

**INVESTIGATING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED TO ASSESS
PRIMARY TRAINEE TEACHERS ON TEACHING PRACTICE**

by

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**A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
In part fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Ed.D Learning and Learning Contexts**

**School of Education
The University of Birmingham
December 2014**

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ABSTRACT

The National Student Survey (NSS) reveals that in the UK Higher Education students are generally dissatisfied with course assessment and feedback processes. This thesis investigates and evaluates a range of assessment and feedback strategies used during Initial Teacher Training (ITT) teaching practice. The views of trainee teachers, school based tutors and university based tutors with regard to the effectiveness of these strategies are also evaluated. A cross sectional research design employing questionnaires, interviews and a focus group interview was used to obtain and analyse data.

The findings show that overall, the stakeholders in this study are satisfied with the assessment processes used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice. These research findings are contrary to the NSS data. Insights gained contribute to the knowledge of the assessment of ITT trainees.

This thesis indicates why the assessment strategies used on teaching practice are effective. The lesson observation and subsequent discursive feedback and action point setting is regarded as the most effective assessment strategy. Analysis of the research data suggests that lesson observation and feedback is effective because it provides an authentic assessment experience. The thesis argues that authentic assessment strategies have a positive impact on student experience.

DEDICATION

**In memory of my Mum who left school at 14
but spent her whole life
learning, open-minded and curious.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you:

- to the tutors and fellow students on the EdD programme at the University of Birmingham for their support
- to my supervisor Susannah Smith for her invaluable feedback and encouragement every step of the way
- to my faculty for providing the means to complete the doctorate
- to the students, teachers and tutors who gave their time to take part in this study
- to Steve and Joe for telling me to 'get on with it'.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

1.1 Introduction

This research project takes place in an initial teacher training (ITT) institute in a higher education faculty which educates primary teachers; the focus of the research project is the assessment of trainee teachers on a qualified teacher training course (QTS). The research aim begins to identify the key issues related to the assessment of trainees on teaching practice and considers the methods and methodology related to a study of this kind. Key questions are explored with an increased spotlight on the specific research questions and a focused critical review and evaluation of the key evidence base and analysis of empirical evidence.

Trainees in the third year of a teacher training course were asked about their views of the assessment strategies used to assess them on their teaching practices; an on-line questionnaire was used to collect the data. To explore some of the issues arising from the survey a focus group of trainees was invited to discuss some of the topics in more depth. Other participants include school based tutors and university based tutors. The on line questionnaire was used to collect information from school based tutors and interviews with university based tutors added to the data. In this way both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

In understanding the process of assessment in this context I discuss how the technical–rational (Shils, 1978) approach to assessment, largely based upon top down policies from national organisations, influences the judgement process. A prominent concept of assessment in the current educational arena is supported by a

technical-rational (Schoen, 1987) view of practice underpinned by a positivist philosophy which holds that practitioners are instrumental problem solvers and teaching is a craft with clearly defined actions and reactions. This approach to practice links to the assessment tools with a focus on targets and summative grades. The aim of some policy makers appears to be to create a model of practice capability that can be universally and objectively applied. This approach to initial teacher training as a competency- based profession is gaining increased momentum as can be seen in the policies and rhetoric of government documentation: *Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers* (DfE, 2011a). In alignment with this policy the current trends are to train teachers in school based settings with 'on the job training' and a focus on practical skills. My thesis will suggest that this approach to assessment and practice may have implications for the quality of the assessment of primary school teachers. The assessment practices are intrinsically aligned to the philosophy of the training process and an approach based on summative grades may be too rationalistic for situated practice. Within the context of this project there are examples of both formative feedback and summative grades in the assessment strategies used in school.

1.1.1 Overview of the structure of the thesis

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the structure of the thesis in order to signpost key sections and offer a succinct summary of the project.

This thesis consists of eight chapters which provide a written account of the research undertaken. This first chapter provides an introduction to the project and will outline the research problem and identify the research aims and questions. An overview of the research context, rationale and structure will be contained in this first chapter as

well as an explanation about the researcher's position within the research framework. A consideration of the epistemological and ontological approach taken in the research will be outlined.

Chapters two to four are connected and will present a review of some of the literature relating to this study area and the specific strands of investigation. Greater depth about the context and the historical and political background will be delineated in the second chapter.

The design framework will be presented in the fifth chapter and the rationale for selecting the research tools will be illustrated. An evaluation of the research methodology will be an intrinsic aspect of this fifth chapter.

The data collection and coding processes will be described in chapter six and the data analysis will begin. Chapter seven provides more data analysis and focuses on an interpretation of the data with the aim of drawing conclusions. Finally, the eighth chapter concludes the thesis by reflecting back on the aims of the research and discussing how far those aims have been addressed. The final chapter will identify my contribution to knowledge in this field and offer suggestions for further research in this context.

1.1.2 Researcher positionality

The issue of an 'insider' researcher needs to be acknowledged at the start of the research project as this impacts on every part of the study including the selection of the key question, the identification of participants, the data collection methods, the issue of consent for participants and the data analysis. As a social researcher my goal is to conduct the research in a balanced manner using a systematic, objective

process of inquiry but my very starting point and interests are grounded in choice which could be considered biased as Wolcott explains:

'I regard bias as entry-level theorising, a thought-about position from which the researcher as inquirer feels drawn to an issue or problem and seeks to construct a firmer basis in both knowledge and understanding'

(Woolcott, 2004, p. 186).

In this sense 'bias' needs to be considered in order to provide relevant information about the researcher's orientation and intentions related to the study in question. The aim is to delineate the purpose of the research and outline my assumptions at the start to avoid any confusion with 'prejudice', the result of irrational, out of context judgements.

My interests and involvement as an ITT lecturer has stimulated the inquiry, this is the bias and is explicit from the start. The intention is to recognise that total objectivity cannot be achieved. My assumptions and role are clear from the beginning and will contribute to the meaningful design and interpretation of the study. The position as an inside researcher will impact on my interpretation of the results and will also impact on the perceptions of the participants.

If we engage in reflecting on ourselves (reflexivity) we need to consider the practice of research, our place within it and the design and selection of the field of inquiry itself (May, 1998). Reflexivity recognises that social researchers are part of the world they are researching, it is suggested that researchers need to acknowledge and understand their influence as part of the research process rather than trying to eliminate researcher effects (Cohen, et al., 2007).

Reflexivity in relation to social research is an attempt to identify and address the limitations of the research. It is built upon an acknowledgement that ideology and

power affect an influence over the research and researcher. The researcher needs to consider the restrictions of the research context, participants, the design, the theoretical model, data collection tools and analysis and then openly discuss these limitations. Reflexivity in research is about adopting a transparent and ethical model in research practice. The researcher aims to acknowledge the interests implicit in a critical agenda for the research and to avoid any suggestion that the research is value free (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998, p. 6).

The subjective and value laden nature of qualitative research must be exposed to ensure that the research evidence is fairly placed within a valid context and issues of reflexivity are considered. The possible influence of the research on the participants and the researcher and the issue of potential distorting effects of research need to be stated (Cohen et al.,2007). As Ezzy (2002, p. 153) explained '*...the personal experience of the researcher is an integral part of the research process*'.

In considering my position within the research design one issue of reflexivity has been addressed in the research design following the pilot research project.

Positionality (Lave & Wenger, 1991) denotes the power structures and social identities of the researcher in relation to the inquiry; the issue of power and relationships came to the forefront in the pilot research project.

I recognise that my location, as a tutor of trainee teachers, was a potential barrier to school based assessment tutors willingness to share with me their experiences of the assessment process. For example, this issue arose in a pilot research project where some school based participants perceived my status in the interview as biased (Cohen, et al.,2007) and regardless of assurances to the contrary they perceived my questions as predicated by a desire to determine the quality of assessment

processes in school. The school based tutors were interviewed about the assessment strategies used by them to assess the trainees on teaching practice in their school. Their perception was that I was trying to find out how effectively they were using the university designed strategies as part of the university quality assurance protocols. This issue has been addressed, to some extent, by selecting a different research tool; instead of an interview the school based tutors will be asked to complete a questionnaire; this will be discussed further in chapter five.

The discussion about reflexivity in the research has resulted in a conception of the subjective nature of the research process within this higher education context and my role within the process. As a consequence I recognise that the research outlined in this project is my design and analysis of data collected from trainees and tutors and does not claim to be some fundamental truth. The issue of insider researcher has been outlined to illustrate the importance of explicitly identifying the purpose of the research and the researcher's role and to acknowledge that the question is not, whether total objectivity can be achieved, but whether bias is made explicit. The aim is to contribute to a meaningful interpretation of the study (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998).

1.2 Research purpose and context

The assessment strategies used to assess primary school trainees during their work based school experiences is the focus of this research. The research design centres upon trainee primary school teachers in the third year of a three year BA Qualified Teacher Status (BAQTS) course. The aim is to explore how the assessment strategies are used to assess trainees on teaching practice and what the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about these assessment

strategies. The hypothesis for this spotlight is that teachers are generally regarded as the key to educational improvements; the link between high quality teachers and high quality teaching and learning has been well documented (DfE, 2010; OECD, 2010). One aspect which determines the quality of teachers is their initial teacher training; therefore this is the rationale for placing the research project in this arena.

‘The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and principals, since student learning is ultimately the product of what goes on in classrooms’

(OECD, 2010, p. 4).

As a senior lecturer in education the research is based within a higher education context. As part of my role, I supervise and assess trainees on school based experiences. School based tutors also supervise and assess trainees. One reason for the focus on school based assessment is my increasing awareness of the impact the recently introduced summative grading process has on a trainee’s attitude to the teaching practice. Informal anecdotal observations of a limited number of trainees suggest that some trainees begin the teaching experience with the aim of achieving a specific grade often aligned to previous experiences. An improved grade does imply improved practice and where trainees link their targets to the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to improve their grade there is a clear identification of opportunities to make progress. However, if the need to improve grades is linked to a strategic approach (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, p. 6) to the assessment process there may be fewer opportunities for professional development. So, for some trainees their agenda may be about improved grades rather than improved practice. Tutors work with trainees to help them to identify what they need to do to improve their grade by improving their professional practice placing the emphasis on improving skills rather

than just improving the grade. The assessment process is entwined with the training experience and may begin to impact on the decisions trainees make about their developing practice. This research aims to identify how trainees regard the assessment process. The project aims to find out what trainees and tutors think about the summative grades allocated on teaching practice. The research may provide more insights into the role of assessment in teacher training which may support or contradict Furlong's (2005) view regarding the aim of government '*...to reduce teacher education to an unproblematic, technical rationalist, procedure*' (p. 134).

The strategies used to assess trainees are multifaceted and involve a number of key, often overlapping, approaches. These include weekly lesson observations of the trainees followed by one to one discussions and feedback about their teaching, a mid-point assessment where trainees are allocated a grade and targets for the remainder of the practice and an end of point review where a final grade is allocated and a formal written report is completed. Alongside these 'teaching practice specific' strategies the trainees complete a professional development profile (PDP) which is a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the skills required for the award of qualified teacher. The professional development file is developed through the whole of the course and contains evidence of university and school based experiences. I aim to find out which, if any, of these strategies are regarded as more effective in supporting trainee teachers.

Assessment is at the core of my research; I am interested in many aspects of the assessment process and the impact this can have on learning. There are a wide range of aspects to assessment in higher education and the research in this area will

be discussed in chapter two. The research focus includes a number of themes and emerging tensions related to government policies and initiatives in this context. Assessment in Higher Education has been the focus of a number of research projects. The key research question **here** is based upon the exploration of the complete teaching practice assessment process from the view point of three of the main stakeholders, trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors. The purpose of this project is to discuss and contextualise the key themes and explore two key questions:

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

Before these aspects are considered it is important to consider the theoretical framework of the research.

1.3 Theoretical framework underpinning the research

My ontological and epistemological stance impact on every aspect of the research process and will be addressed at this early point in the thesis to acknowledge the impact my stance has on every aspect of the study.

Setting the nature of the project within a theoretical stance is an essential requirement of effective research; this identifies the base upon which the research is conducted. It is documented (Huberman & Miles, 1998) that assumptions about the nature of the knowledge sought will influence the formulation of the explanations. This is about identifying the ontological and epistemological stance which lie at the heart of the research process and inform the methodological process. It must be

acknowledged that educational research, politics and the decision making processes are linked (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 5). Discussions about the historical and political issues relevant to this study are entwined within the context of this research and will be discussed in chapter two.

There are many theoretical approaches to educational research including critical theory, feminist theory and complexity theory. Views of social sciences represent different ways of perceiving and interpreting social reality. In order to examine different concepts of the world it is important to examine the assumptions which underpin them. One starting point is a discussion about two key concepts of social reality in social research namely; positivist and interpretivist and an exploration of the implicit and explicit assumptions underlining them.

The approach a researcher uses to the whole research process depends on how the social world is viewed by the researcher (Pring, 2000). The social world, and in this project, the educational context is very complex and it is appropriate to identify a framework for thinking about these issues. These are the fundamental questions about what there is to study and how we can know about it. This will then help the researcher to identify how we investigate what we are looking for.

Research in the social sciences has been debated widely (Pring & Thomas, 2004) some have criticised the validity and methodology of research completed in the educational field and have compared research in the social sciences unfavourably with the scientific paradigm where researchers act independently of the subject of their research. The conflict arises from the contrast between the two key research paradigms; the positivist approach and the interpretivist stance. The researcher

needs to consider the importance of theoretical stances within the context of educational research:

'...surfacing the epistemological and ontological assumptions of research strategies and methods is frequently neglected. Furthermore this neglect means that the practice of research is under theorised and it therefore acts to deny its readers the means by which they can make proper judgements about its worth'

(Scott & Usher, 1999, p. 5).

Other writers have been critical of the 'soft science' approach to social research with a focus on interpretive analysis of data rather than the detailed rigour and analysis associated with positivist stances adopted largely by researchers from science disciplines (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

As a researcher, it is essential to consider the stance adopted in the research process in order to manage possibilities of bias and in turn to instil credibility into the research process. Pring (2000) acknowledges that the theoretical stance adopted by the researcher underpins the methodological approach taken. The educational researcher has many choices to make as they embark on their research. The choice of methodology and the justification for selecting this methodology is underpinned by a theoretical perspective. The theoretical approach used by researchers helps to explain, understand and answer key questions within a specific social context (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

Ontological assumptions about the nature of being underpin our epistemological assumptions and must be analysed and understood to determine the nature of the research. An analytical approach to research design which examines the epistemological perspective at the core of the research will add essential credibility to the research findings:

'The theoretical perspective...is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge, therefore, and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know'

(Crotty, 1998, p. 12).

Research is underpinned by theories and to fully understand the research process and acknowledge these influences I will analyse and interrogate them to understand the impact they will have on the process (Hodkinson & Smith, 2004).

1.3.1 Ontology

Firstly, there are ontological assumptions which concern the core of the social phenomena being investigated. Ontology is the study of the nature of being; it deals with questions identifying what entities exist and how they can be grouped, and some regard ontology as an investigative process into what makes humans human (Thomas, 2009). These principles provide starting points for my research in considering, for example, whether groups or individuals will be the focus. If one considers that social reality is determined by individuals acting upon their independent consciousness the philosophical model most closely aligned to this view would be a realist position (Cohen, et al., 2007). This would then influence the research design and question as the researcher would be aiming to identify and understand the individual. This has a direct bearing on my research which will be explained below.

If the ontological stance is based upon a view of social reality as a process external to individuals whereby individuals act upon factors from 'without', then the philosophical nominalist paradigm would be best suited to describe the research decisions. So, how we perceive people and what they do is fundamental, we need to understand what it is that we are looking at and how this impacts on lines of enquiry.

In the context of this project if I perceive the assessment of trainees as an issue of externally imposed systems which assessment tutors respond to by following a set of clearly defined procedures my line of investigation would focus on the political and institutional decisions which are used to define the systems. The enquiry might consider how one aspect of the system impacts on the trainee grades. If I regard the process as a complex set of social interactions where meanings are created from expectations and connections in the artificial environment of the classroom my line of enquiry would focus on individuals and how they react in different situations depending upon the social context. The line of enquiry might then involve discussions with the trainees and tutors about the interactions occurring in the classroom environment and how these influence assessment processes. This approach to ontological considerations example is summarised by Thomas (2009):

'Is the social world in which we are interested best seen as comprising simple variables, or matters such as the interaction among people?'

(Thomas, 2009, p. 86).

The clear cut choice of two different approaches to the enquiry outlined above is open to interpretation and discussion and it may be that the issue of trainee assessment could be perceived from both of the stances outlined. My stance is that I regard the assessment process as both politically and institutionally influenced and also dependent on social interactions in the classroom work space. The review of literature and particularly chapter 3, will explore some of the issues of political influence inherent in the assessment process. The empirical research will explore the assessment strategies within the social environment of the classroom.

1.3.2 Epistemology

Secondly, there are the epistemological assumptions which lead on from the ontological stance about *what* we are looking at it is likely that we will begin to consider *how* we look at the social world. This then leads to a consideration of the epistemological stance and a consideration of the models and paradigms which will provide the theoretical framework for the study.

There is a need to question established views and approaches to educational practices (Thomson & Walker, 2010). Some of the key influences in the social sciences promote critical thinking and adopt an analytical viewpoint which challenges accepted epistemology. For example, Foucault (1980) explained his purpose is:

'not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power... to build little by little a strategic knowledge' (p.145).

In examining the nature of power Foucault (1980) was aiming to describe the character of power in society and the mechanisms by which power:

'reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (p. 30).

Other traditional educational stances such as constructivism, post constructivism and postmodernism are viewed through emerging theoretical lenses as outlined by Maton and Moore (2010) in their book about social realism. They suggest that social realism offers a theoretical stance for educational research which avoids the two extreme options of 'positivist absolutisms or constructivism realism'. They argue that

knowledge in itself can be the focus, the object of research without deciding on either a socially constructed understanding or a value-free contextualised position (Maton & Moore, 2010).

The relevance of this discussion of stances and theories is the impact these have on shaping and leading the research focus on the assessment of trainee teachers. The research project is based in teacher education and it is appropriate to consider my own philosophical stance in this context. Teacher education is historically ensconced in politics and historical influences and these have impacted on my view of teaching. Underlying philosophical views have shaped my own priorities and epistemological stance; my aim is to articulate why teacher education is worthwhile and this research project a valid endeavour.

In order to articulate and explain my theoretical stance it is important to analyse my view of education, and in particular teacher education, from an intellectual standpoint. In undertaking '*an intellectual evacuation*' (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2008, p. 23) the bedrock values of teacher education from my stance will be revealed. Hansen (2008) outlines some of the widely regarded features viewed as the key purpose of teacher education including preparation for life, intellectual study, human development, justice and social equality. These values in themselves are predicated by a view of education itself being a worthwhile activity, this view is debatable and worthy of a more in depth examination. The key values identified by Hansen (2008) are entwined but can cause conflict when advocates of one value regard that as the most important aspect of teacher education. I will outline some of the theoretical stances applicable to this study.

The assessment of trainee teachers is completed as part of a socially constructed world involving individuals and groups working in defined roles. Trainees relate to tutors in school and from university in a range of ways which are not easily quantifiable and rely on dialogue and discussion to comprehend. The theoretical approach which relates to this understanding is the communities of practice which relates to the work of Lave & Wenger (1991). The communities of practice model will be explored in more depth in chapter 4.

The epistemological stance underpinning my research approach originates from an interpretivist stance which is aimed at understanding human behaviour and acknowledges that knowledge acquired from social research contexts is not easily generalised. I understand research as a social activity that is subjective and not governed by 'laws' (Bryman, 2008). Researchers have applied a range of models to explain social research phenomena including Bassey's (1999) model in which he explains how social research can generate predictions based on 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1999, p. 3). Bassey's (1999) work concerns case studies but applies to this cross sectional research design as there is resonance with the notion of 'fuzzy predictions' as a combination of professional judgements and empirical data which is a feature emerging in this research.

Bassey has a background in science; he has two degrees in chemistry and conducted research in the sciences as a chemistry researcher in his early career. This scientific positivist approach to research was his starting point and original epistemological stance. As he moved into a career in education and educational research he began to reconsider this stance in relation to research within the social sciences context and constructed an alternative research strategy namely the

concept of fuzzy generalisation. He outlines the issue of generalisations and the notion that scientists can gather data and by careful control of the variables they can draw generalisations which can be applied in new situations and can be used to predict future happenings.

This strict control of variables is not applicable to classroom situations. A lesson may be taught one day to a group of children with a set of outcomes in terms of the children's knowledge and understanding, however, the same lesson can be taught the following day with a different set of outcomes as it is not possible to control the range of variables existing in complex educational situations. The issue for researchers in the educational context is that policy makers seem to expect that scientific generalisations can be made based upon the research conducted. This is not possible as educational researchers are unable to define measure and control all of the variables within the educational setting.

The fundamental issue of predictability and the nature of research have been considered by researchers, for example, Usher (1996) identifies the esteem in which generalisation and predictability is regarded within the context of empirical research:

'A generalisation is prized precisely because, in not being limited to a particular setting, it is seen as making application possible. Thus generalisations have been traditionally considered the highest level of research and very often what research should strive for... In the natural sciences generalisations are sought because they enable predictions to be made'

(Usher, 1996, p. 10).

