-given feedback was much more important than the actual frequency of engagement with feedback.

Each of these publications relates closely to each other, but the conclusions lack a completely convincing narrative since they assert the importance of positive relationships and genuine tutor intent without explaining why these are important or what they might look like in practice. Student voice also seemed lost in my own arguments since there was no opportunity to check my interpretation of one data source with another data source. This is still a gap in

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the thesis as a whole, for example with ideas such as respect for a tutor not quite resolved into the concept of a positive relationship. The conclusions of this thesis therefore are not entirely able to offer advice for how to make feedback more 'for learning', but it is much clearer on how to avoid being against learning.

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated that mixed methods made a valuable contribution to understanding feedback from students' perspectives, particularly in articulating the importance of students' sense of identity and the broader range of purposes which might be served by feedback.

10.9 Contributions to knowledge

In chapter 1, I described the main inspiration to this thesis being the advantages feedback in teacher education had over feedback in higher education more generally. I argued that efforts to improve feedback typically focused on making feedback more specific, prompter, more frequent, or more personalised. Feedback in teacher education already had these features, so understanding how students saw feedback in this context would help to decide whether these four areas were the ones to improve. Overall, the answer seems to be that there are benefits to feedback being general and that feedback which is too prompt can limit dialogue, so more specific and prompter feedback can be harmful to student learning. There seem to be no negative consequences to feedback being more frequent or more personalised, but it is more important that the intent of feedback is clearly signalled: students need to be able to trust that feedback has their best interests at heart.

The most obvious difference between my conclusions and the existing literature is that assessment is of much less importance to the sampled students. This is perhaps due to

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student teachers being different from HE students in general. A standard degree course has inbuilt self-centredness since the student only really has themselves to think about. Student teachers have both a form of employer (and colleagues) in the school, as well as pupils who rely on them for learning. Other professions might find similar results, for example medical students will have their team and patients, while student architects or solicitors will have colleagues and clients. Student teachers are also assessed differently and seem to benefit, for the most part, from tutors knowing them very well. Students seem to generally trust that assessment will treat them fairly if they pay attention to their feedback and work hard, and this seems to mostly be true. This level of student trust is significantly lower for visiting university-based tutors, who were more frequently described as having their own personal criteria or preferences and behaving erratically.

In professional education, feedback is not so much about meeting assessment needs since there are so many needs which are more important. Assessment might sharpen the focus of feedback at key moments, or protect time, but it might also make feedback less engaging as convention and routine takes over. Feedback may correct obvious faults, but its main purpose is to provide the material for reflection. A problem this thesis has helped to draw out is that students do not see interacting with their tutor as part of their role, so it is important to improve their understanding of feedback being part of reflection to appreciate that reflection need not be a solo activity.

Feedback also serves identity roles, meaning that it has a significant impact on emotions and motivation. The research literature seems to have so far assumed that grades, and so assessment, are the primary concern of students and therefore the reason for superficial learning since eventually there is an opportunity cost to anything which does not target

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grades. However, the student teachers in this study seem to only consider assessment and grades when grades became a pressing concern – otherwise they will focus on their general development as teachers, and often on the learning of their pupils. Even students at risk of failure (or who have already failed) still seemed determined that their pupils would be taught well. The way student teachers in this sample used feedback was therefore much less about figuring out how to get the best grade and much more about reinforcing their overall sense of vocation.

This thesis has also shown that the manner of feedback is important because this signals both the intent of the tutor and the relationship between tutor and student. Being too focused on assessment might even subtly cheapen feedback. For example, some students became quite upset when they thought that their feedback was too specifically focused on grades. In the case of a high performing student, there was frustration when she was told that she did not need any more feedback. The way student teachers were given feedback might even relate to the hierarchy of school staff. Student teachers were keen to be treated like regular staff, even if this meant being given more work than they were meant to do – being “treated like a supply teacher” was a mark of acceptance, being treated “like a teaching assistant” was not. Feedback to student teachers should therefore feel like feedback between peers rather than being hierarchical.

A key contribution from this thesis is improved understanding of what seems like passive behaviour from students. The student teachers in this study described reflection as crucial in their professional learning, and saw feedback as informing their reflection. This means that students regard themselves as actively using feedback, but most of this activity occurs much later and in private and so is unseen by a tutor. Encouraging students to engage more

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proactively in dialogue and co-creating feedback could therefore be achieved by relating feedback to popular models of reflective practice and highlighting the compatibility of dialogic feedback and self-reflection.