The positivist epistemological approach to scientific research which provides secure predictable outcomes provided the impetus for Bassey to consider an alternative

research model applicable to the social sciences context and underpinned by ‘fuzzy logic’ (Kosko, 1994, p. 18).

The term ‘fuzzy logic’ has its origins in ideas and terms used in the 1960s and by Kosko in his book *Fuzzy Thinking* in 1994. It was later used to describe educational terms related to assessments by Fourrali (1997). Bassey aimed to provide a model which would be credible within the context of educational research and outlined an approach to predictions in educational settings which was predicated by a rethink of the issue of generalisations. The idea that generalisations may be true in most situations but not in all is based upon the fuzzy notion that ‘everything is a matter of degree’ (Kosko, 1994, p. 18). The onus is on the researcher to outline the conditions in which the prediction may or may not be true with clear enunciation of the conditions likely for either outcome (Bassey, 2001, p. 10).

This use of generalisations in terms of likely predictions is what educational researchers seek. Teachers are interested in what actions have happened in other classrooms and in the likelihood of being able to predict what might happen in their classroom if the same action is used. Policy makers, for example, in my context course directors and lecturers, are interested to learn about research and the consequences of policies in other settings and how the predicted outcomes might be played out in the host setting.

Bassey acknowledges that the notion of ‘fuzzy predictions’ where professional judgements are used to consider the likelihood of something occurring based on literature and experience could be criticised as no more than a ‘politician’s sound bite’ (Bassey, 2001, p. 19) and consequently could have little credibility. However he

provides a convincing model which is supported by a number of researchers including Hammersley (2001a).

Bassey identifies three types of generalisations, namely, scientific, statistical and fuzzy. The first two generalisations are based upon a scientific positivist approach but following a focus on social research he began to develop a model based on uncertain predications and explains that the fuzzy generalisations have a degree of uncertainty, which the first two categories do not have, but reliable predictions can still be made based upon specific contexts and conditions. In Bassey's work, which relates to mainly case study research, he suggests that:

'a fuzzy prediction replaces the certainty of scientific generalisation ('x in y circumstances results in z') by the uncertainty, or fuzziness, of statements that contain qualifiers ('x in y circumstances may result in z')

(Bassey, 2001, p. 1).

The paper also indicates that the likelihood of 'z' occurring can be justified by the researcher's explanation of 'the best estimate of trustworthiness' (Bassey, 2001, p. 2) where the empirical data is used alongside professional judgment. He suggests that theoretical models of causal relationships can be identified before they are proven with scientific laws. It is worth considering how social interactions can be proven with scientific laws and this is explored later in Bassey's theoretical explorations. Bassey suggests that in conclusions to education research projects the summary of empirical research evidence should include fuzzy predictions. The results explain what has actually been found with a given group of people and events and the fuzzy prediction would extrapolate the findings to suggest what might happen with a group of similar events and people. This approach will be evident in chapter 8 of the study. Bassey's

work has been reviewed by social researchers who recognise his model has value within the social research context (Hammersley, 2001a).

In the case of this project the underpinning model of interpretivism has resonance with my research as I intend to understand the importance of context to the assessment process and plan to investigate the procedures involved by questioning the trainees being assessed in order to gain a greater understanding of the process.

1.3.3 Interpretivism

A greater explanation and critique of interpretivism will be discussed to explain the link with my research focus. Interpretivism arises from the issues of attempting to apply a positivist model to research in the social sciences and the realisation that an alternative epistemological paradigm is required. Research in the social sciences is a complex process as has been outlined above in relation to Bassey's model of fuzzy predictions. Work in the social science context includes a wide range of variables. Some research design methods used by social scientists attempt to use a 'true' experimental design or more frequently a quasi-experimental design. Researchers in this field argue that true experimental design is the only method which is concerned with causality and hence predictability (Smith, 1991). Smith argues that in true experiments variables can be controlled and alternative explanations can be eliminated from studies and as a result clear causality can be established and outcomes explained.

However, the claims made by researchers about the methods used in true experiments are contestable as the model is premised by notions of isolation and control of variables (Cohen, et al., 2007). The ethical issues involved in attempting to

create a restrained environment where variables are controlled are questionable within the educational context of social research.

Interpretivism is a broad epistemological approach which incorporates a range of paradigms but all involve a fundamental starting point that we are interested in individuals and how they relate to each other. This approach is concerned with what people think about the world around them and how these ideas are formed. The aim is to develop an understanding of the ideas and concepts people have and in order to gain this understanding we need to immerse ourselves in the research and collect information about people's views and ideas about their world. There is a notion that knowledge is located in relationships between people. This approach is the antithesis to positivism as there is no discussion about variables and controls but rather of understanding and interpreting the views and behaviours of others (Cohen, et al.,2007). In relation to my focus on the assessment of trainees I aim to gain insights into the assessment process in order to try and understand it in more depth. This approach acknowledges the centrality of my involvement in the process and the subjective nature of the research. In adopting this approach I have identified my position and how this 'positionality' could affect my interpretation. This will also impact on the validity of the research as the central role of interpreting the data is taken by the person designing and collecting the data within their own work space. In this sense it is important for my position to be made explicit.

As a lecturer and supervisor of trainees on teaching practice I am committed to my role in enabling all the trainees in the faculty to become outstanding teachers. As an intrinsic part of the qualified teacher training course all trainees have a number of school based placements where they practice their teaching skills. My research focus

is to find out what trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about how trainees are assessed during this process. I am very involved in the process of assessing trainee teachers on teaching practice and have noted a number of changes and additions to the assessment process over recent years. A number of these changes have arisen due to nationally imposed regulations governing the training of teachers. For example the teaching standards (QTS), introduced in 1998, were updated in 2002, 2008 and 2012. With each update there has been an increased focus on measurable quantifiable assessment standards which have had implications for faculty policies. In addition the political changes in recent years have also impacted heavily on the assessment processes as will be outlined in chapter 3. Other faculty based changes to the assessment of trainees have occurred in the last few years, again due to the change in national regulations, namely Ofsted inspection processes and the increased use in the inspection system of a numerical grade as a descriptor for teaching skills. Increased accountability and pressures to provide evidence have led to an expanded use of formal assessments and summative grades during the assessment process. The nature of education and the speed of national changes mean that strategies are frequently introduced without the time for a systematic review of the procedures involved.

My research within this context is underpinned by subjectivity as I aim to find out what the stakeholders involved in this assessment process think about these systems and ultimately hope to offer some observations and suggestions for improvements, if appropriate, or offer endorsements of the strategies based upon the research context and methodology outlined in chapters 2 and 5. This may provide increased credibility to the systems used.

1.4 Summary

The aim of this first chapter has been to outline the research focus and context within a theoretical framework. This summary begins with a discussion regarding the naming conventions used in this thesis. Philosophical and political views impact upon the research including the nomenclature used to describe teacher training. Names are used to provide us with a way of mentally structuring the world and relates to our cultural experiences. There is a longstanding debate (Allen, 1940) about the naming conventions used to describe teacher training based on the use of two terms 'teacher training' and 'teacher education'. The term 'teacher training' relates to technical-rational view of teacher training which implies that teaching is a craft with clearly defined actions. The term 'teacher education' suggests that it is an educational process involving reflection. The use of these terms then determines the choice of either 'trainee' or 'student'. The terms used in this study relate to the current view of teacher training from the policy makers (DfE, 2011a) and is not meant to imply a particular view of teacher training/education. This discussion will be developed in chapter 2 where the review of literature related to the project begins.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW: ASSESSMENT

2.1 Introduction

This research is conducted in a higher education institute; the focus is the assessment processes used to assess trainee teachers. This chapter will focus on reviewing the literature in these key areas; assessment and specifically assessment in higher education. This chapter contains five main sections: assessment in the educational context; assessment theories; assessment in higher education; assessment in initial teacher training contexts and concluding comments.

The first section starts with a definition of assessment related to educational settings and a discussion about the place of assessment in the educational context. Secondly there is an outline of some key principles and learning theories underpinning the assessment process. The aim in this second section is to consider the theories, practices and policies related to this research context by exploring the key concepts debates and key findings in the area. The chapter then begins to consider relevant assessment theories related to education with a discussion on aspects of formative and summative assessment processes. Thirdly, the broader context and place of assessment within the specific higher education stage will be outlined. In the fourth part there will be a closer reflection on research related to the specific project focus on assessment in higher education of initial trainee teachers on ITT courses in order to identify the key areas of study and themes in previous research in the area of assessment of trainee teachers on teaching practice.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the context of the research and a discussion about the gaps in previous research studies and identification of the

specific research questions. The aim of this chapter is to produce a synopsis and evaluation of the current scholarly knowledge on this topic.

In conducting a review of literature key decisions were made to ensure quality papers were included and those of lower quality or less relevant were not included. These factors also apply to the literature reviewed in chapters three and four which follow. The aim was to identify, interpret and analyse published research literature to add validity to the research and ensure the status of knowledge included in the study is appropriate and transparent. Two key factors were used in the search; a practical search and a methodological search (Fink, 2005, p. 55).

The practical search originates with the research questions and specific terms contained in the research questions have been used to search academic databases. The literature review has been conducted to discover what is already known about the topic and to provide evidence that this research addresses a new aspect in the area and contributes to the knowledge in this field. The content, publication date, settings and funding sources of each research project were all considered. Research outside the remit of the research questions have been disregarded, for example, studies which are situated in the *secondary* school training context have not been included.

In order to decide on the quality of the research some key factors were used. High quality sources were used as the basis for the search with a focus on peer reviewed journals and scholarly, highly regarded texts. Seminal research and texts in this area including Black and William (1998a) and Bloxham & Boyd (2007) have been included in the review. Relevant conference proceedings and quality websites have also been included. Highly regarded systematic reviews such as those published by the EPPI

Centre (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre) have also been incorporated in the research.

The methodology is the second key factor to be considered; this has been examined for each study cited to identify the best available studies. Studies with rigorous methodologies '*deriving sound conclusions from valid evidence*' have been the focus (Fink, 2005, p. 55). The highest quality studies which adhere to rigorous research standards have taken prominence.

The focus of this review is the assessment of initial trainee teachers on ITT courses. Key questions will be explored with an increased spotlight on the specific research question and a focused critical review and evaluation of the key evidence base and analysis of empirical evidence. As Fink notes:

'A research literature review is an explicit method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners'

(Fink, 2005, p. 3).

The purpose is to contextualise this research project and to provide justification for the selected topic by identifying how the research topic will add depth to the existing knowledge base.

There are two main approaches to reviewing the literature for academic research a *descriptive* review and a *systematic* review. In order to clarify these methodologies and explain the choice used for this study I will offer a definition of these two key approaches. One method to review the academic knowledge in this area would be to conduct a *systematic* review of the literature. In using this term I am referring specifically to a scientific approach to the literature often used by health care professionals as they conduct exhaustive reviews of the knowledge about one key

area. This type of review has specific criteria and involves collating evidence which fits into a pre- specified criteria to address a specific research question.

Systematic reviews include a methodological section which identifies specific data bases and journals which are used in the search. Each article is then systematically analysed against very specific pre- determined criteria for relevance and eligibility. There will be an objective assessment of methodological quality which is clearly defined and strictly adhered to. The next step in a systematic review is to use statistical techniques to analyse the data. Often very specific methods are used as a team of researchers may be involved in the literature review and objective transparent search criteria are used (Higgins and Green, 2011).

The concept of a *systematic* review of literature was considered but the implicit positivist view of research inherent in a systematic review is contrary to my research methodology which involves an interpretivist model to consider how trainees are assessed and which strategies might be more applicable. In attempting to apply specific search criteria to the search I discovered that simplistic rules often need to be modified. For example, in attempting to search only for literature relevant to the UK system I adapted the search when I discovered the wealth of relevant literature related to portfolios from the US.

'It is important to remember that we are not faced with a dichotomy between rational rule-following and irrational judgement. Rather, even the most simple rule-following involves some judgement; and rational decision-making will often take the form of the interpretation of principles rather than the 'application' of rules'

(Hammersly, 2001b, p. 546).

There are other researchers who are critical of a systematic review of literature and acknowledge the need to apply critical thinking and intelligent reading and writing to the research review process (MacLore, 2004).

However, the findings from a highly relevant systematic review entitled: *'What is known about successful models of formative assessment for trainee teachers during school experiences and what constitutes effective practice?'* conducted in 2003 by Moyles and Yates has been included as it provides evidence of the research conducted in this area and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The alternative descriptive review of literature has been used as the approach for this study:

'Descriptive reviews rely on knowledge and experiences in identifying and interpreting similarities and differences in the literature's purposes, methods and findings'

(Fink, 2005, p. 226).

The *descriptive* review has much in common with a *systematic* review in that it also has explicit search strategies and clear criteria for including pertinent studies. They differ in how the findings and conclusions of research papers are interpreted.

Systematic reviews use statistical techniques to examine and compare studies whereas *descriptive* reviews rely on experience and evidence to interpret and compare the studies, therefore the *descriptive* review is more applicable for this study (Fink, 2005).

2.2 Assessment in the educational context

Assessment is integral to the educational process and it is important to consider what we mean by assessment in this context. Assessment is a term used in everyday life where it is used to pass judgement on others, on things and ideas (Broadfoot, 1996)

and is also common in broad social terms. It is an evaluative term and as '*education is one of the most evaluative settings*' (Broadfoot, 1996, p. 4) it is clear that assessment has a particular significance in educational settings.

Educational assessment is a complex practice as it involves an evaluative judgemental process based upon a range of factors within a social context (Goodman, 2012). Assessment is used for different functions including grading, reporting, diagnosis and motivation and the function may determine the assessment tool selected. The tools to collect evidence are varied and highly debated. Some assert that the term 'assessment' suggest a process of objective measurement (Drummond, 1994) but given the range of variables and factors influencing the assessment process, other researchers question this approach and suggest a more subjective model is applicable (Hansen, 1994).

Two main conceptual frameworks to assessment arise from these two theoretical backgrounds, namely, summative from the objective model and formative assessment arising from the subjective framework. Although there are other types of assessment for different purposes, within this thesis these are the two models which will be the focus for the research. Summative assessment is used to summarise progress (Stobbart & Gipps, 1997) usually at the end of a course or unit of study (Martin, 1997) and is then reported in some way. Formative assessment is aimed at supporting the learning process and involves suggestions and guidance for the learner to enable them to progress (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

One of the key debates in recent years has been around the issue of assessment *for* learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a). This is where a formative model is used to provide feedback which helps to move the learner forward and is intrinsically linked to the

learning process. In relation to the study both summative and formative models are used to assess the students on teaching practices and one of the areas of investigation will be a discussion about the effectiveness of these two models from the perspective of those involved in the process.

2.3 Assessment theories

Assessment has been a feature of education for centuries. As one of the earliest philosophers, Socrates, used question and answers as a key approach to his dialectic method of inquiry. In China, from 2000 BC, civil servants were selected by an annual examination (Min&Yang, 2001) which was used to exert political control. Mass examinations were a key feature of the UK education system from the 19th century and were designed to sort students into groups for specific vocations (Miller, 2006).

Assessment in education has been an aspect of scholarly research for a number of years, for the purpose of this study there will be an outline of assessment theories and initiatives developed since 1988 when the National Curriculum (DES, 1988) was introduced leading to aspects related to the assessment of teachers since 1998 when the first standards for teachers were published (DfEE, 1998b).

Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) were introduced for 7-year-olds for the academic year ending July 1991 and for 11-year-olds in the academic year ending July 1995. This marked the start of an era of assessment in schools where results were shared with parents and school results were published in the public forum.

Research began to consider how assessment related to learning. The seminal work conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998b) outlined key features of formative assessment which have been adopted by a number of schools. The formative

assessment model is framed by learning theories from the constructivism stance. Vygotsky's (1986) work correlates to models of formative assessment where the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is used in terms of instruction and assessment. This has been explicitly analysed by Warford (2010) where the ZPD is used to explain the relationship between the tutor (the supportive other) and the student (individual learner) on teaching practice. In analysing the findings of this study it appears that Warford's (2010) explanation of the potential for assessment to be 'dynamic assessment' offers a conceivable model for dialogic democratic processes of assessment on teaching practice. The application of this theoretical framework could offer insights into the assessment strategies investigated in this study and the extent to which trainees perceive the process as dialogic and democratic. Vygotsky (1986 p.51) stated that '*direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless*'. Instead, the approach described by Warford (2010) involves the tutor and student interacting to identify targets to develop skills by verbal interaction. The social interaction between the tutor and the student is the mediating tool in the learning process. This suggested application of Vygotsky's model includes a discussion about mediating the observation and feedback process by negotiating the focus between the tutor and the student. This is an idealised model and does not take into account the influence of externally imposed agendas and policies which impact on the open mediation suggested by Warford (2010).

Piaget's (1970) theories also have resonance when related to formative assessment especially with regard to self-assessment. The intellectual basis of formative assessment is that positive feedback provides a stimulus to the activities of self-regulation and transformation; essential elements, in Piagetian epistemology, for

generating higher aspects of intelligence (Piaget, 1970). Empirical work completed by Black and Wiliam (1998b), illustrated how formative assessment strategies help students to become more mindful and aware of their learning through the processes of self-regulation and transformation. The method is based on positive feedback to provide a stimulus to the thought processes for students. This relates to the observations of trainees on teaching practice and the subsequent feedback which provides the trainee with the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and to mediate future action points with the tutor.

Summative assessment, within the context of higher education, can also be considered within a theoretical framework. Reliability and validity are two aspects, identified by Bloxham and Boyd (2007), as key components related to conflicting aspects of assessment. Positivist approaches to assessment would argue that without reliability, there is no validity. The intrinsic validity of an assessment method can be judged by how well the assessment task assesses the stated learning outcome (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). For example, in the research project, a summative grade is allocated at the end of the final teaching practice to assess the trainees' teaching skills; if this is a valid assessment method one assumption might be that the trainees would have confidence in, and agree with, the grade allocated at the end of the practice. This issue will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

In considering Bloxham & Boyd's (2007) assertions the reliability and validity would be the key aspects to explore from the trainees' perspective.

2.4 Assessment in higher education

In recent years political decisions have continued to impact on assessment in higher education; the widening participation agenda appears to have had some influence on

assessment practices (Rust, 2002). There are a range of innovative approaches to assessment and a number of research projects which identify alternative approaches to assessment such as those outlined by Beaumont (2007) and Edwards & McKinnell (2007).

Additional concerns in the area of assessment in higher education relate to the continuous spotlight on student disquiet with the assessment processes in the university context (Kovacs et al., 2010) which frequently headlines in student satisfaction surveys (see Appendix 8). The exception to this general disquiet is the National Student Survey (HEFCE, 2012) scores for the Open University where there are exceptionally high NSS scores for assessment and feedback (Gibbs, 2010).

Some researchers believe that '*...getting assessment right is crucial to the whole of the student experience at University*' (Bloxham, 2012, p. 1).

The emphasis placed on assessment in higher education signals to students what tutors think is important and where their focus should be placed. A specific aspect relating to teacher training is the issue of assessing professional competence using the qualified teacher standards which involves school based colleagues and adds a further dimension to the assessment debate (Bloxham, 2012).

Key literature in the area of assessment and education is broad and detailed. Recent research on the assessment of trainee teachers has considered the role of the portfolio in the assessment process (Berg & Curry, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Meeus, et al., 2009; Zeichner & Wray, 2001) both as a tool to develop a reflective approach and as a mechanism to provide evidence of standards. A number of different areas have been examined, for example, where students adopt a range of approaches to assessment ranging from a strategic approach, where the

aim is to complete the assessment with the least effort possible to pass the module (Gibbs, 2006, p. 15), to more thoughtful deep approaches to their learning where the assessment process is regarded as an opportunity to explore ideas and develop thinking skills (Gardner-Medwin, 2006).

A strategic approach to assessment may be related to the system of modular teaching with tightly focused learning outcomes which began to gain momentum following the Dearing report. One of the main recommendations of the report was for:

'... all institutions of higher education to give high priority to developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies which focus on the promotion of students' learning'

(Dearing, 1997, p. 116).

The underlying suggestion was that some higher education institutes did not focus sufficiently on students' learning prior to this report. One of the consequences of this recommendation in terms of assessment was that there were more clearly defined learning outcomes with the aim of supporting students through assessment processes in order to make assessment criteria transparent. This in turn has led to concerns about the quality of learning.

'It is already apparent in outcome –based systems that an instrumental attitude of just doing what is needed for assessment reduces the desire to do anything challenging or cognitively difficult'

(Ecclestone, 1999, p. 47).

This conclusion is also drawn by Norton (2004) who then begins to consider how the assessment criteria could be reconceptualised as 'learning criteria'. This view is not without critics and some researchers suggest that detailed assessment outcomes and criteria support students and help them to develop their understanding

(Harrington, et al., 2006). There is tension regarding the assessment processes and this will be one aspect which will be considered.

Assessment is a complex area of study and involves a number of factors and theoretical stances which have been the basis for investigation over many years. A recurring focus involves researchers discussing the relevance of formative assessment as a tool to aid learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). The issue of student feedback, which is a central element of formative assessment, is an area key to the observation and feedback strategy which is a key component of the teaching practice assessment processes.

The review of the Qualified Teacher Standards (QTS) which began in March 2011 (Gove, 2011) and was implemented into policy in 2012 highlights some of the ideological differences between ITT providers and politicians. In June 2010, Michael Gove, the Minister for Education, stated his view of teaching as a 'craft' best learned in the classroom as an apprenticeship model. Conversely, many teacher educators suggest that trainee teachers should establish teaching skills which rely on innovative and experimental teaching approaches (Harber, 2009; Warford, 2010; Wray, 2007; Zeichner & Wray 2001).

Underpinning this review of the QTS is the 2010 white paper (DfE, 2010) which outlines the most comprehensive review of teacher training for many years and suggests that the most appropriate way forward for teacher training is to become more school based and less university based. This approach appears to be based upon ideological rather than evidence based reasons (Whitehead, 2011). The ethos of this approach is to regard teaching as a technical-rational skills based occupation

(Shils, 1978) as opposed to a reflective developmental process. This is another area of tension in the research project context.

2.5 ITT and assessment

A number of research studies have been conducted around assessment in higher education; the focus now will shift to studies specifically related to the context of assessment of ITT school based training:

'While there is a significant body of literature concerning practice teaching, research focused on the assessment of the practicum has largely been ignored'

(Brooker et al., 1998, p. 5).

This was the conclusion of Brooker's literature review conducted in 1998 in Australia, since then there have been more studies concentrating on the assessment of trainee teachers on their teaching practice.

Two key areas of study, with resonance to my research, have emerged from the review of the literature, namely, portfolios as a tool for assessment, and standards and competencies. Studies in these two areas will be critically analysed.

Bloxham (2012) has provided an overview of assessment and learning in higher education contexts and identifies 'tacit knowledge' as a key component of the assessment process in ITT institutions. Tacit knowledge can be described as the knowledge, procedures and rules of our discipline and has resonance within the context of school based assessments of primary school teachers.

2.5.1 Portfolios as an assessment tool

Tacit knowledge is assessed in the school context in many ways. The first area of study relates to the use of portfolios as a formative assessment tool. The use of

portfolios as an assessment tool has been discussed nationally and internationally and some common themes emerge. A number of studies (Schaaf & Stokking, 2008; Meeus et al., 2009) attempt to evaluate the validity of the portfolio as an assessment tool and conclude that even where portfolios are closely linked to standards, validity is difficult. Meeus et al., (2009) suggest that portfolios are effective where they complement other assessment tools.

Other researchers (Berg & Curry, 1997; Willis & Davies, 2002) discuss the purpose of portfolios as a tool to support professional and personal development, and all point to the complex nature of the assessment of teaching. In the same manner Zeichner & Wray (2001) identify ways that portfolios can support greater reflection in trainees and improve professional development. Zeichner and Wray (2001) stress the link between the quality of the reflections and the concept of 'authentic' assessments which gain validity for trainees and teacher educators. Similarly the theoretical model outlined by Warford (2010) identifies the writing process as a tool for teacher development. Although there is general agreement about the use of portfolios there were some researchers who identified the need for moderation and standardisation of assessment portfolios to ensure rigour and reliability (Brooker et al., 1998; Erickson & Wentworth, 2010; Tummons, 2009). Other researchers agree with Zeichner & Wray (2001) that 'authentic' methods (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Delandshere & Arens, 2001; Sambell, 2011) were best received by students and certainly this concurs with the key principles identified by a number of researchers concerned with assessment in higher education:

'Importantly, we know that students discriminate between assessment tasks that are 'just hurdles to jump' and those which are 'relevant' or feel authentic in some way. Authenticity may be gauged against activities which are likely to be useful in the world outside HE, such as in employment'

(Sambell, 2011, p. 11).

The research emerging from the US identifies the benefits of the portfolio system in helping to develop reflective practitioners (Delandshere & Arens, 2001; Wray, 2007; Zeichner & Wray, 2001). One study (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000) where seven teacher education programs in a number of states were researched, offers a more critical examination of the issues of portfolios. In this study a number of student portfolios were examined in depth and were compared with other methods of assessment including case studies and problem solving methods. Darling-Hammond & Snyder 's (2000) conclusions highlighted the need for assessment processes to be fully embedded in the learning culture and not seen as an 'add-on' to ensure that the assessment process is authentic and meaningful to the students. The effective use of portfolios appears to have positive implications with regards to the transition from good studentship to good practice in the classroom,

'An assessment model that can shape professional growth is very useful in creating the seamless fabric between pre-service training and practice in the classroom'

(Berg & Curry, 1997, p. 84).

One major systematic review systematically examined several studies related to the formative assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice and concluded their review with some relevant comments about portfolios. This review entitled '*What is known about successful models of formative assessment for trainee teachers during school experiences and what constitutes effective practice?*' conducted in 2003 by Moyles and Yates has particular relevance for my research. The review was supported and part funded by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to promote the use of research and evidence to improve teaching and

learning and was conducted in a rigorous manner. Despite the criticisms of the systematic review (Fink, 2005; MacLore, 2004) this review has examined a wide range of research and the methodology and data analysis appears robust and can therefore be regarded as a reliable source of information. This review (Moyle and Yates, 2003) was undertaken by the Centre for Research into Education and Teaching (CREATe) within the School of Education at Anglia Polytechnic University (APU). The systematic review of the research literature about successful models of formative assessment for trainee teachers during school experiences was completed following the procedures for systematic reviews developed by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the Institute of Education in the University of London. The search strategy and decision making processes are well documented and explain how the studies published between 1987 and 2002 were the focus of the review. Using the criteria, 233 papers were considered in the study and five were identified for an in-depth review. The EPPI-Centre is well recognised in the field of social sciences research and uses detailed transparent search techniques to inform policy and professional practice. A critical stance needs to be considered as any review process must include judgements about what to include (or not) and in terms of these reviews the researchers may be approaching the review from a particular political or theoretical standpoint (Hammersly, 2001b; MacLore, 2004).

This study was aimed at finding out what was known about successful models of formative assessment for trainee teachers during school experiences with the aim of identifying effective practice. The research selected for inclusion in the study was scrutinised and all empirical data was examined and checked in detail by

experienced researchers working in a respected organisation. The review defined effectiveness as related to validity and reliability.

One of the key summary points arising from this review was the positive regard for portfolios as an effective means of formative assessment. After surveying all of the studies within the scope of the review it was concluded that the evidence identified portfolios as the most effective formative assessment tool. However they also concluded that the findings arising from the two studies (Berg & Curry, 1997; Willis & Davies, 2002) had issues with 'trustworthiness' and in general there was a '*...lack of quality research in the field and this highlights the need for more focused research to be undertaken*' (Moyles & Yates, 2003, p. 2).

2.5.2 Standards and competencies

The second significant area of study identified in the literature review centres on standards and competencies. The standards agenda in initial teacher training is policy driven and the issue of politics in this arena will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. When standardised competencies began to be introduced in ITT it was an international trend. In the USA a closer scrutiny on teacher training had a direct impact on teacher assessment and the introduction of standardised assessments (Bell & Youngs, 2011); standards were introduced in Australia (Brooker et al., 1998), Hong Kong (Tang, 2008) and many European countries (Foster, 2006). In reviewing the literature in this area there are some researchers that welcome a functional framework with criterion based standards (Brooker et al., 1998) whereas many others discuss the significance of *how* the standards are implemented being a key aspect to their success. Tang (2008) explains how in her research the standards were used effectively to promote professional development where they were used as

a tool for professional dialogue. Delandshere & Arens, (2001) are more critical of a uniform standards based approach and are concerned that the debate about standards per se moved forward to a discussion about how they could be implemented without a real professional debate about the relevance of the standards in the teaching context. Martin & Cloke (2000) have similar concerns and question whether standards which are attempting to be objective and rational can be used to assess the dynamic process of teaching with all the contextual variables. Darling-Hammond et al., (2010) offer the most in-depth and relevant research in their project where they discuss the importance of '*authentic assessments of teachers*' (Darling-Hammond and Snyder 2010, p. 525).

This aspect of authentic assessments taking place in school based experiences can be illustrated by an explanation of a research study completed by Hewitt and Smith (2007) examining the work placements of trainee teachers. Questionnaires of 143 second year teacher training students revealed some interesting results. Overall the students were very satisfied with their school based experiences and the methods of assessment used despite the fact that ten per cent of the cohort had an unsuccessful experience. In this study students were assessed via lesson observations undertaken weekly by the class teacher or the university based tutors and received verbal and written feedback on the lesson taught. In addition students had weekly review meetings and a final report written by their university tutor or class teacher. Case studies in this research project provided further qualitative data on student satisfaction which identified dialogue, in the formative assessment process, as a strength of the experience. The students appear to respect this method of

assessment as the purpose is clear and it has a direct impact on their career in teaching (Hewitt & Smith, 2007).

Two international research studies will be analysed in more depth to provide greater insight into the use of standards to assess trainee teachers. The first research to be discussed was undertaken by Tang (2008). She conducted research in Hong Kong about the professional standards used for assessing professional competency. Her research involved collecting data from various stakeholders of school based assessment through focus groups, individual interviews, and recording of post-observation discussions about the role of a standards based progress map in charting trainee teachers' progress on teaching experiences. She concluded that the approach to the standards based assessment was crucial. Where the standards were used as a policy mechanism about the quality of teaching the process was in danger of being mechanistic and over simplified. On the other hand where the standards were used as a basis for professional dialogue they were more effective in enabling students in training to move forward in their development. She recommended that trainee teachers were more involved in a dialogue and understanding about the assessment process and how this can enable assessors and students to identify aspects of quality teaching '*...the appropriate use of assessment criteria; that is, as conceptual reference for professional development rather than prescriptions of teaching behaviours*' (Tang, 2008, p. 28).

The significance of Tang's study is the re-emergence of a theme threading through the literature review; that of the importance of dialogue in the assessment process described by Warford (2010, p. 255) as '*strategic teacher-student dialogue*'.

The second research project conducted in California went beyond the focus of initial teacher training and examined a structured portfolio assessment based upon the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). PACT is a teacher performance assessment designed to examine '*the planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection skills of student teachers against professional standards of practice*' (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 121). This study differs to Tang's project in that it began to identify the impact that in-service teachers had on the progress of the children in their classes. This study moves to a significant area worthy of investigation in a further study, namely, an examination of the impact the assessment strategies used to assess trainees has on the children in their classes. Pupil progress is an area that the current Ofsted framework is interested in linking to initial teacher training and would be worthy of further investigation.

2.5.3 Common themes

From a review of the literature surrounding the two areas of study i.e. portfolios and standards and competencies based research, a common theme of dialogue and negotiation emerged. Where the assessment focus was underpinned by dialogue the assessment strategies were regarded as positive by trainees. A detailed example of this emerges from Wray's (2007) work where the research conducted in a large USA university focused in depth on how nine students completed their portfolios. They had regular meetings (13 in total) to discuss the content and development of their portfolio with school based staff. A multi-method approach was used to collect the data, drawing largely on the interviews and transcripts of the regular meetings. The discussions about the purpose of the portfolios drove all discussions and activities; it was essential to identify the purpose, audience and process of evidence selection to

ensure that trainees were personally involved in the portfolios and understood and respected their value. Trainees worked together as a group and with the support of school based staff to complete the portfolio; Wray discusses the impact of *'participation in the teacher learning community'* in enabling trainees to engage in a *'collaborative portfolio development process'* (Wray, 2007, p. 1150).

Trainees gained benefits from the professional conversations with their peers and mentors. 'Communities of practice' as a theoretical stance (Wenger, 1998) underpinning this approach will be discussed in chapter 4.

Other researchers also focus on the quality of dialogue used to explore and discuss the teaching following a lesson observation. White (2009) conducted an action research project aimed to improve the quality of feedback given by the assessors. She identified a research informed contextual framework to act as a scaffold for this process and again stressed the importance of a shared understanding of the assessment process. The framework is designed to ensure that the feedback process is effective and of quality and also enables students and assessors to identify the links between university based and school based learning.

The purpose of highlighting dialogical approaches within the literature review is that it is an aspect which will be explored later in the thesis when interpreting the data in chapter 7.

A second common theme emerging from the literature review is the focus on reflection and analysis as key skills in the development of effective teachers; many researchers e.g. Admiraal et al., 2001; Martin & Cloke, 2000 were critical of a techno-rational approach to teaching skills and aimed to promote assessment systems which generate reflective thinkers:

'...the problem of portfolios being simply a mere collection of largely unrelated, anecdotal assignments gathered together in a single folder can hopefully be avoided'

Admiraal et al., 2011 p 1027.

2.6 Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to provide the context of my research by outlining the literature in this area. The breadth of existing research has resulted in a selected focus on key areas with particular relevance to the research topic. This discriminating approach has ensured that the most significant and applicable work has been given the most attention. This concluding section will offer summary comments about the main issues and challenges surrounding the topic and will provide suggestions for new research opportunities, including my own.

Key findings arising from the review of the literature in the area of assessment in initial teacher training contexts identified some noteworthy issues, the first being the prevalence of research in the area of teacher training assessment in the US compared to work in almost every other country (Berg & Curry, 1997; Dutt-Donter, 1997; Ingersoll & Kinman, 2002; Reiss & Villaume, 2002; Stone, 1998). The research in the US is prolific and one key theme is the subject of portfolio based assessments and the issues related to assessment in light of the standards-based reforms (Delandshere & Arens, 2001). This observation synthesises with the findings in the systematic review completed in 2003 by Moyles & Yates *'The bulk of the studies were of US origin with only 13 loosely relevant studies undertaken in the UK'* (Moyles & Yates, 2003, p. 36).

Research has been conducted in the UK since this systematic review (Black & William, 2009; Hewitt & Smith, 2007) but it still appears apparent that research is

emerging more frequently from other countries including more recently Australia (Dowden, et al., 2013) rather than the UK.

One aspect emerging from the research, which merits further investigation, is the use of electronic methods to support the assessment process. Hewitt and Smith have researched the use of tablet computers as part of the placement visit by the tutor but note that the computer can interfere with the discourse required for effective formative feedback (Hewitt & Smith, 2007). However, where students have used ICT in their portfolios some researchers have noted benefits in trainees' understanding of the learning process. Video portfolios were used as a tool for trainees to facilitate in depth discussions about the learning that had occurred in their lessons (Admiraal, et al., 2011). Other research considered the use of ICT for profiling linked to the QTS (Warford, 2010).

Another key area which needs further research is the *student* view on the feedback process and how this impacts on their learning. Some researchers have included qualitative data to analyse the views of students (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Wray, 2007) but further research needs to be completed in this area.

The model of one to one formative assessment during teaching practice has been identified as another notable aspect. In ITT students are regularly observed teaching during their school experiences and are then provided with one to one verbal formative feedback. Where students have been asked about this form of feedback they comment on it favourably (Foster, 2006).

The need to clearly define the key purpose of any assessment strategy is essential; Bloxham (2008) examines some of the conflicts which arise from the varied purposes of assessment which also concur with other researchers (Zeichner & Wray, 2001).

Bloxham (2008) offers some relevant insights into the effect these key purposes have on teacher training but it is interesting to note that the issue of assessment of teaching practice is only addressed as a peripheral aspect. Bloxham discusses the tensions that arise from the fourfold purpose of assessment, namely: *'certification, quality assurance, student learning and lifelong capacity'* (Bloxham, 2008, p. 13) and notes the need to address some of these challenges. She provides some interesting models of assessment strategies to improve assessment on teacher training courses but they are linked closely to university based training (Bloxham, 2008). Further research is needed to investigate assessment in school based training.

The key models of the formative assessment of trainee teachers on teaching practice are portfolios, one to one oral feedback and written feedback. Although the area of portfolios is well researched other formative methods are less well evidenced and more empirical research is needed. This conclusion identifies a number of possible areas for future research. The breadth of opportunities means that a selective approach is needed. Significant aspects which can feasibly be researched in my context are formative and summative assessment strategies and stakeholders' views of the effectiveness of these strategies. Above all the most beneficial research project will relate to student learning and attempt to offer greater understanding of the link between assessment and learning:

'Teaching is a highly complex profession and the corresponding assessment process should reflect this and, further, where assessment is not simply summative the process should be supportive of trainee teachers' learning and development'

(Martin & Cloke, 2000, p. 189).

As a consequence of this initial literature review my key questions are:

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

Finally, research in this area is limited and the conclusions and comments identified in this chapter are based on a restricted number of studies, consequently, conclusions are rightly tentative and speculative. A closing comment from Bloxham and Carver (2014) summarise the research in the area of higher education assessment research:

'We are not aided by large-scale, robust or repeated studies in many areas of higher education assessment research. Instead we have to work with generally small-scale, practitioner research studies produced by enthusiastic and sometimes inspired teaching staff' (p.124).

CHAPTER 3 THE POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key historical and political aspects related to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in England. The aim is to provide a lucid account of the context of the study by framing it within the social, political and historical perspective. This chapter provides an overview of the government's major policy development in which education, and specifically the strategy for ITT, are discussed.

There are five main sections in this chapter. The first section will outline the rationale and key principles for including a chapter on history and politics and the particular relevance of this subject in the arena of teacher training. The second section considers the historical perspective with reference to teacher education with an overview of key policies from 1846 to 1988 and this leads to section three which provides a closer analysis of policies arising from the 1994 introduction of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA).

The international context has influenced policy makers concerned with ITT and consequently this will be discussed in section four. The concluding section draws together some of the key themes identified in this discussion of the historical and political agenda and links these themes to other chapters.

3.2 Rationale and key principles

A key theme running through this research and identified in chapters one and two is the view of teacher training as a technical- rational (Shils, 1978) process. This section outlines the discussion underpinning this view and considers how far policy makers have influenced this approach.

An important factor regarding initial teacher training in England, is that it is, and nearly always has been, centrally managed by government; the drive by government to control teacher training has always been strong (Furlong, 2013). Governments, of all political parties, have established systems of control over teacher training to regulate the numbers in training, the quality of the training and specification of the curriculum content. It is a centralised constrained system managed by the government in power. Increasingly, in recent years, the control systems have become more domineering and punitive. An example of this is QTS (DfE, 2011b) standard three where one strand refers specifically to the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics. The emphasis on the teaching of phonics manifests in the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) survey (DfE, 2013) which asks new teachers specifically about the effectiveness of their training in preparing them to teach phonics and then uses the response to this question to rank initial teacher training providers (DfE, 2013). Compliance is stressed and is directly linked to the Ofsted grading (Ofsted, 2014) given to ITT institutes and ultimately, funding streams.

In 2011-12 ITT institutes were either university based (80%) or other providers (20 %) (Education Committee, 2012). However alternative routes into teaching are expanding substantially and rapidly and under current government plans:

'It is anticipated that by 2015, over half of all new teachers will enter teaching via the School Direct scheme with a consequent substantial reduction in university led provision'

(Furlong, 2013, p. 4).

This issue, of divergent models of teacher training, and the potential impact on the assessment processes, will be discussed in more depth in the final chapter.

Since the late 1970s, ITT has been debated in great depth and has been subject to government policy initiatives usually based on ideological views. The teaching profession has been reconstructed with an increasing move towards technical-rationalist reforms linked to competencies and standards (Adams & Tulasiewicz, 1995; Bloxham, 2008; Furlong et al., 2000; Martin & Cloke, 2000). During the late 1980s and 1990s and early twenty-first century this process reached a high level of intensity illustrated by the raft of central government ITT legislation (DES, 1984; DfE, 1992; DfE, 1993; DfEE, 1997; DfEE, 1998a; DfES/TTA, 2002; TDA, 2006; DfE, 2010). In fact in 1993 Gilroy (1993) noted that in 14 years there had been 15 Education Bills.

The concept of teacher training has undergone a number of transitions from the political perspective and there remain two largely polarised views of teacher training within the present context. Other views of teacher education from a range of disciplines including philosophical, sociological and psychological perspectives will also provide valuable models but the political perspective remains dominant in this framework.

The two constructions of teacher education arise from distinct theoretical models.

One view is that teacher training is about imparting or delivering (Lawlor, 1990) a set of knowledge and skills to trainee teachers so that they can then transfer this knowledge to the children. In this model the teacher is the 'technician' and the finite set of skills and knowledge are prescribed and rational. This view is underpinned by a technical rationale (Halliday, 1998) view of teacher training:

'It is doubtful that many educational theorists would demur from the view that technicism dominates current policy and practice in teaching and teacher education' (p. 597).

The second view regards teacher training as a route to change society and is concerned with developing pro-active practitioners able to evaluate and make professional decisions about the children in their care with the overall aim of improving society. This view regards teacher training as a vehicle to impart ethical and moral values and, in effect, re-construct society (Tom, 1984).

The research focus area includes a number of themes and emerging tensions related to government policies and initiatives. Current methods of assessment of trainee teachers on teaching practice are focused on two areas. Trainees are assessed using the QTS standards (DfE, 2011b) which provide a broad framework for their skills development and includes aspects of reflective practice. The evidence for the QTS standards is provided in a professional development profile (PDP). Alongside this trainees are assessed summatively and assigned a grade using Ofsted criteria specifically for trainee teachers (UCET/NASBITT , 2012), in the middle and at the end of their teaching practice. In order to understand the current focus on professional competencies we need to reflect on the historical context and how this impacts on contemporary practices.

3.3. Historical context

Examining the historical context of this proposal enables the research to be understood in context and provides a robust justification of the research approach. For the purpose of this study this section will be discussed in two parts. The first section will provide an overview of events from 1846 up to the 1980s/90s. The second part will outline policies and practices emerging from the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in 1994.