This thesis can also make some useful contributions to feedback literature more generally. First, it has shown how feedback can be completely different for HE students depending on context – how they approach feedback in university does not predict how they approach feedback on a work-based placement. I have outlined the major themes in how university-based student teachers understand feedback, which offers a useful starting point for considering student teachers on other training routes and other trainee professionals. As future student teachers in England are more likely to belong to a school than to a university, their relationship might be very different again, in which case a new model might emerge. I have also questioned the basic assumption, one to which I also subscribed, that grades would have a significant impact on how students engage with feedback. Putting this assumption to one side can dramatically change how data is interpreted, giving a more charitable understanding of what students are trying to do. The student teachers in this study also offer encouragement that students will not adopt surface approaches to learning if they trust that assessment will account for their general development.

The use of mixed-methods in this thesis has shown that online survey methods are almost as reliable as pen and paper surveys, and that an online sample is not necessarily a self-selecting sample. Students who volunteer for subsequent phases were also shown to have a possible slight overall positive bias, which could be helpful for qualitative-only researchers to consider since such volunteers might be the only students sampled in a qualitative study, making the positive bias both more influential and more difficult to detect. Students who miss out items

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on the survey also had a strong association with more negative experiences, suggesting that question phrasing might need to be adjusted to allow more expression of negative opinions or that purposive sampling of students with negative experiences (possibly with surveys completed in an interview format) would be valuable. Finally, more in-depth interview approaches such as repertory grid and Biographical Narrative Interview Methods have been shown to successfully draw out subtleties in students' experiences. Since student teachers' programmes are so intense, this will always be a difficult group to sample, so it is reassuring that these methods can still be valuable even when adapted to use only half the recommended time.

Based on a broader understanding of feedback, this research also offers useful prompts for future surveys. One of the most widely used survey tools is the Assessment Experience Questionnaire, which forms part of the TESTA research toolkit. However, despite its widespread use there are two important methodological flaws with this survey. First, it uses far too few items for each of its scales related to feedback (quantity and quality of feedback, use of feedback, surface approach and deep approach each have three, while satisfaction contains just one). Second, the Cronbach alpha scores reported for these scales suggest that these items are a poor fit anyway (quantity and quality of feedback = 0.61, use of feedback = 0.7; the minimum threshold for internal reliability is typically 0.7).

Since the scales are both too narrow and have insufficient internal validity, it is inappropriate to use correlation to analyse patterns of response. However, this is what the AEQ is typically used for. Any items which can strengthen the AEQ are therefore of significant value to the everyday TESTA-led research conducted internally in over 40 UK universities as well as others in Australia, India and the United States (Jessop et al., 2014). Items concerning relationships

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between tutors and students would seem a useful addition, as would prompting students to think about reflection as an example of how they use feedback. I would therefore recommend adding items to the Assessment Experience Questionnaire to ask students about whether their contributions to feedback were welcomed, whether they trusted that their assessment would be fine provided they followed their feedback, and whether feedback was more about reinforcing the status of their tutor.

The analysis of narrative data in this study also highlighted the often blurred boundary between feedback and learning. Any kind of reflective teaching might loosely be thought of as formative assessment, and reflection might – or might not – be thought of as feedback. This returns to the argument I made when outlining the main definitions of feedback, that it is so closely aligned with constructivist ideals that feedback can be inferred in a range of situations which learners might not call feedback. Talking about the intent and purposes of feedback provides a useful way to delimit the definition and should be central to conversations about feedback.

10.10 Future developments

This thesis has challenged the view that students only have superficial understanding of feedback. While some students clearly misunderstood some of the phrases normally used to describe feedback or had their own idiosyncratic use of words such as ‘detailed’ or ‘concise’, overall there was a strong sense that students were highly aware of the importance of feedback and the purposes it could serve. Starting from this more charitable premise suggests that future research could usefully build on helping students to articulate their understanding, and the repertory grid method still seems very well suited to achieving this. It would also be valuable to find how tutors’ views related to students’ views, particularly with respect to

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expectations of how engaged students should be and how tutors see the power relationship.

Reflection emerged as a major theme, but there was also a strong suggestion that students mostly thought of reflection as something which happens much later and in private. Work which looked to improve students' understanding of Schon's model, or suggest alternatives, could therefore also advance understanding of how feedback is used in teacher education.

The relationship between students and tutors has already received attention, including the close linguistic studies from Copland (2010, 2011) and the analysis of bullying behaviour in Sewell et al. (2009). However, there seems to be a lack of good practice evident in the literature, so it would be interesting to deliberately sample tutor-student relationships which prominently feature dialogic and sustainable feedback.

Finally, the mixed-methods design of this study has highlighted how survey data needs to be unpacked in a qualitative understanding so that students have a chance to articulate their understanding of assessment and feedback in their own terms. This links in with my own development as a researcher since I will be running an evaluation of ten programmes to look at assessment and feedback at a programme level. Colleagues have already raised concerns about the poor internal validity of the AEQ survey tool, so effectively combining this with focus group data will be vital both in engaging staff in the research and ensuring that the survey data is not unfairly dismissed. Looking at the internal validity of my own scales has given me a valuable lesson in judging Cronbach alpha statistics too harshly, as my scales fared little better than the AEQ despite being mostly constructed through factor analysis. If student voice is to be respected, it must be able to defend against criticisms of both the scale and depth of the research. My own researcher development will therefore try to continue to build my skills to think in narrative terms about numerical data.