3.3.1 History of teacher training in England from 1846 to the 1980s

The first government teaching qualifications were linked to the pupil-teacher scheme which began in 1846. Pupil-teachers completed a five-year apprenticeship in teaching and learning within a school context, and were then allowed to sit the annual Queen's Scholarships examination, which qualified the scholarship holders for places in recognised teacher training colleges.

Teacher training was transformed following the Elementary Education Act of 1870 which established elementary education in England and was the start of mass education. A natural consequence of the move to education for all was the need for a supply of teachers. To address the shortfall Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMI) were given powers to certify teachers after one year's training and to recommend, without examination, serving teachers for the Certificate.

'Between 1870 and 1880 the number of certificated teachers rose from 12,467 to 32,128 and the number of pupil-teachers more than doubled'

(IoE, 2014 para.3).

From 1890 universities were allowed to admit up to 200 students to train to be teachers. The Royal Commission on the Working of the Elementary Education Act established training colleges which had their curricula approved by the Education Department, and inspected by HMI. By 1902 the training of teachers was established as a form of higher education, enabling the new local education authorities (LEAs) to make secondary schools available for the training of pupil teachers.

A dual system of teacher training was established by the early twentieth century. This included teacher training colleges resulting in the Teachers' Certificate and the

emerging University Training Departments which provided training for university graduates.

In the post second world war period there was an urgent need to train teachers which resulted in 55 emergency colleges being established and run by local councils. The scheme remained in operation until 1951 and during this period 35,000 teachers were trained through the emergency scheme. The McNair Report was published in 1944, just months before the 1944 Education Act received Royal Assent. It addressed many of the post war requirements for the supply and training of teachers. Closer links and increased cooperation were founded between colleges and universities. Institutes of Education were established at a number of universities. The status of teachers was established with the recognition by the Board of Education of only one grade of teacher, the 'Qualified Teacher', which would be for people who had "satisfactorily" completed an approved course of education and training. The McNair Report (1944) recommendation that teacher training courses be lengthened to three years was finally implemented in 1960. This scheme ran until the 1980s when teachers usually studied for the one year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or the three or four year B.Ed. degree.

In 1988, the Education Reform Act (HMSO, 1988) established a National Curriculum and paved the way for formal Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and increased accountability in all areas of education. Teachers' independence to teach when and what was being eroded and their influence over the policy making process was minimal. The 'golden age of teacher control' (Le Grand, 1997) from 1944 to the mid-1970s where parents and the state trusted teachers to know what was best for children was gone.

Increased accountability of teachers became a feature of education during the 1980s. In 1985 Keith Joseph (secretary of state for education and science) proposed linking teacher appraisal and performance-related pay. The result was a year of industrial action by teachers. The introduction of a national curriculum, SATS and the publication of league tables further increased the accountability of teachers. As McKenzie (2001) noted:

'Indeed in many ways it seems the claims that there has been a shift from old to new style politics (involving a shift from concerns about emancipation from oppression to concerns about reflexivity and self-actualization) do not fit comfortably with current educational discourse' (p. 7).

The major aim of the state was to establish a national framework of accountability. The Department for Education and Science (DES) and HMI evidence began to question the quality of teacher education. During the 1980s a number of research findings were published by these two bodies. Two reports in particular had a significant impact; they were the two national surveys conducted in 1981 and 1987 which surveyed newly qualified teachers (DES, 1982; DES, 1987). Each survey looked at approximately 300 new teachers in England and Wales and in the judgement of HMI *'nearly one in four were in some respects poorly equipped with the skills needed for teaching'* (Furlong et al., 2000, p 15) and one third stating a dissatisfaction with the training they had received.

In researching the assessment processes used to assess trainee teachers one must consider why assessment has become such a dominant issue in education.

Education and schooling, as perceived today, has its basis in broader historical and theoretical influences.

From the 19th century with the introduction of state funded elementary schools in 1870 the state organised school buildings and education as a response to ‘population management’ (Peim, 2009). The instruments of record keeping and surveillance and the structure of the school buildings and introduction of the figure of ‘the teacher’ provided an edifice of state control which became woven into the fabric of society. Assessment became synonymous with control and conformity with age related norms and national standards the rhetoric of education. Assessments and standards from birth to post compulsory education are the props of current educational policies but in examining these tools I recognise that this view of schooling is only one interpretation of education. In viewing educational practices I appreciate that how we are positioned, the lens through which we view the world, impacts on our understanding. The ideology emulating from some areas was that one clear way to improve the quality of teaching in schools was to re-evaluate initial teacher training:

‘In England, one of the central areas that contemporary governments have looked at in their attempt to change teachers has been the system of initial teacher training. It may be a false assumption, but it has nevertheless been assumed that one significant way of influencing the skills, knowledge and values of teachers – in other words, their professionalism – is to change the form and content of their initial training. This has meant that initial teacher education has increasingly become a major site for political debate and struggle in recent years’

(Furlong et al., 2000, p. 6).

At the start of the 1980s and much of the time prior to this the content and control of teacher education was left largely to colleges and universities. However, once standards and competencies began to be used the speed and range of control was intensified. A number of researchers would argue that the key purpose of these

changes were to undermine the professionalism of teachers (Furlong et al., 2000; Meighan & Siraj Blatchford, 1998).

3.3.2 The Teacher Training Agency

The establishment of the teacher training agency in 1994 marked a turning point in the training of teachers and the start of the use of standards and professional proficiencies to assess school teachers.

The teaching standards (QTS), introduced in 1998 (DfEE, 1998b) were updated in 2002 (DfES/TTA, 2002) and then reviewed in 2008 (TDA, 2008). Prior to this, accountability was monitored using a framework for national competencies which was established in 1993 (DfE, 1993). Leading on to the contemporary context, in March 2011 there was a press announcement by the new government announcing another review:

‘Instead of focussing on the essential skills of great teaching, the current standards are a vague list of woolly aspirations’ (Gove, 2011).

There was strong criticism of the 2008 (TDA, 2008) standards and the implicit message that more measurable, closely defined standards were needed. This has direct implications for my research area. One issue of concern is the extent to which teaching is regarded as a reflective process and the conflict that may arise where assessment processes focus on narrowly defined technical aspects of teaching. This could have an impact on some essential teaching requirements.

The composition of the 2011 review committee provides further evidence of potential bias and questions about the political and epistemological stance of the review members, and more significantly the education department’s policy makers in convening this particular group. Of the fifteen members of the review committee, six

were from academies and none of the members were from ITT institutes. This contrasts with the 2008 review when ITT providers were represented.

The standards arising from the 2011 review were implemented in autumn 2012 (DfE, 2011b) and are a simplified version of the 2008 standards (TDA, 2008). These standards (QTS) represent the present government's view of teacher training.

Another major shift in policy arising from the White Paper in 2010 (DfE, 2010) is the swing to more school based training with less emphasis on initial teacher training in institutes of higher education. These contemporary tensions led to a renewed consideration of the skills and strategies used to assess trainee teachers. ITT providers are accountable for the quality of the trainees completing the course and are under pressure to use robust assessment tools to ensure quality judgements. The present context suggests a focus regarding teacher training as a craft to be learned with the apprenticeship model considered as the preferred option where trainee teachers learn alongside experienced teachers in the school environment.

3.4 Politics

Teaching and teacher education has become a political focus which is both socially constructed and value laden in many countries (Harrison, 2007). Competency based standards agendas have been driven by political forces and researchers have discussed the impact of this trend (Cochran-Smith, 2000). The competencies for teachers in England was established in 1992 with the introduction of *Circular 9/92* (DES, 1992) and these were replaced by the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status in 1998 (DfEE, 1998b). When the standards were reviewed in 2002 (DfES/TTA, 2002) there was a recognition of a key aspect of 'professional competence' which was welcomed by teacher trainers as it acknowledged the complexities and breadth

of the process of teaching. It was also one of the first documents to acknowledge the complexity of the assessment process:

'The many different people involved in assessment-school-based tutors, class teachers, higher education tutors and trainees themselves- need to develop a common understanding of what is involved in meeting the Standards. Assessment against the Standards is a matter of skilled professional judgement made at different times in different contexts, and often draws on evidence from a range of sources collected over time' (TTA, 2003, p. 5).

3.4.1 Government policies

A succession of alternating Labour and Conservative governments has been in power from the 1960s to the present date. Each government has adopted a distinct approach to education and educational policies have reflected these differences. 'Old' Labour (1964-1970 and 1974-1979) established an approach of increased control which has continued to this day. Le Grand & Bartlett (1993) discuss the quasi-markets introduced by the Conservative administration between 1979 and 1997 where market principles began to be applied to English state schools. Legislation gave a greater priority to parental preferences as a means of increasing choice and raising standards. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced market led reforms which created competition between schools, delegation of school budgets and (in theory) increased power for parents to select schools of their choice.

The 'New' Labour government (1997-2010) continued the market orientated philosophy of the previous administration (West & Pennell, 2002) although some would argue that their stance contrasted to the Conservative approach in a number of ways. The key difference was the focus of each administration; the Conservative rhetoric surrounded competition in contrast to the labour focus on social inclusion.

These approaches to education reform in general also impacted specifically on teacher training. Increased control of teacher education aligns with broader philosophical approaches. The post-modern era has seen the rising influence of technical rationality across society, its institutions and functions (Schoen, 1987) and ITT has not been immune to this. Technical rationality attempts to reduce professional practice to clear, precise procedures that can be measured and managed effectively; it is marked by rationalisation and bureaucracy. Policy makers have advocated an increased technical-rational approach to all aspects of ITT including the assessment and quality assurance procedures. The implications of this approach for primary trainee teachers remain the focus of this study.

3.5. The international context

This section will outline the impact of worldwide contexts on some of the policy decisions in the UK education system related specifically to teacher training and highlight how international studies and research have led to global comparisons in education. In this section there will be specific reference to policies in the English education system although many of the points apply to the UK in general.

In teaching, international comparative data is increasingly used to analyse student learning outcomes across countries and this data can be used to impose regulatory mechanisms on the teaching profession and teacher education, including standard setting, teacher testing, evaluation and accreditation of teacher preparation (Tatto, 2006). This issue has also been raised recently by the incumbent government (Gove, 2011).

This comment from 1900 illustrates the historical extent of educational policy 'borrowing':

‘The practical value of studying, in a right spirit and with scholarly accuracy, the working of foreign systems of education is that it will result in our being better fitted to study and to understand our own’ (Sadler M. , 1900, pp. 49-50).

Other countries, including Australia, USA and Singapore, are also applying regulatory mechanisms as they strive to improve their education systems:

‘Across the globe, international league tables have become a significant source of influence in the design of national educational policies’

(Takayama, 2008, p. 387).

This approach is an intrinsic component of contemporary government policy and researchers urge the present government to establish ‘evidence driven’ processes to ensure that revisions to educational policies and curriculum reforms are completed in a climate of considered research, arguing that, only this way, can curriculum coherence and stability be maintained alongside developments (Oates, 2010).

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings has been used as a lens to compare the UK with other countries. Finland has been held up as a model by policy makers in the UK in recent years due largely to its high PISA ranking. This section will focus on examining policies and practices related to teacher training in Finland by comparing it to the UK system to provide insights into the key research area, namely, the assessment of trainee teachers.

Teacher training strategies in Finland are particularly relevant within the context of the present English government reforms. The planned reforms for initial teacher training in England will be explored by identifying the link between the planned policy and the source of the policy.

This section will illustrate how the PISA survey has a powerful impact on national and local policies (Grek, 2009). However, a number of researchers question the

methodology and the purpose of this influential data base in order to understand and evaluate the summary reports (Bulle, 2011; Malaty, 2006; Simola, 2005).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was founded in 1961 their mission is to '*...improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world*' (OECD, 2010a).

There are thirty four member countries in the OECD all working together to improve the lives of the citizens of their respective countries (OECD, 2001). As part of their remit the organisation conducts detailed assessments of the academic achievements of fifteen year olds in each country known as PISA assessments. These assessments began in 2000 and have been conducted at three yearly intervals since then. The assessments are conducted in reading, maths and science. They focus on general competencies and the application of knowledge and skills learned at school to real-life challenges. (OECD, 2010a). From the data there has been a trend in the United Kingdom's ranking to a lower ranking each year. The most recent results revealed the UK's performance slipping down for all three subjects between 2000 and 2009, from 8th to 27th in maths, 7th to 25th in reading and 4th to 16th in science. The reasons for this have been discussed by some researchers (Jerrim, 2011; Prais 2003) and consideration must be given to the notion that the change in rankings is not simplistic and should be analysed in greater depth. The 2009 rankings indicate that we are now 25th in the overall rankings and Finland is third.

An examination of the status of teachers in the UK and Finland might provide some relevant insights into the marked ranking differences in these countries. Finnish teachers have comparatively low rates of pay but they are held in high regard in society (Oates, 2010).

'Finnish teachers enjoy high social status and this may be one key factor in understanding the effectiveness of their school system. The second point of interest is that teachers in comprehensive schools enjoy a higher status in Finland than in most other advanced liberal countries. What is even more rare, people at both the lower and higher ends of the social spectrum seem to appreciate and respect the teacher's work' (Simola, 2005, p. 458).

Simola (2005) considers this high status with respect to the historical and social context of the country and suggests that this position is partly due to the historical context. Finnish teachers campaigned for a university based training from as early as 1890. In the 1950s Finnish teaching unions demanded that graduate level training should be the standard for primary school teachers and in 1979 teacher training became Masters degree level. It is reasonable to consider that the authority and success of Finnish teachers is based upon their strong professional identity (Norris et al., 1996).

3.5.1 Initial teacher training in Finland

The focus on comparing initial teacher training in the UK with training in other countries is uppermost in the present government's (DfE, 2010) proposals about how to improve teacher training. In particular the spotlight is on the strategies used in Finland:

'we will invite some of the best higher education providers of initial teacher training to open University Training Schools. These are used widely in Finland as a means of training teachers in practice'

(DfE, 2010, p. 23).

Public discussions attribute Finland's success in the PISA rankings to, amongst other aspects, its high quality teacher training. At point of entry to teacher training in Finland there is clear evidence that year on year teaching as a career is one of the most popular university courses. Only 10 per cent of applicants gain entry to a

teacher training course so universities can select the best educated and most highly motivated students. Newly qualified teachers in Finland are very well acquainted with teaching methods and have a good understanding of research.

'In Finnish culture, the profession of teacher has been seen as one of the most important professions of society, and a lot of resources have consequently been invested in teacher education'

(Väljärvi, et al., 2003, p. 48).

Teacher training in the UK is not so popular and the application processes seem to be determined more by economic influences than the status of teaching as a profession (TES, 2011). Comparisons with the UK must be considered within the wider context. The UK has a population of over 62 million compared with just over 5 million in Finland. One of the consequences is the smaller, more manageable teacher training organisation which consists of only thirteen universities compared with just over 200 ITT providers in the UK. In Finland the training is split between the education faculty of the university and the relevant subject faculties (OAJ, 2008). This differs with the UK system where the majority of the university based training is within the education faculty. Some might regard this focus on subject training by subject experts to be beneficial in developing a higher level of subject expertise in Finnish teachers.

Trainees on initial teacher training programmes in the UK and Finland complete teaching practices as part of their training. Teaching practices in Finland are generally shorter than in the UK and take place in university training schools or schools affiliated to the university. The training schools support and enhance the university based training and research. Research and practice are seen as inseparable. The class teachers working in the training schools are responsible for

teaching the class and for working with the university tutor to train the student (Raiker, 2011).

The class teachers usually teach the same class over a number of years and therefore build up a great knowledge of each individual pupil in their class. Class sizes in the university training schools tend to be between 15-20 (smaller than municipal class sizes) which further enhances the ability of the training class teacher to support the trainee in developing their teaching skills. This differs greatly with the UK system where most training takes place in state schools as there are, as yet, no university training schools (Hobson et al., 2010).

Finnish students are encouraged to be reflective practitioners and discuss their teaching and set action points after all lessons. University tutors and class teachers support the trainees in completing research and many of the class teachers in the training schools have doctorates (FNBE, 2011). This reflective approach is common in UK training but the holistic approach based on a deep knowledge of the child would be more apparent in Finland within the context of university training schools. Also it is uncommon for UK class teachers to have doctorates.

Primary school training in Finland focuses on a holistic approach to human development and an understanding of learning theories and the interaction between teacher and learner.

'Important pedagogical contents in all teacher education and training are the ethical and social basis of teachers' work; interpersonal, interaction and cooperation skills; understanding of the learning process; and prevention of learning difficulties and exclusion'

(Helsinki, 2006, p. 71).

Students in the UK and Finland study the theory and methodology of subjects and relate this to practical teaching experiences. Where the difference between UK and Finnish teacher training appears to arise is the increased concentration on research in Finland. All teacher training leads to a Master's degree and the link between research and practice is emphasised. Students are expected to complete independent research to solve educational questions arising from their teaching experiences. This prepares them well for the autonomy and independence they will encounter in their teaching careers. This approach is an aspect of some UK courses, mainly the one year post graduate training courses, but may not be embedded to such an extent. The close link between the universities and the university training schools enable a significant research culture to be established in Finland.

The social and historical perspective for this underpinning approach to teacher education in Finland has been well documented (Rautalin & Alasuutari, 2007; Simola et al., 1997; Simola, 2005) but at this point we need to consider some of the theoretical frameworks at the foundation of UK teacher training. This will illustrate how the social and historical context in UK underpins teacher training. Undoubtedly there have been several paradigm shifts in teacher training and these themes have been explored by a number of educational researchers (Edwards et al., 2002). One specific example is the change in underlying assumptions about the content of teacher training. Until the 1970s the disciplines of psychology, history, philosophy and sociology were all regarded as eminent components of teacher training courses and were seen by many as providing a secure theoretical base to teacher training (Edwards et al., 2002). The margins between the individual disciplines have become blurred. This may be regarded as an advantage by some, as multidisciplinary

research can be advantageous and can enable marked insights. However, the subject specific approach, clearly evident in Finland, enables teachers to gain valuable insights into teaching and learning and provides significant problem solving approaches to situations arising in the classroom. The focus in the UK system could be seen to be '*largely atheoretical*' (Galton, 2001).

Certainly, UK policies and approaches in teacher training are largely driven by political initiatives and quick fire responses to inspection regimes and comparative performance tables rather than a considered theoretical approach. The shift from discipline purity can be regarded as a sign of contemporary culture where discipline categories and identities are weakened by the culture of choice. This analogy is evident in global educational policies and the strategy of policy borrowing across countries (Phillips et al., 2008).

It is clear that the theoretical frameworks and cultural contexts differ greatly between England and Finland and this needs to be considered when 'policy borrowing.'

3.6 Summary

This chapter has explored some of the historical and political aspects related to ITT with reference to the international context. Key themes regarding the approach to ITT have been explored in light of government policy. The government drive to approach ITT as a techno- rationalist standards driven system has conflicted with higher education institutes that continue to argue that teaching and learning are complex processes which necessitate an emphasis on professional reflection (Delandshere & Arens, 2001).

One of the key regulatory bodies responsible for evaluating ITT providers and for monitoring control is The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). They are one of

the major supervisory bodies with a remit to inspect and regulate education in England. They have been part of the increased regulation of teacher training during the last 20 years and as part of this process teacher educators are far more accountable. Teacher training is funded directly through the National College of Teaching and Leadership (previously it was the Teaching Agency) which is a government agency working closely with Ofsted. This government agency is responsible for ensuring the legal requirements for ITT, determined by the government, are fulfilled. These include entry requirements, training criteria and management and quality assurance criteria. The Initial Teacher Education Inspection Handbook (Ofsted 2014) outlines the framework of inspection for ITT institutes and has not been discussed in detail in this study as the focus is on the *impact* of the framework on the assessment strategies within the ITT rather than the detail of the framework itself.

The continued focus on defined criteria and standards has a direct impact on the assessment processes used by university based tutors and their school based colleagues. Initial teacher training providers are assessed and graded by Ofsted and these grades are then used as part of the formula when allocating funding for places for training providers. School based tutors work in school environments which are assessed by Ofsted and are mindful of these grades when they assess trainee teachers. The whole system is highly centrally managed and: *'the work of Ofsted serves further to reinforce that centralization'* (Furlong, 2013, p. 5).

A highly centralised system might have an impact on the quality of teacher training and the skills that newly qualified teachers demonstrate. The high rating of quality of their ITT courses given by newly qualified teachers indicates a high level of

satisfaction with their courses. In the annual Newly Qualified Teacher Surveys 90 percent of newly qualified teachers rated their training as good or very good (Teaching Agency, 2012). However there are many who consider the narrow technical approach of teacher education to be reductionist and in contrast to some of the necessary reflective expansive skills required of effective practitioners (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

This centralised control of teacher education contrasts with systems of teacher education in other countries which are determined by other forces. For example, it is suggested that market forces largely determine the nature of teacher professionalism and teacher education in the United States (Labaree, 2004). This leads to the final section of this conclusion; a summary of the relevance of the global context in relation to teacher education.