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Appendix: survey tool



Over the last 10 years, Assessment for Learning has dramatically changed what teachers do in classrooms, but it also has important implications for how teachers are trained. However, there are very few studies investigating this from a trainee perspective in real depth.

This is where I want to contribute, through my research, to current understanding. This is not only to improve the experience of trainees at the University of Cumbria, but also to show how feedback is really experienced, and what schools and universities can learn from the views of trainees.

This survey has been designed to last no more than 10 minutes, and it is entirely anonymous and confidential.

I would very much appreciate your help to make this project successful, but please be very clear that there is no obligation for you to take part.

Many thanks

Mark Carver, PhD student (mark.carver@uni.cumbria.ac.uk)

☒ Impartial - the university funds my research, but has no influence on the outcomes and has no access to raw data. The university will only receive a report of my findings and a copy of anonymised data.

☒ Confidential - your name is only used to invite you to join the next stage of my study. Your name is then permanently deleted either way - if you decline to participate further, I add your data to my anonymous numerical analysis. If you accept, I link your responses and assign you a pseudonym.

☒ Yours - you can change your mind at any point, without giving a reason. You will always be given reports to read before they are published, and if you're not happy with how I've used your data you can be removed from the study.

☒ I will never share any information which could be used to identify you. Nothing in this research affects your relationship with the university or any school, either positively or negatively.

This research has been approved by a University of Cumbria ethics panel.

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read and understood this information sheet. I understand that this is just about my most recent assessed placement and the person who gave me feedback on that placement (e.g. mentor, class teacher). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. You can use my responses for anonymous statistical analysis. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. You can share anonymous statistical data for use by other researchers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I would like to receive a personalised analysis of how my data compares with other trainees. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. You can contact me about joining in the next stage of the study. I understand that I don't have to accept, and that my name and email will be deleted afterwards whatever I decide. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you chose "yes" to statement 4 or 5, please give your email address below. This will only be used for the purposes stated.



Section A: about you and your most recent placement

A3. I would identify myself as: (tick all that apply)

- Male ☐
- Female ☐
- A mature student ☐
- Disabled ☐
- From a UK ethnic minority group ☐
- Dyslexic ☐
- From a background not traditionally associated with higher education ☐

A4. The main person who gave me feedback was: (tick all that apply)

- Just one person ☐
- Several people ☐
- Male ☐
- Female ☐
- My mentor ☐
- My class teacher ☐
- A member of the school's senior management ☐
- I did not have anyone giving me any feedback at all ☐


Section B: about the feedback you experienced on your most recent placement

B1. Please remember, this survey is only about feedback on your most recent assessed placement and the main person who gave you that feedback. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Leave blank any which are not applicable.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
In feedback sessions/meetings, my contributions were welcomed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The feedback was tailored for me as an individual learner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback gave me clear priorities for my next observation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I carefully looked at my previous feedback when planning for my next observation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was important to be seen to act on feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I made sure that my observed lesson had something special in it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I made sure that my observed lesson used an idea from the main person who gave me feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My observed lessons were the same as my normal practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had some special activities which I saved for observed lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tried out my observed lessons beforehand to make sure they worked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The feedback from different observations on the same placement was inconsistent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would have behaved the same in feedback sessions even if placements were not assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was confident about assessing the quality of my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trusted my own judgement more than the judgement of the main person who gave me feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It would not have been appropriate to question the decisions of the main person who gave me feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I didn't just focus on what the main person who gave me feedback wanted, I did what I felt was important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trusted that if I did what I was told then everything would work out in the end	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The main purpose of the feedback sessions seemed to be to reinforce the status of the main person who gave me feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix: survey tool



Please remember, this survey is only about feedback on your most recent assessed placement and the main person who gave you that feedback. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Leave blank any which are not applicable.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The main purpose of the feedback seemed to be...(a)...to improve faults in my teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b)...to guide me to improve generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c)...to help me meet my own goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d)...to make sure the pupils got good lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e)...to make me work harder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f)...to make sure I had evidence for each QTS standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g)...to prove that the school had met their responsibilities to the university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The grade I received was not influenced, positively or negatively, by any personal factors between me and the person who gave me the grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I pushed myself to make a good job of every task, whether or not I thought it was important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I paid careful attention to any advice or feedback I was given	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback came in time to be useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback matched up with observation focus criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I used the advice and feedback to...(a)...improve my practice generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b)...figure out how to get the best grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c)...figure out what they really wanted me to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The expectations on me were far too high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you for helping, I really appreciate it. Please use the space below, or email, for any other comments.