In this chapter I have explored the influence of international comparison tables on the policy of the present government. Interestingly, Michael Gove has recently announced that England will not be taking part in the problem solving component of the 2012 PISA tests. The reasons given are that the government does not want to create a burden on schools. However, more cynical opponents suggest that it is a case of the decision makers selecting which aspects of international comparison are appropriate, and fit into the national agenda, and which are not a case of 'cherry-picking' the aspects that match the government's agenda (Stewart, 2011).

Finnish teachers also take a reflective stance on their ranking in PISA .They value the recognition this has provided for their profession but they note a concern that change may be difficult to implement within the Finnish system as its place in the rankings remains high. Policy makers in Finland argue that changes do not need to

be implemented. Finnish teachers call for further investment in the structure and resources of schools. The analysis of the PISA data identifies excellent results that are achieved with average expenditure on resources making bids for increased funding difficult (Rautalin & Alasuutari, 2007).

Bulle (2011) proposes an approach to the PISA data which is based on an exploratory analysis of the data and trends revealed by the survey. The suggestion is that the focus needs to be on broad understandings of educational models represented in the countries rather than the performance of the national educational systems. PISA data has been used by some politicians to score political points and drive pre-determined policy.

There are divergent forces involved in deciding educational policy. At the local level culture and politics determine indigenous practices. In order to learn from global policies there is a requirement to use rigorous evaluations to ensure that coherent policies emerge. The recent announcement by the University of Birmingham suggests that one aspect of the Finnish model of teacher education will be adopted in England:

'The University of Birmingham has been invited to make the University School one of the Government's flagship partners in teacher education and it will become one of the first "University Training Schools" in the country' (University School, 2012).

This strategy will be monitored with great interest.

To conclude, this chapter has provided an overview of the historical, political and international context of teacher training in England and has provided links to some of the key areas relevant to the thesis. Chapter 4 will examine the theoretical framework used to interpret the processes of teacher training, namely, 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998).

CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on some of the key theoretical frameworks related to this thesis within an educational setting. The first section sets the scene and outlines the link between teaching and learning and theoretical frameworks. Next there is a discussion about social constructivism as the most relevant learning theory in this context and this is related to the central themes running through the thesis. Following on the theoretical 'communities of practice' will be discussed in more detail. Section four is focused on exploring learning theories in relation to assessment before the concluding section draws together the main points arising from this chapter and identifies the specific theoretical links to this study.

4.2. Learning theories

In discussing theoretical frameworks and their relationship to teaching and learning it is important to define which aspect of the teacher training process I am referring to. Here, there is resonance with Carter (1990) who discussed some of the literature on learning to teach and defined one key aspect as: *'the acquisition of knowledge directly related to classroom performance'* (p. 291).

Teacher training involves university based training, school based training and independent study. This study is concerned with the aspect of training related to school based environments, although the other two aspects are referred to at appropriate points in the study.

The concept of teacher *training* and teacher *education* and the difference between the two was introduced in chapter 1. A working definition of the two aspects has been offered by Billings (1981) and Robertson (1987). The former notes that education is

about being informed, to know about something, whereas training is about doing something. As Robertson (1987) states:

'The focus of training is on knowing how rather than knowledge that' (p. 469).

However, the concept is more complex than these summative definitions suggest and will be discussed further as the ideas related to this are fundamental to many of the theoretical stances in this study.

When considering the key frameworks underpinning this research a range of paradigms and learning theories have been considered. In reflecting on different models it is clear that some learning theories resonate with the research completed in this thesis. For example, within the cognitivist models of learning theory Gagne's (1988) hierarchy of skills development provides a model of instruction including feedback and assessment as key elements. These aspects are clearly key in the assessment of trainee teachers. However, in exploring Gagne's theory in more depth it is clear that the cognitivist theory underpinning the model does not give sufficient attention to the social aspects of learning which I consider key to the development of trainees' skills on teaching practice. The cognitive principles regard the learning process as a series of hierarchical skills which can be taught using experimental methodologies and is not a model applicable for this study. Other theoretical frameworks have been explored and the best fit for this study is the communities of practice model (Wenger, 1998) which is an extension of social and situational learning theory within a social constructivist paradigm (Vygotsky, 1986).

4.2.1 Theoretical frameworks

A theme which appeared as a thread throughout the literature review was the discussion of how underpinning learning theories relate to the assessment of

trainees. The main theory, social constructivism, and in particular the focus on the use of language (Vygotsky, 1986) will be discussed and the research will be examined using this lens to clarify theoretical aspects which underpin my research. The central theory is based upon social constructivism and socially situated perspectives which contrasts to cognitive constructivists, for example, Piaget (1970) who emphasise the way individual learners construct knowledge. Social constructivists argue that knowledge is shaped and evolves through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1986). In considering social constructivism in more depth one framework in particular relates to the context and focus of this research and that is the communities of practice model (Wenger, 1998) and the recognition and discussion of the impact of participation with different communities within the school environment.

4.2.2 Social constructivism

Social constructivism is a theoretical model used to explain learning. It is a social theory of learning and acquisition of knowledge within social settings. Knowledge is socially constructed in groups, collaboratively, creating a culture of shared meanings by interacting with and learning from others. In social constructivism theory there is an emphasis on the role that the social culture plays in the cognitive development of a person (Vygotsky, 1986). This is in contrast to cognitive constructivists that emphasise the way individual learners construct knowledge from experience and experimentation (Piaget, 1970). Accepting a socially constructed view of learning implies that the trainees are active learners involved in the process of socially constructing and engaging in their own learning (Owens, 2007). The origins of this theory are largely attributed to Lev Vygotsky.

4.2.3 Vygotsky

Vygotsky emphasised the role of language in cognitive development. Social constructivist approaches are based on active student involvement; *'for him [Vygotsky] thinking was a culturally mediated social process of communication'* (Daniels, 2001, p. 50).

The social interaction between the tutor and trainee is the mediating tool in the learning and assessment process during teaching practice. The dialogue following lesson observations enables the trainee and tutor to negotiate their way through the lesson observation and facilitate the trainee to become able to operate beyond their established capabilities (Daniels, 2001).

Vygotsky has four key concepts underpinning his theory. These are internalisation, verbal mediation, the zone of proximal development and the distributed mind. The aspects with most relevance in this context are verbal mediation and the zone of proximal development.

The zone of proximal development is used to describe an approach to learning where the tutor and learner interact to solve a problem together and the result is that the learner is more successful than when they are alone. It was based on observations of children completing tasks and the recognition that learners working on their own rarely did as well in completing tasks as they did when they worked with an adult. It was not that the adults completed the task for the children but that the interaction with the adult helped the child to refine their thinking and complete the task (Atherton 2013). Vygotsky noted that the oral interaction and reasoning process provides a scaffold (Bruner, 1975) for the learner. Over time the adult's reasoning becomes

internalised by the child as they learn to find solutions to problems without the expert as they have internalised a 'script' for finding the solution to the problem.

The main discussion about Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) emulates from Warford's (2010) research where he applies the theory to teacher training and entitles his analysis 'The *zone of proximal teacher development*' (Warford, 2010). Warford (2010) integrates Vygotskian theory into Western models of teacher training and suggests that one can apply Vygotskian theory to teacher training as a dynamic process where students' understanding of the teaching process evolves as they adjust to situations in the classroom. He regards teacher training in this context as situated learning. Vygotsky created the concept of the ZPD as a metaphor to explain how social and participatory learning takes place and in Warford's (2010) example there are some key links:

'Teaching teachers the Vygotskian way envisions a three-way conversation that places teachers' prior experiences as learners and often tacit beliefs about pedagogy into conversation with pedagogical content of the teacher education program and observations of teaching and learning in field placements' (Warford, 2010, p. 253).

Warford (2010) suggests that traditional models of teacher training may result in tension between the university based training and the school based experiences as a result of different discourses between academic language and classroom based spontaneous language. He suggests that Vygotsky's ZPD model offers the opportunity to mediate and 'blend' these areas of tension. However, with classroom based scenarios and case studies being common aspects of the university based training; I question whether Warford's (2010) interpretation and application of Vygotsky's theory in this context is too simplistic.

Vygotsky used the ZPD in terms of instruction and assessment. He discussed the relationship between the individual learner and the supportive other. Warford relates this to the tutor and the trainee with the interaction between the two serving to solve dilemmas on teaching practice by verbal mediation. Vygotsky (1986) stated;

'direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrot like repetition of words by the child, simulating a knowledge of the corresponding concepts but actually covering up a vacuum' (p.150).

Although it is clear that Vygotsky was focusing on discussing interactive dialogic learning approaches it is also important to consider the social aspects of shared problems and the institutional structures which are more apparent aspects of Wenger's theory.

Research conducted by Meuss et al., (2009) also considers the ZPD in order to discuss the learning capacities of students who might demonstrate the same teaching competencies. In their research Meuss et al., (2009) discuss the challenges of supporting trainee teachers and in particular outline some of the issues relating to the development of reflection as a skill in pre- service teachers. Their research explores the structures needed to support individual students. They use Vygotsky's model to analyse the type of support required by a knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978) to help trainees develop a reflective approach to their developing teaching skills. In Meeus et al's., (2009) research they use Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (1978) to clarify the distinction between teaching competencies and learning competencies. They consider two hypothetical students who have the same teaching competencies but a different learning capacity, i.e. the

extent to which they possess the necessary competencies to learn from and for their teaching practice:

'The size of the zone of proximal development is a measure of the learning capacity of the students. Now imagine that both students are confronted with a problematic teaching situation and both have access to the same supervision. Student A will be able to gain more from the learning situation than student B. Student A has a greater learning competency than student B'

(Meeus et al., 2009, p. 405).

Their paper concludes that more inquiry is needed to understand the support that knowledgeable others can make to develop reflective thinking skills in trainee teachers to enable them to reflect upon their school experiences during placements. In contrast to Meuss et al., (2009) and Warford (2010), Ammon & Levin, (2002) discuss the move from constructivism as a process to a well-developed understanding of how theory then relates to pedagogy. In their research they conclude that advanced trainee teachers will have a well-developed understanding of the use of theoretical models to support their students in different situations. Their research noted that trainees who experienced reflective assessment styles then provided their own students with more opportunities to make choices, give reasons, evaluate and reflect.

4.2.4 Communities of practice

The theoretical model with most resonance for my work is Wenger's (1998) holistic model of learning as a dynamic process based within communities of practice. Research in this area has a particular significance with the research focus. This section will begin by defining communities of practice and identifying how it links to the thesis.

The phenomenon of a community of practice is not new and there are examples of communities working and learning in this collaborative way in the past, for example, a tribe learning to survive or a group of artists exploring a new means of expression. However, the use of the term 'communities of practice' is a more recent approach and refers specifically to a perspective based on learning and knowing.

The term was first coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their book *Situated Learning* (1991) as the basis of a social theory of learning. Wenger then built on these ideas and wrote a seminal book '*Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*' (1998), that outlined the theory of communities of practice which provided practitioners in organisations with a knowledge strategy on which to base their learning.

These communities of practice exist in a number of contexts including business, government, research and education. Communities of practice have a shared aim to learn together in a shared territory:

'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'

(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2012, para.1).

It follows then that a community of people, for example, a neighbourhood community, may not be a community of practice unless there is a focus on shared learning.

Sometimes the learning aspect is an incidental aspect of the community or it could be the main reason a group comes together. Communities of practice jointly participate in mutual action and share a repertoire for that engagement.

There are three key characteristics of a community of practice: a domain, a community and a practice. The first aspect of the domain is a defined group or

organisation and not merely a group of friends. Membership of the domain requires a shared commitment and a shared competence; the identity of the domain is defined by the shared area of interest.

The community is the second feature of the community of practice and is defined as a group of people learning from each other by sharing activities and pooling ideas.

The community engages in discussions where they learn from each other and develop effective relationships built on a mutual interest and desire to learn from each other.

The practice is the third characteristic of a community of practice and is explained by Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2012) as ...'*a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice*' (para.5).

For the group to work effectively they need to cultivate the relationships and shared experiences so that they become implicit features of the group. It can be formal or informal, for example, a group of teachers sharing lunch on a regular basis will be defined as a practice if they share ideas and discussions which help them to learn how to develop their teaching skills.

A combination of the three elements of domain, community and practice, determine a community of practice where joint activities take place and appropriate tools enable the member of the community to learn, practice and reflect. The value of the notion of a community of practice lies in the fact that it does not relate to an abstract characteristic such as class or race or simply an organisational group such as a neighbourhood, but because of the shared practice. Membership of communities is

dynamic and we are all members of overlapping communities. The community of practice is a model of situated learning.

Now I have a working definition of communities of practice I will outline how this relates to the research focus on the assessment of trainee teachers on school experiences. The domain is the school environment although it could be argued that it also includes the higher education community as the university tutors are based in the university. Another way of considering this is that where the partnerships between school and university are embedded and secure the university tutor becomes part of the school domain and is a member of the community of practice of the school whilst also a member of the university community. If one considers the other definitions of a community of practice, inclusion of the university tutor within the model is appropriate as they are practitioners engaged in the community and learning from the community. Wenger's model also acknowledges that we are all members of multiple overlapping communities.

The trainees in the school environment on teaching practice move from peripheral participation of the school community during their pre teaching practice visits to a central position where they are active members of the community. A frequent comment from the class teacher supervising a trainee, at the end of a successful school experience is: 'They are like one of the staff'.

Wray (2007) discusses the movement from a peripheral member of the school community at the start of training programs to full membership of the community where group norms and expectations are fully understood.

'Such learning processes shift the focus of learning from the individual to the participatory where experience informs knowledge and reflection is the mechanism through which experience is understood'

(Wray, 2007 p1141).

Key themes emerge when considering initial teacher training; both Wray (2007) and Seifert & Mandzuk (2006) outline the process of development and reflection as central components of communities of practice. Wray (2007) discusses the camaraderie that exists in supportive school communities where experienced practitioners work alongside trainees in ensuring successful completion of portfolios of evidence to demonstrate key teacher proficiencies (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). They also outline some of the challenges that arise when cohorts of trainees work together in less positive environments. Issues surrounding learning to teach can be raised in context and with the support of experienced practitioners.

‘Students also reported the dialogic and collaborative nature of the teacher learning community enhanced their growth and development as well as their overall understanding of the portfolio requirement’

(Wray, 2007, p. 1139).

The relationships between class teachers, university based tutors and trainees are the basis of school based learning and assessment processes. Membership of the school community is a dynamic process and works to support the trainee teacher from a peripheral role as observer to a central role as teacher by the end of the school experience. The role of the university tutor is clear within Wenger’s model as a practitioner who ‘straddles’ the communities of the school and the university. Clearly communities of practice also exist within the university based framework and will overlap with school based scenarios. Trainees on teaching practice will be members of groups including year group cohorts and subject specialist groups.

4.3 Communities of practice within teacher training

As part of the literature review I have considered research in the teacher training context which relates to the communities of practice model. One study conducted by Lewis in 2013 has a particular resonance to this thesis. Lewis (2013) discusses a range of theoretical models related to the performance dimensions of teaching and concludes that school-university collaboration should be the standard approach to teacher preparation underpinning training models.

In coming to this conclusion Lewis (2013) identifies three terms describing approaches to teacher preparation. These are *performativity*, *phronesis* and *practice*. *Performativity* is used to describe the tacit dimension of teaching where teachers use trial and error to develop their skills and draw upon day to day experiences to arrive at routines and systems of teaching that work successfully in the classroom.

Phronesis is described as an approach where teachers regard teaching as a moral act and draws on the traditions of Aristotle (1909) with teaching being regarded as a subjective activity with the teacher considering the type of citizen the pupil is to become. The third aspect of teacher preparation which Lewis (2013) uses is *practice* and relates to situational learning and responses to the context of the classroom.

The discussion related to *phronesis* links to the recurring theme identified in Chapter 2, about teaching being a techno -rational occupation or a reflective activity.

Bernstein (1982) provides an account of Aristotle's *phronesis* and explains that the distinction between the technical, scientific aspects and the *phronesis* lays in the former having an objective basis and the latter a subjective basis.

'It is the distinction between... phronesis and technical that is critical. Technical skill unlike ethical know-how can be forgotten'

(Lewis, 2013, p. 7).

The debate about whether teaching can be learned by acquiring a set of specific competencies or is a more akin to a reflective developmental process determines, to some extent, the theoretical model I have selected to underpin this thesis. In Lewis's (2013) discussion he outlines the three terms *performativity*, *phronesis* and *practice* and concludes that the separation of educational theory and teaching practice in teacher preparation act against a unified account of the nature of teaching. He describes how theoretical aspects taught in university settings and practice based experiences in school settings act as a divide between teaching and research. The model he proposes is based firmly around the view that teaching experiences in school need to link to theoretical aspects and that one appropriate model to achieve this is for teaching training to be seen as cultural learning with the novice (trainee) moving to become an expert (teacher) in a supportive school environment;

'The apprentice becomes a member of a community among whom are experts who model the desired standard of practice. What the expert models is not just technical acumen, but also craft identity, which has artistic and dispositional dimensions'

(Lewis, 2013, p. 3).

This relates closely to the School Direct model of teacher training which includes an increased focus on school based training (DfE, 2010). This apprentice model, discussed by Lewis, is drawn from research conducted by Lave (1982) which examined the differences between informal and formal approaches to learning amongst tailors in the Vai community. It was noted that expert tailors passed on their skills to their apprentices in informal settings where the novices were learning in communities of practice. The resonance with teacher training is that the apprentice

Vai tailors flourished in an environment that teemed with models of good practice, just as trainee teachers can prosper in a school with expert teachers where the goal of quality learning experiences is shared by all the stakeholders.

A key aspect of effective 'communities of practice', as discussed by Lewis (2013), is the concept of the tacit understanding of the context and shared perception of the social culture. University tutors need to have a sound understanding of the culture of schools in order to become good partners with school based tutors in supporting trainee teachers. University tutors are able to learn the culture of the school to become good partners with the school staff. Most of the tutors involved in teacher training were teachers in primary schools at earlier points in their careers but there needs to be an acknowledgement that the school context is a dynamic environment and subject to change. Tutors with previous primary school based teaching experience may make assumptions based on cultural contexts of the school which might be out dated and might hinder opportunities for a collaborative approach to the training process.

Lewis (2013) concludes that there is a need for schools and universities to work collaboratively to create and nurture learning environments where trainees can flourish and progress with guidance from expert teachers. He has a particular interest in training teachers to become reflective practitioners rather than a focus on developing technical competence and promotes a particular approach to teacher training: '*...preparing teachers for ethical, morally defensible practice*' (Lewis, 2013, p. 10).

Overall his stance is that teacher training should be conducted in an environment with trainees learning in communities of practice. This view of teacher training as a school based model concurs with other researchers (McCormick et al., 2010).

Other researchers (Price, 2005) examine university tutors as a community of practice engaged in the assessment of students and bring to light some of the challenges of this model when applied to a higher educational institute. The concept of a common assessment standard can be an uncomfortable aspect within the higher education community as research suggests that different tutors award varying grades to the same work unless aspects of subjectivity are shared (Wright, 1996). Price (2005) suggests that a more transparent approach to objectivity based upon the 'scholarship of assessment' would be a more effective approach.

Discourse is regarded as an essential aspect of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and this also may be compromised within teams of markers in higher education settings where much of the assessment is conducted on an individual basis in isolation to the team (Price, 2005). This approach is also a factor in the assessment of trainees in schools where tutors assess individual trainees with little moderation of assessment grades.

Within the context of the communities of practice model there is an assumption that school based models of learning offer the best opportunities for trainees to develop the tacit knowledge (Rust et al., 2005) required by trainees. There are studies which question the evidence base for a focus on school based models of training (Wilson & Berne, 1999) and evidence from Ofsted's inspection findings indicates more outstanding provision of initial teacher training in higher education institutes than school based models (Ofsted, 2010). This indicates that the focus on purely school

based training appears to be an ideological driver rather than evidence based. The model of training in this study is a higher education partnership *with* schools not a school based model. At this point I will consider the tension arising from the government's stated aim '*to shift trainee teachers out of college and into the classroom*' (Gove, 2010). This aim is informed by the ideological commitment to teaching as '*a craft- best learned as an apprentice*' (Gove, 2010).

This resonates with the earlier discussion about whether teacher training is regarded as *education* or *training* (Billings, 1981; Robertson, 1987) and correlates to the debate about teacher training as a reflective process or a techno- rational process.

4.3.1 Apprenticeship models

The apprentice model of teacher training has gained momentum in recent years and is at the heart of recent reforms to teacher education (DfE, 2010) where the shift is towards more school based training.

The apprentice model of teacher training has become one of the stalwarts of government policy in recent times but it is not a new model or one that is linked just to the UK. In the USA the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) recommended the establishment of *clinical schools* to provide a learning environment of teacher training. The first year of a teacher training course would be in university, in the second year the trainee would work as an intern in the *clinical school*; this environment was compared to the teaching hospital model. The Carnegie Forum (1986) model stated that teachers in outstanding schools should act as lead teachers to support and guide trainee teachers in the school environment as the trainees taught classes. The lead teachers also taught the trainees as part of the university based training (Stallings & Kowalski, 1990).

Another example of a professional development school was suggested in the RAND (a research and development organisation) study (Wise et al., 1987) where they suggested an *induction school* because:

'The induction school can advance teaching as a profession. It is based on the idea that, although the university can educate the prospective teacher a teacher can become fully prepared only through extensive, supervised classroom experience. In the induction school, seasoned veterans can help induct novices into the profession' (p. 96).

Although the structure and detail of these school based training models are varied each recommends partnerships which link school and university based training in preparing and inducting teachers into the profession using collaborative apprentice models akin to the communities of practice.

The school based approach to teacher development and training has been considered as an 'ideal' approach to teacher training. Government policy and reports have often been based on this premise as can be seen from the commissioning of the 'state of the nation' report by the Teacher Training Agency where the assumption inherent in the report is that school should be at the centre of determining professional development (McCormick et al., 2010). However, some researchers (Wilson & Berne, 1999), who have reviewed the literature in this area have noted that the premise that school based learning is most effective, has not always been based on empirical evidence but rather on beliefs.

Whatever the political approach to initial teacher training might be it is clear that within the traditions of teacher training there will be an element of school based practice. The next section will consider how these school based learning situations relate to assessment and theoretical frameworks.

4.4 Theoretical models and assessment

Social constructivism models of learning are associated with a belief that learners create their own knowledge from socially constructed learning scenarios.

Collaborative interaction with peers is regarded as an important aspect of the learning process; learners construct individual understanding from their experiences, peers and experts. Clearly, within this paradigm, any model of assessment which relies on reproduction of facts would be questioned.

I will refer back to some of the theoretical models introduced in chapter 2. Schoen (1987) demonstrated the need for a 'reflective practicum' where students can prepare for their future careers by taking part in work based practical experiences. In these work based environments practitioners reflect and make sense of unique situations. The assessment processes used in these situations need to enable learners to devise new strategies for the situations they encounter and to shift between action and reflection. Summative models of assessment are not appropriate in this environment and formative models including oral and written feedback following lesson observations are more suitable approaches as they enable aspects of reflection to be assessed.

The communities of practice model offers opportunities for the assessment of trainees to take place within authentic environments using reflective tools such as a portfolio. This was seen to be a positive model identified in Wray's (2007) research project. By constructing the portfolio around the educative process of lesson planning, assessment and pupil progress issues surrounding learning to teach can be raised in context and with the support of experienced practitioners.

Other theoretical models drawing from the work of Vygotsky (1986), and the socially situated character of learning, have credibility when considering assessment on teaching practice. Laurillard's (2002) conversational framework offers a progressive model of learning and assessment which moves from transmission of knowledge to aspire to a model with a focus on developing reflective practitioners.

This model links university teaching and school based practical experiences. The university based framework is based upon an '*iterative dialogue between teacher and student*' (Laurillard, 2002, p. 25) where the discourse surrounds theoretical and conceptual models and a practical experiential level where the participants reflect on the theory in light of the practice (Laurillard, 2002). University based learning has a focus on 'second- hand' descriptions of the world whereas school based field work is concerned with first hand learning experiences. The community of practice framework links these two aspects of teacher training. Although Laurillard (2002) was concerned mainly with technology based learning there is a clear correlation with this model and teacher training and the link between university and school based learning.

Other researchers (Rust et al., 2005) adopt an explicit approach to the social constructivist model of learning as a solution to the issues related to assessment in higher education. The Quality Assurance Agency which reviews the quality of higher education has consistently indicated that assessment practices have been a weakness (Knight, 2002). Some researchers have identified specific strategies to improve assessment in higher education (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, 20; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Price et al., 2007; Race, 2007). There is an awareness that a range

of strategies may be most effective (Darling Hammond et al., 2010). In applying a constructivist assessment process some of the issues identified by the Quality Assurance Agency can be addressed.

One of the criticisms of assessment in higher education is that the assessment processes are seen as separate from the module content but a constructivist model ensures that each module, within a course design, is aligned to the assessment processes by ensuring that the learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods are intrinsically interrelated (Biggs, 1999). Shepard (2000) outlines a constructivist paradigm where the model of assessment necessitates student centred approaches where peer and self-assessment tools are used to enable students to construct knowledge within a community of practice involving tutors and students. A social constructivist approach requires a meaningful understanding of the assessment process where the success criteria is clearly defined and understood by tutors and trainees.

The research literature (Black & William, 1998a; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004) on assessment strategies using a socially constructivist model is clear that the aspect with the greatest potential to impact positively on future learning is quality feedback. The key to effective feedback, from a social constructivist stance is that students are actively involved in the feedback process and this will be discussed in more depth in chapter 6 where the observation feedback process used to assess trainees on teaching practice is analysed. Some researchers note that students need to understand how to interpret the feedback and how to use it to help them to progress (Sadler, 1989). The importance of emotional responses to feedback and the role this then plays in the ability of the student to act upon the advice has been discussed by

a number of researchers and also has an impact on students' ability to interpret and act upon the feedback given (Dowden et al., 2013). If the feedback is an oral dialogue, as in post lesson observation discussions, it is possible for the feedback to be mediated and linked to next step targets which are negotiated with the trainee and shared with the key stakeholders in the community of practice.

However, some research indicates that applying a social constructivist model to assessment and in particular the role of feedback does not always achieve the benefits for student progress. In the research conducted by (Price et al., 2007) 'a social constructivist assessment process model was devised which included a 'feedback loop' and attempted to put the model into practice using an intervention programme to support students. They concluded that, based on their research,

'...we have totally failed to demonstrate any tangible improvement as a result of our peer review intervention in terms of student marks or assessors' confidence in the efficacy of the intervention to improve performance'

(Price, et al., 2007, p. 15).

However, although their research concluded that there was very little impact on the student marks in this study, there were many positive comments from tutors and students about the use of the peer review model. They offer suggestions about why the intervention was not successful in increasing grades including the idea that students adopted a strategic approach to the assignment and were satisfied with a 'good enough' grade. Price, et al., 2007 also conclude that more research is needed to understand why the intervention did not have the positive impact the research suggests it should have had (Rust et al., 2005).

Research examining other specific assessment strategies used to assess trainees also identifies the social constructivist paradigm. Where a portfolio assessment tool is

used effectively there are opportunities for learners to reflect on their own teaching and consequently to come to a better understanding of the teaching process (Jarvinen & Kohonen, 1995; Klenowski, 2002; Meeus, et al., 2009; Wray, 2007). The research conducted in this project explores how the trainees use the Professional Development Profile (PDP) as an assessment tool. Questions in the survey and interview ask trainees and tutors about how the PDP is used as an assessment strategy.

4.5 Summary

The links between the theoretical models and the relevance to this thesis will be summarised in this concluding section. There are important links between the theoretical models explored in this chapter and the purpose of this study, some of which have been identified as the theories have been discussed and analysed.

Dialogical talk is the core assessment process used on teaching practice to feedback to trainee teachers about their progress and this draws largely from the model of the zone of proximity (Vygotsky, 1986).

The learning processes developed by trainees on teaching experience are mainly reliant on the social context of the school environment and how the trainee becomes a member of the community. The distinction between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge and the importance of the school context in providing access to the tacit knowledge is a key feature in this research (Price et al., 2007). The community of practice (Wenger, 1998) theoretical model has a clear link to this process and will be discussed in the final chapter.

This chapter offers more in depth links to the theoretical frameworks underpinning the thesis. An overview of some of the theoretical stances was introduced in chapter

2 and this chapter has added depth to that introduction by highlighting specifically how the research models link to the project.

The chapter began by outlining the 'big picture' and the broad learning theories related to teacher education. The next section discussed the social constructivist models (Bruner, 1975; Vygotsky, 1986) by identifying frameworks with resonance to the assessment of trainees. Further discussion identified a range of models and approaches including the conversational framework (Laurillard, 2002).

Discussions about specific assessment strategies including portfolios and feedback have also been provided and linked to the theoretical frameworks.

To conclude, the analysis of the communities of practice model and the extrinsic links to the approaches used in this thesis provide a model of reference throughout the thesis. The next chapter will outline the research design and methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The two key research questions were identified in chapter 1, namely;

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

Chapter five outlines the design framework selected to research these key questions and explains why this research design is applicable for this study. Within this context the research design is defined as *'the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes'* (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). This contrasts with the data collection tools which *'are the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse the data'* (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8). Specific data collection tools have been selected which will generate data to attempt to answer the two key research questions. The approach to the research is explained with reference to ethical considerations and issues of validity. The rationale for selecting each research tool will be explained by drawing upon established educational research approaches. The link between epistemological stances outlined in chapter one and research methods will be a key component. Finally, the methods of data collection arising from application of the research tools within this research project will provide a summary of the chapter and clear links to chapters six and seven where the data will be analysed.

5.2. Research design

Leading on from the discussion of theoretical stances underpinning the research project in chapter one and in recognition of issues of educational research methods as outlined by Peim (2009) it is important to appreciate that the theoretical base provides validity and credibility within the research community and particularly within the context of educational research (Maton & Moore, 2010).

The epistemological stance identified in chapter one links with the methodological approach adopted and described in this chapter. My questions stem from an aspiration to understand the assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice. Consequently, the theoretical stance underpinning this research approach originates from an interpretivist stance which is aimed at understanding human behaviour, in this case aiming to gain tacit knowledge of the way in which trainees are assessed on teaching practice (Bryman, 2008). Within this paradigm there is a view that social behaviour can be understood by questioning participants and listening to their views, ideas and explanations using open questions to identify the key themes involved in their reasoning. With this approach in mind appropriate research tools have been selected and will be discussed later in this chapter.

A cross sectional survey was completed in the weeks following the end of the BA year three students' final teaching practice. The research tools used were: an on-line questionnaire with mainly closed questions, a semi structured focus group and semi-structured interviews. These research methods suggest a mixed approach to methodology and included the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

This research will consider the current assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice within the political and cultural context which has been

discussed in detail in chapter three. Trainees are assessed using the QTS standards which provide a broad framework for their skills development and includes aspects of reflective practice. The main assessment strategy used on teaching practice is the lesson observation which is followed by one to one oral feedback and a written record of the key aspects noted during the observation.

The evidence for the QTS standards is gathered by the trainees during the three years of the BA course and is organised in a Professional Development Profile (PDP) and cross referenced to the teaching standards. Alongside this, teaching skills are assessed at the mid-point in the teaching placement and then at the end of the placement. A summative grade is assigned at mid-point and at the end of the practice using Ofsted grading criteria for trainees (UCET/NASBITT , 2012).

5.2.1 Cross-sectional research design

When deciding on the design approach to be used in this research the methodology used in three other similar studies was considered. Research with a similar focus is discussed to understand and evaluate the methods used to gather the data. The first study discusses students' perceptions of written feedback (Dowden et al., 2013), the second looks at the use of portfolios in teacher education (Meeus et al., 2008) and the third explores a criteria and standards framework (Brooker et al., 1998). In analysing the research methods used in these three studies I was able to use the information to help inform the choice of methods to be used in my study.

Dowden et al., (2013) studied two cohorts of students in the final year of a four year teacher training course to find out their perceptions of written feedback as an assessment strategy. One cohort was university based and the second cohort was a distance learning cohort. Participants were invited to take part in the research and

participation in the study was voluntary and therefore self selecting. The main data collection tool was a questionnaire with a mixture of closed and open questions preceeded by focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were used after the pilot questionnaire was trialed and the responses to the interviews were then used to inform the design of the questionnaire used in the study thus the focus group was used to develop themes for the questionnaire (Robson, 2002).

One issue identified by Dowden, et al., (2013) was the low response rate to the questionnaire with only 10% of the on-campus cohort responding and 14% of the distance learning cohort responding. However this low response rate was not regarded as having a negative impact on the data:

'The survey response rates were relatively low but this was not deemed to be problematic because the project sought to gain qualitative insight into students' perceptions, as opposed to generating generalisable quantitative data'

(Dowden, et al., 2013, p. 353).

A contributory reason for holding this view was that the results were similar to another large scale study where several hundred teacher training students completed a comparable study designed by Ferguson (2011).

The use of questionnaires in Dowden et al.,'s (2013) study generated a substantial amount of quality data which enabled the research question to be addressed; this indicates that it would be a useful part of the research design for my study. However, I would be concerned with such a low response rate and intend to adopt strategies to achieve a better response rate.

The second study (Meeus et al., 2008) adopted a quasi-experimental design to explore the use of a portfolio assessment tool to promote autonomous learning.

Two cohorts of students on an initial teacher training course were compared before and after their teaching practice using pre and post experiment measures. The students' teaching practice grades and assignment grades were analysed.

The main strength of using a quasi-experiment design is the ability to identify the effect the intervention i.e. the portfolio, has on the outcome i.e. the assessment grade (Newby, 2010). The control group were assessed using the traditional dissertation model and the experimental group using a portfolio assessment tool. Since the participants for the study are not selected randomly, as they would be in a true experiment design, the research design is classed as quasi- experimental.

Tutors were also key participants in this research project; they completed a questionnaire about their experience and concepts of learning. This data was then used to explore the differences in supervision provided by tutors in the control and experimental group. The main research instrument used was a questionnaire which included closed questions about learning styles. All data collected was quantitative.

Having examined this study (Meeus et al., 2008) I recognise that quantitative data alone would not address the research questions and a quasi-experimental design would not be appropriate as there is no intention to measure the effect of an intervention. I decided to plan a research project to gather data about the stakeholders' perceptions of the assessment strategies and in exploring the key research question I collected qualitative data in the interviews, open ended questions in the questionnaire and focus groups. Quantitative data was collected from the closed questions in the questionnaire.

The third project which was used to determine the research design is the study conducted by Brooker et al., (1998) into the use of a standards framework to assess teaching skills. The participants in this study were teacher training tutors with responsibility for supervising trainee teachers. The supervising teachers were interviewed after the teaching practice to find out their perceptions of the newly introduced assessment framework. The study generated a rich source of qualitative data from a group of 20 tutors which indicated a positive response to the new framework. However, Brooker et al., (1998) noted that:

'Further helpful insights in the evolutionary process could be obtained from a trial which captures the perspectives of students and other stakeholders' (p. 18).

This view has resonance with my study as I intend to explore the views of trainees, university based tutors and school based tutors. As a result of reviewing Brooker et al's., (1998) research design I intend to collect data from the three groups of stakeholders involved in the process.

The exploration of the methodology used in these three related studies has provided a critical consideration of the research design to be used in this study. The research design selected for this study is related to the context and is a pragmatic approach to the area of study. The cross sectional research design was used as it provides a reasonable framework to gather data quickly, economically and is a practical approach to answering the key question. A definition of a cross sectional design is offered by Cohen et al., (2007) in their seminal research text *Research Methods in Education*; 'A cross-sectional study is one that produces a 'snapshot' of a population at a particular point in time' (p. 213).

It provides a structure to collect data at a specific time by exploring differences which already exist. One advantage is that the research is completed in a narrow time frame; in this study the data was gathered between December 2013 and March 2014. A largely cross sectional design provides a descriptive account of the assessment process used to assess trainees on teaching practice. The data can be analysed for the existence of relationships between the information gathered.

Another advantage of a survey is in '*...its appeal to generalizability or universality within given parameters, its ability to make statements which are supported by large data banks...*' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 207).

This research design is most commonly used for a national census where a representative sample of the population is surveyed at the same time.

The final advantage of the cross sectional design is that patterns of association can be identified. It will be possible to identify relationships between one or two variables because the data has all been collected at a single point in time.

The disadvantage of a cross sectional design is that I will be unable to identify with certainty any causal links between the variables but it may be possible to infer causal links (Bryman, 2008, p. 59). It is also an ineffective research design for studying change.

There are four aspects to the research:

- Survey: 93 respondents from a cohort of 180 Year 3 BAQTS trainee teachers (undergraduates in the final year of their training mainly aged between 20-22. The majority of the cohort is female.)
- Focus group: 6 BAQTS Year 3 volunteers (all female)

- Teacher survey: 19 school based tutors from an invited group of 20 involved in the assessment of the trainee teachers on teaching practice (aged between 25-55, mainly female)
- Tutor interviews: 6 university based tutors involved in the supervision and assessment of the trainee teachers on teaching practice (aged between 32-55, all female).

An explanation as to how these sample groups were selected will be provided later in this chapter.

Three research tools were used: questionnaire, interview and focus group. The specific questionnaire tool is the Bristol on line survey (BOS) software which can be accessed on line and completed electronically. This process enables the data to be collected anonymously and analysed in an economical manner. The software was used in a pilot trial and this has enabled practical issues to be rehearsed and refined. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data from university tutors. The participants involved in the research project are trainee teachers, university based tutors and school based tutors.

5.3 Research tools

The three research tools selected are semi structured interviews, on line questionnaires and a focus group. The on line questionnaire was circulated to 180 trainees and 93 completed the survey. A tutor specific on-line questionnaire was circulated to 20 school based tutors and 19 completed it. Interviews were conducted with six university based tutors who volunteered following the questionnaire and six students volunteered to take part in the focus group interview.

The semi structured interview clearly aligns to the interpretivist stance outlined above which suggests that social behaviour can be understood by questioning participants. A balanced approach to research methodology, outlined by (Pring, 2000) which recognises that both qualitative and quantitative approaches have value has resonance with my approach to the research question:

'My argument is that the opposition (not the distinction) between quantitative and qualitative research is mistaken. The 'naive realism' attributed to those who espouse the more quantitative methodology is not justified' (p. 55).

Pring (2000) is critical of theoretical approaches which focus on the distinction between these two methodologies and suggests an approach which relates the research methodology to the purpose of the research. This stance is an element of my research.

Cresswell (1994) suggests that this simplistic definition of a mixed approach needs further consideration and outlines a 'dominant –less dominant design' where one methodology has more prominence. Applying this model to my research a qualitative study would be the main component with quantitative less dominant.

'The advantage of this approach is that it presents a consistent paradigm picture in the study and still gathers information to probe in detail one aspect of the study'

(Cresswell, 1994, p. 177).

This approach to the methodology suggests a largely constructivist stance although as Creswell (1994) notes '*Should paradigms be linked with methods?*' (p. 175).

Certainly the research focus for my study suggests an interpretive approach, trying to make sense of the assessment process rather than positivism, a scientific approach (Denscombe, 2010). These two options suggest a distinction between two theoretical

stances but other models do exist involving methodologies which relate specifically to social sciences research including Bassey's (2001) 'fuzzy logic' model discussed in Chapter 1. The decision about the selection of research tools was underpinned by the theoretical stance and the nature of the research questions.

5.3.1 Data collection tools

The decisions about the choice of data collection tools was partly informed by the issues arising from pilot research study conducted in 2013. The first issue arising from the interviews with the school based tutors during the pilot study was related to the researcher's professional relationship with the tutors. In the interviews with the school based tutors issues of influence and 'power' appeared to impact on the participants' responses and overall attitude to the questions. It was a reminder that:

'In approaching educational research our advice is to consider it to be far from a neat, clean, tidy, unproblematic and neutral process, but to regard it as shot through with actual and potential sensitivities'

(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 131).

The issue stemmed from my role as faculty link tutor to trainees in school settings which involves me working alongside the school based tutors interviewed to work in partnership to support, mentor and assess the trainees. In the role of interviewer the power balance altered as was clearly illustrated by one interviewee who assumed that the interview was conducted as part of a quality assurance process. The interview was planned in detail with potential issues addressed by a detailed explanation about the purpose and ethical aspects of the interview. Confidentiality and impartiality was addressed honestly at the start of the project (Bryman, 2008). Despite these planned strategies it was clear from the analysis of the respondents' comments that there was a view that the interview process was a strategy to

determine quality assurance issues relating to the supervision of trainees on teaching experience. Also, despite the participant agreement form outlining the anonymous nature of the research and the verbal explanation, the issue of anonymity was still a concern for the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2007). As this could have an impact on the validity of the respondents' responses other methods of collecting data were considered. If the respondents regard the interview process with suspicion then this could have a negative impact on the research findings. As a consequence of the issues arising from the pilot study an online questionnaire was used to collect data from the school based tutors to reduce some of the potential validity issues.

The second issue in the pilot project related to the interviews with trainees. The question of interviewer bias and power influence was considered when interviews with trainees were planned in the pilot study. Power influences and dynamics can affect the validity of the responses from interviewees (Denscombe, 2010) and it appeared from the responses given that trainees were influenced by the power balance. A clear example was the differences in responses to questions in the anonymous on-line survey and questions asked at interview. In the survey some trainees were critical of the faculty link tutors but in the interviews no criticisms were raised. It was decided that the use of a focus group discussion would provide a more secure position regarding the validity of the responses, with the design of the focus group discussion addressing some of the issues of power and influence. As discussed by Gibbs (1997):

'...attitudes, feelings and beliefs ...are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes,

beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context (p 1).

Careful framing of the focus group discussion enabled trainees to discuss the issues in an honest manner avoiding the overly upbeat positive stance evident in the pilot interviews.

5.3.2 Questionnaire

The first research tool used was the on- line questionnaire which was circulated to the students on the BAQTS course (See Appendix 1). A second questionnaire (See Appendix 2) was circulated to school based tutors.

The self-completed questionnaire was selected as it is a versatile tool which enables both structured quantitative data to be collected using mainly closed questions but also some open ended questions which provide depth and explanations for responses to the closed questions. Another reason for selecting the on-line questionnaire is that it is accessible to participants at a time convenient to them, 'interviewer effects' are minimised and the option for 'social desirability bias' identified by (Sudman & Bradburn, 1982) is reduced. Sudman and Bradman (1982) note that personal interviews had the potential to include bias where respondents have a tendency to under-report activities that are sensitive. Trainees would honestly express their thoughts about the assessment process in an anonymous survey. Power influences are unlikely in the questionnaire, due to anonymity.

A number of closed questions using Likert (Likert, 1932) options were included in the questionnaire. Likert (Likert, 1932) scales provide the opportunity for participants to differentiate their responses using a rating scale whilst still providing a numerical response. Each category of response is discrete and measures only one aspect at a time. For example, trainees are asked:

'How useful do you find each of these assessment strategies? Select from the scale 1-6, 1 not useful 6 very useful.' This type of question in the questionnaire elicited quantitative data which provided increased reliability as well as the opportunity to identify trends by examining the correlation between answers to key questions. For example, it is possible to compare the answers to questions regarding satisfaction with grades allocated at mid-point review (MPR) and end point review (EPR) with the type of supervision model the student has experienced on teaching practice. MPR is an assessment point which takes place half way through the teaching practice and it provides the opportunity for the trainee to reflect on their progress with the supervising tutor and class teacher. At this point a summative teaching practice grade is allocated and targets for the remainder of the practice are agreed. The EPR takes place at the end of the practice where the final grade is decided and a summary report written about the trainees' achievements and areas of development. There are three models of supervision for trainee teachers; the first one involves mainly university based tutors observing and assessing the student; the second model involves mainly a school based assessment model and the third is a combination of the two with a school based tutor in training. The questionnaire will elicit quantifiable comparative data which can be analysed.

In addition to the majority of closed questions there are some open questions in the questionnaire which enables respondents to provide additional information about the assessment strategies as well as more detailed information about their responses to some of the closed questions.

A final advantage of the on- line questionnaire is the additional analytical tools within the software which enable the data to be interrogated in an efficient manner.

Answers from participants can be compared more easily with other participants and are easy to collate and analyse (Newby, 2010).

A disadvantage of the on-line survey is the potential for low response rates since the survey is anonymous and the participants may feel remote from the researcher and the research process. Strategies were used to ensure a good response rate and these will be explained in chapter 6.

5.3.3 Interview

The second key research tool is the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview was selected as the most appropriate research tool for the university tutors as it offers a degree of flexibility and:

'has predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perceptions of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given, particular questions which seem appropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included'

(Robson, 2002, p. 270).

Interviews are personal compared with a sterile questionnaire; participants are able to explain what they think about the research topic in personal discussion. The interview is flexible; the order can change and spontaneous decisions can be made to probe, in more depth, a particular issue. In contrast, the questionnaire is planned in advance and cannot be altered part way through the response process (Newby, 2010). Furthermore interviews align to the underlying social constructivist position that perceives knowledge as a socially constructed experience:

"the use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to the individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans"

(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 349).

Key aspects were considered when designing the interview schedule including the structure, type of questions, order of questions, prompts, bias and practical aspects such as the use of recording equipment.

The interview schedule was designed to find out about the assessment strategies used on teaching practice so most of the questions are semi structured to ensure responses relate specifically to the topic and to generate responses specific to the research question (See Appendix 3). Interview schedules were created and piloted and modifications were made in light of the pilot study. For example, in the pilot interview schedule, there was a question about who attended the MPR which sometimes elicited a defensive stance as tutors explained why they might have deviated from the faculty guidelines. As I wanted to avoid any perception that I was making judgements or quality assuring the processes, I did not ask this specific question. Basic principles were reviewed when planning the questions including distinct types of question content: knowledge, behaviour, beliefs, attitudes and attributes (Robson, 2002). The main questions focus on what the participants think is the 'desirable' approach to assessments on teaching practice (De Vaus, 2002, p. 95).

Interviews can be used at any stage of the research process, for example at the start of the project to identify the key issues or at the end of the investigation to explore issues arising within the research (Powney and Watts, 1987). Interviews for university tutors took place after the teaching practice and questionnaires had been completed. All interviews took place on the university campus with times and locations convenient to participants. The interviews lasted from 30 to 40 minutes.

The questions are valid in that they measure specifically what was intended, namely tutor attitudes to the assessment strategies used on teaching practice. Reliability has been assured by using unambiguous language which can be interpreted in the same way by different respondents on different occasions.

5.3.4 Focus groups

The use of focus groups as a research tool is common in business, medical and political fields and is a prime tool for market research. It has gained prominence in educational research as a group interview technique but does not have the usual reciprocal dialogue moving back and forth between the interviewee and interviewer which is a common feature of interviews. Instead the researcher provides the topic for discussion and the interaction between the group about the topic generates the data. There are many definitions of focus group interviews but all definitions include group interaction around a focused topic. One working definition is provided by Krueger & Casey (2009) as '*...a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment*' (p. 5).

In this research it has been used with a specific purpose in mind; to add detail to the information generated by the student survey (Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie, 2002).

The focus group discussions were used after the survey was completed to probe more deeply into some of the responses and themes identified in the student survey (see Appendix 4).

The advantages of focus groups are that they are:

'very focused on a particular issue and, therefore, will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview; they are economical on time, producing a large amount of data in a short period of time...'

(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 376).

Focus groups have also been used to triangulate the data collected in the survey and the interviews.

There are issues to using focus groups and these aspects were considered in the research design to limit the negative aspects. One disadvantage is that the researcher has less control, than in an interview, over the data collected as the group discussion is more open ended (Morgan, 1997). Another aspect to consider is the extent to which the individuals in the focus group are expressing their own opinions and how much they might be influenced by group dynamics. One way to mitigate this issue is to select a sample that is not a friendship group; this was achieved by asking for volunteers from different groups. The practical issues associated with convening a focus group was also addressed including the timing and number of participants. The chairing of the group was handled effectively to keep the discussion focus to the point but facilitating open- ended discussion (Cohen et al., 2007).

During the meeting I ensured that all participants had the chance to speak and was mindful not to show approval (Krueger & Casey, 2009), to avoid favouring particular participants. I avoided giving personal opinions to prevent influencing participants towards any particular opinion.

5.3.5 Triangulation

It has been an informed decision to use a range of data collection methods which gather both quantitative and qualitative data. This use of triangulation, using more than one method to collect data, is a valid approach to demonstrate concurrent validity in education research (Denscombe, 2010). Using a range of methods is an attempt to understand more fully the richness and complexity (Cohen et al., 2007) of

the assessment processes used in school based placements. The use of a number of data collection methods allows the results to be more reliable since they have been cross-checked, and triangulation is a significant factor in addressing the reliability of research. Triangulation is more multi-faceted than one approach to data collection and types of triangulation have been identified by a number of researchers (Denzin, 1970; Silverman, 1993; Thurmond, 2001). Within this study I aimed to achieve data triangulation by considering the viewpoints of the same subject from different perspectives, methodological triangulation (obtaining data by using more than one data collection tool) and analytical triangulation analysing the data using more than one coding strategy. These will be explained in more depth in chapter 6.

5.4. Research Sample

The reasons for selecting the participants are largely pragmatic considerations related directly to the research question (Thomas, 2009). The student sample group for the questionnaire was the year three cohort on a BA QTS course. This specific group of students was selected purposively and has no correlation with samples identified in positivist research. The rationale for selecting this cohort is that this group of students were in the final year of their course and have a wide range of experiences about the assessment processes and were able to contribute responses based on their experience from three teaching practices. This sample group was a single year cohort of one hundred and eighty students. This provided a purposive sample *'representative of something meaningful'* based on predetermined criteria (Newby, 2010, p. 228). The cost of administering the survey was low and it was easy to reach these large cohorts of people using existing virtual learning platforms within

the university communication system. The majority of the cohort were aged between 20-22 and are female.

20 school based tutors were invited to complete the survey by personal first hand invitations during my supervision visits to school, 19 of the cohort completed the survey; 2 are male, 17 female. The school based tutors had a range of experiences in supervising trainees from the focus university ranging from 2 years to 6 years. All of the school based tutors were familiar with the university strategies for assessing trainees and all had recent experience of supervision.

Participants for the interviews were volunteer university based tutors with a range of experiences involved with supervising trainees on teaching practice. This purposive sample group of self-selected volunteers were all female (Cohen et al., 2007). The tutors were interviewed using a semi- structured interview on the university campus. The six focus group participants were invited to attend from a group of fifteen volunteers who had responded to an email sent to the year 3 cohort. The group of six were selected as they were not a friendship group and had a range of experiences on teaching practice including different grades and placements which were different models of supervision.

Summary of Sample			
Stakeholder	Data Collection Tool	Number of Participants	Description
BAQTS Year 3 students	Questionnaire	93	Mainly aged 20-22 mainly female
BAQTS Year 3 students	Focus Group	6	Aged 20-22 female
School based tutors	Questionnaire	19	Aged 25-55 18 female 1 male. Range of experience from 5 years teaching to 32
University based tutors	Interview	6	Aged 32-55 all-female. Range of experience in ITT from 4 years to 15 years

5.5. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are paramount in the research context. The focus on functional aspects including review committees, ethical approval forms and participant consent forms places the stress on practical considerations but the review processes must begin with an understanding of the basic principles underlying the research:

'Although there are important practical matters that stem from ethical concerns, ethics is about the conduct of your work: it is about how you think about inquiry, how you think about this research project; it is about your respect for others'

(Thomas, 2009, p. 146).

Ethical procedures and practices guide all aspects of the research process including the research purpose, methods and reporting procedures (Cohen et al., 2007). The epistemological stance was considered as this impacts on the research process. This is particularly relevant as the research is being carried out in my own institution. Questions about who the research is benefiting and whether the research is 'worthwhile' and therefore justifiable in taking up people's time and energy are the first ethical considerations. In selecting a topic relating to the assessment of trainees I am revealing an interest in this area arising from a value led position. My view is that the way we teach, prepare and assess teachers in training is of importance to society, since well taught teachers will in turn become better teachers which benefits society as children will be better educated. This stance is value laden, but if the stance is clear from the start of the research issues of bias and subjectivity are more likely to be addressed as the research develops.

My status as an 'insider' researcher has been discussed (chapter 1) and steps have been taken to explain aspects of inherent bias and to minimise prejudice but there is recognition that total objectivity will not be achieved.

The concept of informed consent is a key ethical issue within this project. Participant consent forms (see Appendix 5) have been created in conjunction with the supervising tutor and in line with the university guidelines on research procedures and the code of conduct for research. Information on the background to the research is included in the consent form so that participants understand what they are agreeing to. It is also important to state that participants have the right to withdraw their consent and an outline for the process for opting out is shared with all participants. This rigorous attention to detail ensures that participants were not coerced into taking part in the project.

Participants are reassured that the data collection and analysis is confidential and anonymous. The essence of an anonymous approach is that the identity of the participant will not be revealed, ensuring the person's privacy. The interviews were conducted one to one but all recorded information is anonymous. All data collected is protected both by practical elements such as keeping the data in a safe manner but also in terms of ensuring that the boundaries surrounding the information are protected with particular reference to the reporting stage of the research project. All participants signed a statement (see Appendix 5) to ensure approval before the research began and also formally stating the confidentiality issue (Cohen et al., 2007). By ensuring these key aspects are considered in the research process participants are protected and university research procedures were followed. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Committee,

subject to minor amendments which were addressed (see Appendix 6) before the project began and this was endorsed by the research committee at the host university where the research was conducted. These two university based research committees adhere to policies which follow the protocols and recommendations of national professional bodies and legislative requirements (Cohen, et al., 2007).

5.6 Summary

This chapter has provided an outline and justification of the methodological framework for the research. The framework is underpinned by a social constructivist agenda that uses questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data about the central questions:

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

The first data collection point was the review of relevant literature; this review of key issues, research and theories was outlined in chapters two three and four and provides an essential starting point in the research design and data collection process. The historical and political context was defined so that the current study can be placed in context. As Merriam (2009) defines, the literature review *'is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research on a particular topic'* (pp. 75-76).

The literature review and analysis of the methodology of three previous studies provided a rationale for decisions about the research design for this study.

Secondly, quantitative and qualitative data was collected from the questionnaires and the third data collection point was the qualitative data arising from the interviews and focus group. The chapter concluded with a section outlining the ethical process and a recognition of my position as an 'inside' researcher.

The next chapter will explain the data analysis methods and coding strategies used to interpret the data. Chapter 7 will provide a detailed analysis of the data and will draw together some of the main findings arising from the presentation of the data.

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The focus for this chapter will be a discussion of the findings arising from the research with a reminder that this is presented from my position as an insider researcher as outlined in chapter 1.

An explanation of the data analysis tools and coding methods will be provided including a discussion about the use of NVivo10 software. The bulk of the chapter will present and analyse the data. In analysing the data it is appropriate to begin with a recap of the main research questions identified in chapter one which are:

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

The structure for the data analysis will follow the guidance provided by Miles & Huberman (1994) and will consist of three aspects: data reduction, displaying the data and drawing and verifying conclusions. The third aspect of drawing conclusions will be the main focus of chapter 7.

6.2 Data analysis and coding strategy for qualitative data

Within this section I provide details of how the textual data was analysed and coded in the interviews, focus group and open ended survey questions. The data from each group of participants is distinct but the same categories were used to analyse the data in order to identify key themes. At all stages the data arising from each distinct

group of participants can be extracted. The strategy used was content analysis. A working definition of this type of analysis is provided by Cohen et al., (2007):

'...the process of summarising and reporting written data- the main contents of the data and their messages....it defines a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis examination and verification of the contents of written data' (p 475).

The process of content analysis has been identified as a particularly useful tool for the coding of open ended questions in surveys and individual and group responses. This links in exactly with the data collected in this section of the research project (Weber, 1990). This consists of both a descriptive account of the approach in general and includes an explanation of the coding strategy and tools used to organise the data. Content analysis starts with the data which is then interrogated to create summary forms by using emergent themes and categories which may pre- exist.

A frequent comment regarding qualitative data analysis is that the analysis should begin in tandem with the data collection and should start with reading all of the data to get a sense of the whole (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007; Saldana, 2013). This prompted me to read the transcripts for each interview several times, while making use of memos in order to note points of interest, possible themes, similarities, inconsistencies and links to other areas. This approach was applied to the interviews, open ended questions in the survey and focus group transcript. This initial reading enabled me to identify important ideas and subjects that were recurring which helped to recognise key themes. I was also mindful that:

'In qualitative data the analysis here is almost inevitably interpretive... the researcher brings to the data his or her preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, biography, background and agenda'

(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 469).

Having repeated this process a number of times, the interviews, survey results and focus group transcript were then imported into NVivo10, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis software (CAQDAS) package designed to assist with the analysis and interpretation of data. The advantages of employing computer software packages for analysing qualitative data include organised storage and rapid retrieval of the data, powerful search functionalities, more efficient coding of data, encouragement towards a close examination of the data and enhancing the overall rigour of the study (Cresswell, 1994; Saldana, 2013).

Some have cautioned against overemphasising the abilities of computer packages. Thomas (2009), for instance, argues that *"Nothing, of course, substitutes for your intelligent reading of your data... this is the danger of software in qualitative data analysis: it leads to the false belief that someone else is going to do the hard work for you"* (Thomas, 2009, p. 207). This is also highlighted by Atkinson & Hammersely (2007) who stress the intricate processes involved in reading and interpreting data and suggest that computer software is no substitute for this process.

However, having reviewed the arguments for and against NVivo10 I elected to use it as a tool to aid the process of organising the data and assisting in the analysis by using the search and querying tools whilst recognising my role in determining meaningful categories and emerging themes. The software tools proved to be beneficial in the organisation and coding of the qualitative data as it enabled me to search for key words and phrases and to present the results for consideration. The process of data reduction, where key data is selected, simplified and transformed is an essential initial part of the data analysis activity. A positive aspect of NVivo10 compared to other CAQDAS software is that it enables the direct language of the

participants to be used in the coding process which fits in well with the interpretivist stance and focus on using the participants to construct the themes within the research (Saldana, 2013).

The process selected to analyse the data fits within the methodological framework identified in chapter 5 where an interpretivist stance is defined. A process of 'constant comparison' (Thomas, 2009, p. 198) was used whereby the data was sifted and examined several times comparing phrases, words, sentences and paragraphs with all of the other elements. Themes then began to emerge from this constant comparison process that encapsulates the substance of the data. These themes are the key component of the research process and are constructed by the participants. This approach is the basis of the interpretative approach. The analysis and interpretation of the participants' data is filtered by me, and as such involves a subjective approach as Sipe & Ghiso (2004) note that *'all coding is a judgement call... as we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions and our quirks to the process'* (pp.482-3).

During the analysis of the data the aim is to enable the participants to construct and determine the themes but I recognise that I will interpret and perceive the data from my perspective and therefore need to use caution in conducting the analysis.

6.3 Coding and categorising

The strategy for coding and categorising will be explained in more depth in this section with the qualitative data discussed first followed by a discussion of the quantitative data.

6.3.1 Data reduction of qualitative data

The next stage of the content analysis involved the creation of categories and codes to identify units of meaning within the data:

'Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size - words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs'

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56).

This stage of the data organisation can be described as data reduction as the data needs to be reconfigured and reduced into manageable units which relate to the issues being addressed by the key questions in the research. This is described clearly by Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 10); *'Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written field notes or transcriptions.'* Coding is an interpretive technique used to organise the data and provide a structure for understanding the data. It requires the researcher to analyse the data and demarcate it into manageable segments which are labelled with a code. The codes used are words or phrases which show how the data segments link to the research questions.

There are two approaches to developing codes and categories in qualitative data analysis, these are deductive and inductive (Patton, 2002). The first starts with a list of themes arising from the literature review and initial review of the data. The second method is to use grounded theory and enable the themes to emerge during the analysis process which might then lead to new theories being developed. Cresswell (1994) suggests that qualitative data analysis is more aligned to an inductive approach to the development of themes but others (Miles & Huberman, 1994) imply that a mixed approach is more common.

For this project I started with a list of initial themes surfacing mainly from the research questions, literature review and results arising from the pilot study. These were: assessment grades, reflection tools, the school community, lesson observations and feedback. Having completed an initial process of reviewing the data I identified a further theme as progression and standards. This approach to the development of codes and categories uses some initial themes identified in the research process but also allows for an inductive on going analysis. The aim is to analyse the data in a thorough and transparent manner with the research questions at the centre of the process.

The data was established as an Internal Source in NVivo (see figure 6.0) and placed in groups: university tutor interviews, focus group transcript, tutor survey 1, tutor survey 2 and Y3 trainee survey. The tutor surveys were imported in two sets for technical reasons which had no impact on the data analysis.

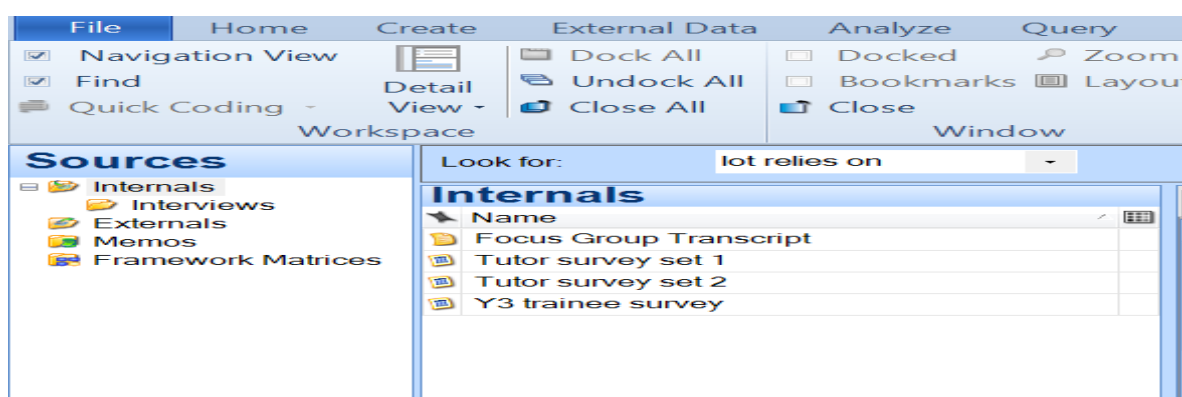


Figure 6.0: Data input into NVivo

After inputting the data into NVivo the word count query was used to identify which words were used most frequently by the participants in their responses to questions. The purpose of using this analysis at this point was to identify significant elements to code and to assist in the recognition of themes. I am aware of the limitations of using

word frequency as a guiding principle and instead used it as a tool suggested by Saldana (2013, p. 63);

'Remember that word frequency in the data does not necessarily suggest significance, but it is nevertheless worth exploring as a query... to explore any emergent but as yet undetected patterns.'

Key words have been selected from the word frequency enquiry and used alongside the initial themes as the basis of the secondary data scrutiny. The principle aim in this part of the process was not merely to identify commonly occurring words but to find the most commonly occurring concepts. In line with this aim I used the tool in NVivo to select words with exact matches, words with a similar term and synonyms and refined the search by ignoring less significant words like conjunctions or prepositions, which are not meaningful to the analysis.

The word count query tool counts the words used and identifies words appearing more frequently in the text. From this initial analysis of the university tutor interviews (see figure 6.1) the four most frequent words appearing in the interviews were:

WORD	SIMILAR WORDS	COUNT
grade	Grade, graded	31
mpr	Mpr ,MPR	28
lesson	Lesson, lessons	27
assessment	Assessing, assessment	21

Figure 6.1: Word frequency: University tutor interviews

The same query was applied to each of the four data groupings to identify which key words appeared most frequently. The full representation of these word frequency queries are represented as word clouds examples seen in appendix 7.

The word frequency for the school tutor survey (figure 6.2) included the word *support* which is the only time it occurs in the word frequency analysis.

WORD	SIMILAR WORDS	COUNT
assessment	Assessing, assessment	18
support	Support, supported, supporting	18
progress	Progress, progression	17

Figure 6.2: Word frequency: School tutor survey

The trainee on line survey was completed by 93 students and the open ended questions in the survey generated a large amount of textual data which was initially explored to identify the frequency of key words, the result of this query can be seen in figure 6.3 below.

WORD	SIMILAR WORDS	COUNT
FLT	Flt (faculty link tutor)	60
grade	Grade grades, grading	47
improve	Improve, improved	47
standards	Standard, standards	41

Figure 6.3: Word frequency: Trainee survey

The word frequency investigation of the focus group transcription proved less useful as most of the first fifteen words and utterances were affirmation words for example, 'yeah' 'mmm' and other words which were not relevant such as, 'know' and 'good'. A further review of the next fifteen most frequently occurring words generated some useful information see figure 6.4.

WORD	SIMILAR WORDS	COUNT
year	Year, years, yearly	17
school	School, schools	16
tutor	Tutor, tutors	13
evidence	evidence	12

Figure 6.4: Word frequency: Student focus group survey

This exploration of the frequency of key words helped to refine the categories used for further analysis and discussion by identifying the incidence and patterns of key terms. There are guidelines for determining categories from a number of researchers (Cohen et al., 2007; Atkinson & Hammersely, 2007; Saldana, 2013). In exploring these suggestions I decided to use three main principles: categories which are mentioned frequently, ideas and concepts which appear to be important and areas of enquiry which provide a unique insight into the issue. From this scrutiny of the word frequencies and drawing upon the initial themes identified in the review of the literature and the pilot study a number of key categories were identified and used to begin to code the qualitative data in the interviews, focus group and open ended questions in the surveys. These are listed below:

Initial coding categories:

PDP
Grade
improvement and progress
standards
purpose of assessment
School based tutor
Faculty link tutor
Evidence
lesson observation and feedback

mpr grade and discussion
epr grade and discussion
Support
Assessment
Reflection
action points
suggestions for improvements

These categories were used as the basis to code the textual data in NVivo using the categories as descriptive codes with words and short phrases as a summary description of the content rather than abbreviations of the content. Descriptive coding is identified by Saldana (2013) as a useful technique for qualitative researchers.

The textual data was organised and coded using the descriptive codes identified and adjustments were made to the coding and data using the constant comparison approach identified by Thomas (2009). For example, sub categories were identified including those which noted positive and negative comments relating to each category and comments that were particular to specific participants such as trainees or tutors. The data from different groups of participants was kept distinct as one of the key research questions relates to the views of each of these distinct groups. For some categories there was no input from some groups; this is apparent in the coding map. The NVivo facility for mapping codes enables a visual structure to be demonstrated which aligns to the data and identifies sub categories and relationships between categories (see figure 6.5), for example, all of the comments related to evidence were within the context of standards so the evidence folder is organised as a sub folder of the standards folder.

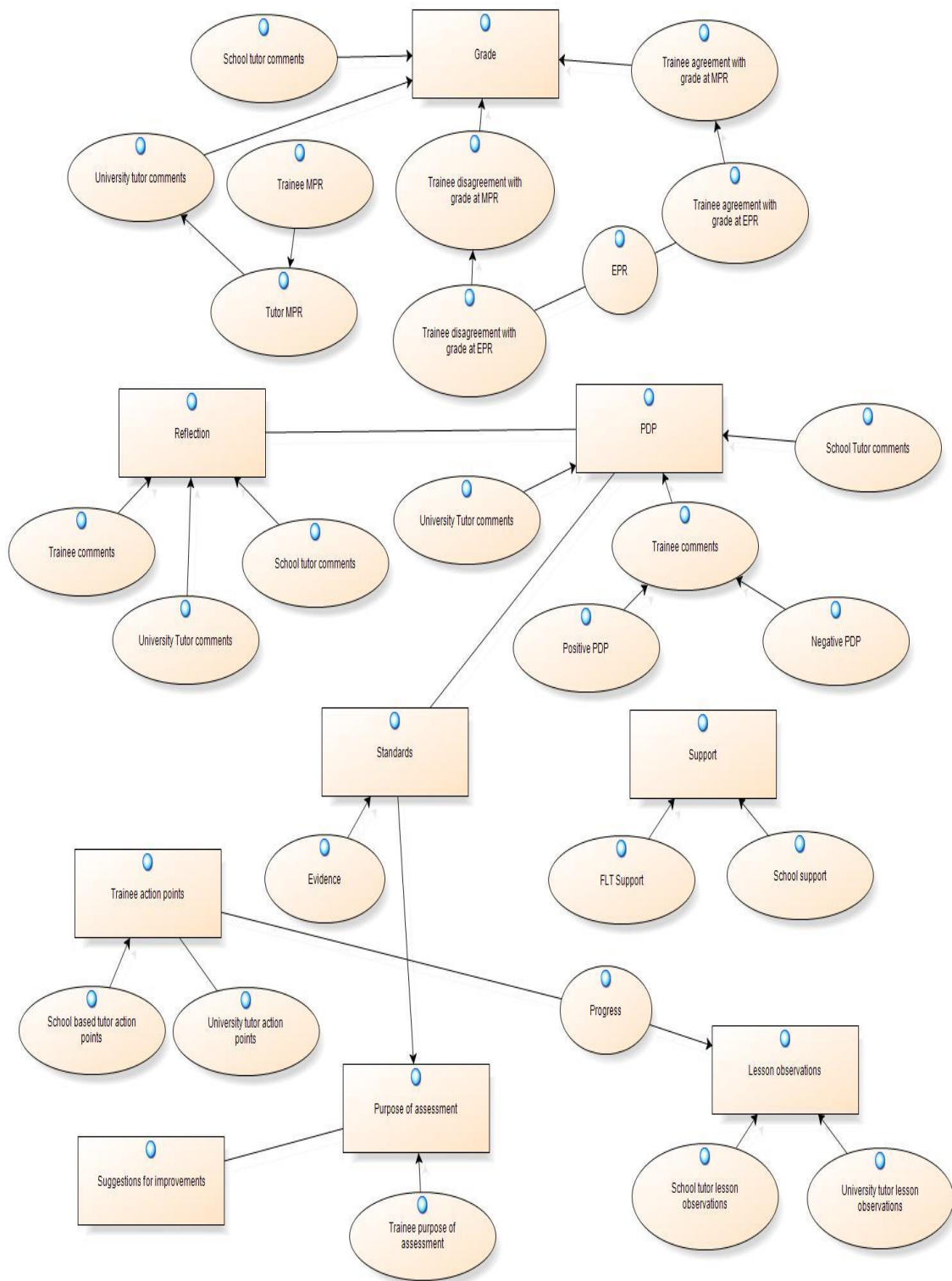


Figure 6.5: Visual representation of coding including categories, sub categories and the relationship between them (rectangles represent main categories, ellipses represent sub-categories).

The model of categories and subcategories is complex. In order to rationalise the analysis four key significant themes were identified which subsumed the categories and sub categories.

The key themes emerging from this analysis and the processes of defining these themes from the categories and sub categories is mapped in figure 6.6 using a network analysis to show how one idea is related to another (Thomas, 2009).

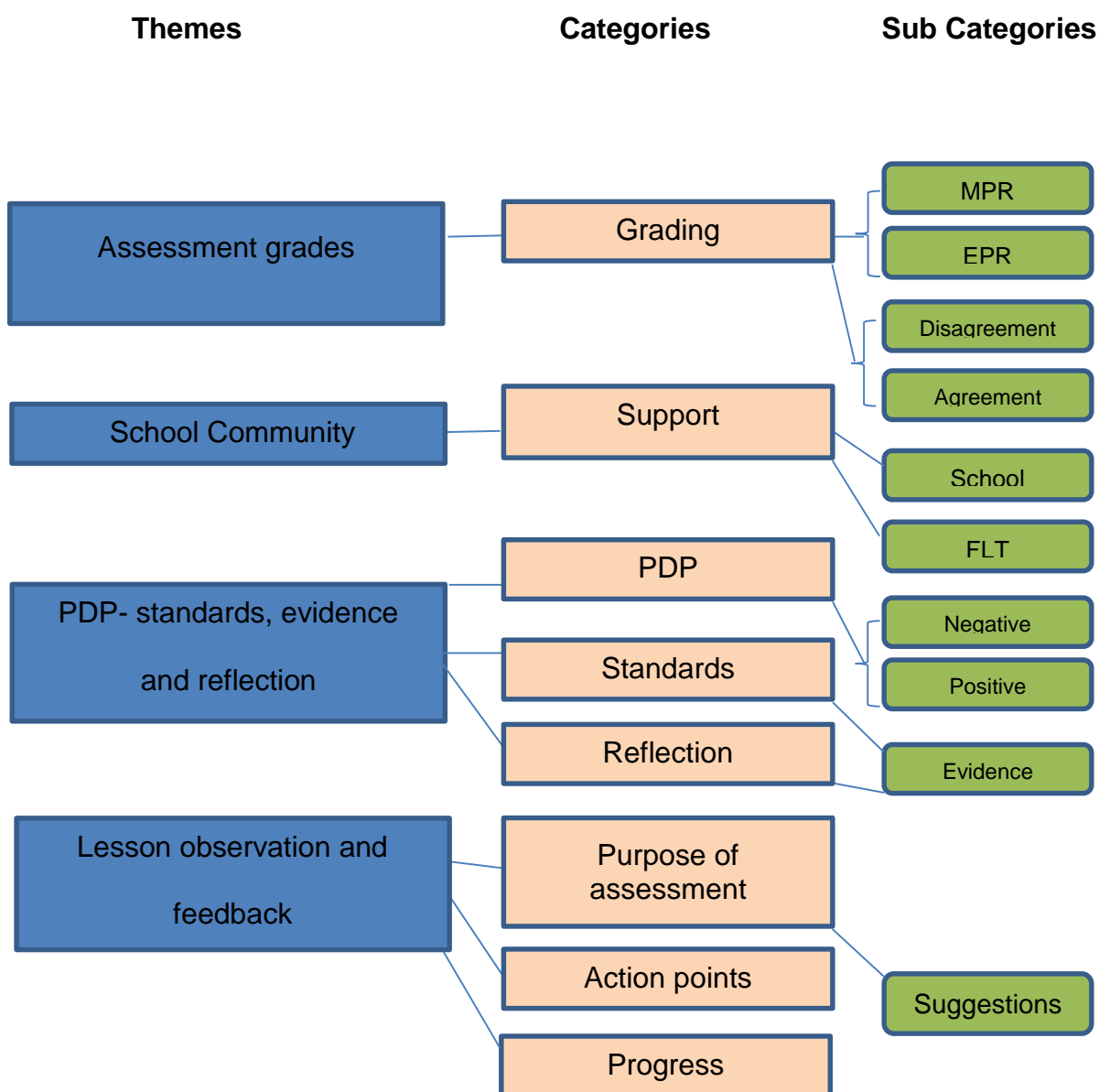


Figure 6.6: Summary network of themes emerging from categories and subcategories

6.3.2 Data reduction of quantitative data

Most of the data arising from the Bristol on line survey questionnaire is highly structured (e.g. closed questions and Likert responses) and was coded without any additional segmenting of the content as the coding was inherent in the questions.

This method is recommended by Saldana (2013 p.26) as an effective approach as *'...the software provided excellent organisation with individual cells holding entries and their accompanying codes'*.

Quantitative analysis of this data will be related to the codes, categories and themes identified in the analysis of the qualitative data.

The Bristol on line survey questionnaire (BOS) contains analysis tools within the software and these have been used as a starting point to interpret the data gathered.

The analysis tools count responses to the closed questions and present the data graphically; in this way the data is reduced to charts graphs and tables which present the data succinctly. Options within the software enable the data in selected questions to be cross tabulated to make comparisons. Summary tables have been used to present a synopsis of the ideas emerging from the open questions.

Emerging from the coding and categorisation are four key themes which are:

- assessment grades,
- the PDP: reflection, standards and evidence
- the school community,
- lesson observations and feedback.

These themes have been used as the basis to present the data arising from all of the data collection tools. Coding is not a straightforward process and the categories identified are not mutually exclusive; there are overlaps and links which have been

identified in figure 6.5. The data analysis is focused on the research questions so it draws together the data related to the research question to preserve the coherence of the information.

6.4 Displaying the data

The next processes in the data analysis is to display the data arising from the coding processes which form the basis of the second stage of the data analysis identified by Miles & Huberman (1994). A frequent criticism of coding method is that it seeks to transform qualitative data into empirically valid data, which contain positivist scientific properties thereby depleting the data of its richness, and individual character. To respond to this criticism I have explained the coding process in detail and will include verbatim qualitative data in this section of data display that might be absent from a mere list of codes and summary statistics.

6.4.1 Assessment grades

The most prevalent themes emerging from the data surrounds the assessment grade and links to the second research question which asks what the stakeholders think about the assessment strategies. The starting point for presenting this data is the BOS survey and questions 6 and 10 which related to agreement with the MPR and EPR grades

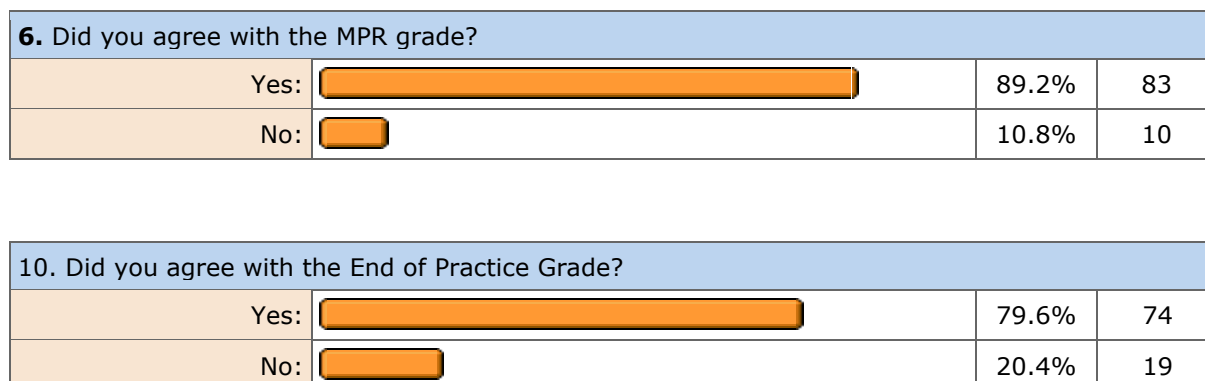


Figure 6.7: Trainee agreement with MPR and EPR grades

Most of the trainees agree with the grade but there is a difference between the satisfaction rate at MPR (89.2%) and EPR (79.6%) with an almost 10% reduction in satisfaction at EPR. The reasons for agreement with the grade were clustered around a few main themes which is presented in Figure 6.8

Reasons for agreement with MPR/EPR grade	
It reflected my achievements/ linked to lesson observations	52%
The grading criteria was discussed at the weekly meetings	39%
The grade was explained at the MPR/EPR meeting	9%

Figure 6.8 Summary of reasons for agreeing with MPR and EPR grades

The school tutor responses to the same question revealed that 95% of tutors said that trainees agreed with the MPR and EPR grade. The school tutor comments included:

The grade was agreed with by all parties (BOS Tutor 5).

It was discussed in depth with the trainee at all meeting using available evidence (BOS Tutor 4).

She was a highly successful trainee and scored a grade 1. It would be counter productive to disagree with such a good grade (BOS Tutor 1).

The responses from university tutors regarding the grades correlated closely with the school tutors with all of the tutors stating that trainees agreed with the grade and all of them suggesting that trainees were more likely to agree with the EPR grade a typical comment was:

Yes- it's (EPR) easier than the MPR grade because you are working from whatever grade they got at MPR, usually there's no problem as it's all based on the progress since MPR. (Interview A Jan 2014)

The next step is to review the data regarding disagreement with grades to present the reasons why trainees sometimes disagree with the grade they receive.

The reason for one trainee not agreeing with their grade was explained by the tutor:

She had a period of absence and felt that this had contributed to a lower than expected grade' (BOS 16).

Trainees had more varied reasons to explain their disagreement with the grade including:

Based on the criteria I should have received a grade higher than I did but the Faculty Link Tutor did not want to give me this and as I was not involved in the MPR I was not able to question the grading (BOS 32)

I was not present when the review was done and the grade was lower than I felt I had achieved (BOS 66).

These comments lead to a presentation of the data regarding the manner in which MPR and EPR meetings are conducted to reveal how this might impact on the trainees' attitude to the grade. This also relates to the first research question regarding how trainees are assessed. I present a summary of the findings, from questions 5 and 9 in the trainee questionnaire which asks who attended the MPR and EPR, in Figure 6.9. A total of 93 trainees completed the survey.

5. Who attended the MPR?			No (n=93)
Trainee:			88
Host practitioner:			66
Faculty link tutor:			74
School based tutor:			29
Other (please specify):			3

9. Who attended the EPR?			No (n=93)
Trainee:			77
Host practitioner:			50
Faculty link tutor:			73
School based tutor:			30
Other (please specify):			3

Figure 6.9: Attendance at MPR and EPR

This illustrates that at MPR, 5 trainees were not in attendance at the meeting and at EPR, 16 trainees were not present at the meeting and correlates very closely to the number of students agreeing with the grade at this point (88 trainees attended the MPR and 83 agreed with the grade at MPR, 77 trainees attended the EPR and 74 agreed with the grade at EPR (see Figure 6.7). There may be other reasons for disagreement with the grade and these will be explored in chapter 7.

6.4.2 The PDP: reflection, standards and evidence

This section considers the data related to the PDP and how it is regarded by the trainees and tutors. Ideas around reflection, standards and evidence gathering will also be presented in this section as they emerged frequently from the questions about the PDP.

In the questionnaire trainees were asked how useful they found the PDP in their second teaching practice. Their responses are recorded in figure 6.10. The results indicate that 59.2% (6.5+22.6+30.1) of trainees found the PDP file useful on their teaching practice in year 2.







14.d. Professional Development Profile -- Select one response for each question 1 not useful 6 very useful			
1:		6.5%	6
2:		14.0%	13
3:		20.4%	19
4:		30.1%	28
5:		22.6%	21
6:		6.5%	6

Figure 6.10: Usefulness of PDP file (question 14.d)

However, when compared with other assessment strategies used on teaching practice, no students identified the PDP as the most useful strategy for supporting their progress; see figure 6.11.

16. Which assessment strategy used on teaching practice has been the most useful in helping you to progress?			
Lesson observations and feedback:		91.4%	85
Mid Point Review:		7.5%	7
End of Practice Review:		0.0%	0
Professional Development Profile:		0.0%	0
Other (<i>please specify</i>):		1.1%	1

Figure 6.11: Usefulness of PDP file (question 16)

In examining the qualitative data related to the PDP it was clear that many (52%) trainees regarded the PDP file mainly as a tool to track their progress against the standards and the location to file evidence to demonstrate their progress; see figure 6.12. A significant proportion of the trainees (20%) also regard the PDP as a tool to support a reflective approach to their teaching.

Comments about the PDP	
Useful as tool to record evidence and track progress in standards	52%
Reflective tool	20%
Negative comments about PDP	27%
Other comments	7%

Figure 6.12: Summary of trainee comments about the PDP (question 16)

Tutors are more positive about the PDP and most of the comments related to the PDP relate to it as a strategy to track progress against the standards and as the location for evidence not contained in the teaching practice file. One interviewee questioned the PDP as a separate file:

It (the PDP) was looked at as a tool to record evaluative comments- it's good to see that students have developed a reflective approach...but I sometimes wonder about the value of the PDP- so long as they have evidence for all the standards it doesn't really matter where it is. A lot of the evidence is in the TP file and what you see when they teach- but the PDP file does make it easier to track against each of the

standards. It is more straight forward for the BAs as it helps them to know what they are looking for- what areas they need to develop – before they start on the next TP. The trouble is the students perceive it as an isolated document and not as a useful tool- it needs to be embedded into practice- most of them are not making the links (Interview A Jan 2014).

The negative comments about the PDP from the trainees' perspective relate mainly to their perceptions of the usefulness of the PDP and the extent to which it is tracked and monitored by the assessment tutors during their teaching practice. Of the 27% (figure 6.12) who commented negatively about the PDP the most frequent complaint related to the PDP as an additional task and not something that was integrated into the assessment process during teaching practice, as interviewee A notes in the comments above. As one trainee commented in the survey in response to question 13:

There isn't enough time to fill this in whilst on placement. My FLT did not look at it so it did not contribute to the assessment of my skills on teaching practice (BOS 37).

The PDP portfolio file is used by trainees to track evidence against the Qualified Teaching Standards throughout the whole of the BA course so this ambivalence about the file as a tool to assess trainees on teaching practice is understandable and will be addressed more fully in chapter 7.

6.4.3 School Support

School support refers to the support trainees receive in the classroom environment from the school staff and the university based tutors working in the school context.

This theme has arisen from the data as a less significant theme but has been included as a distinct section in the data analysis to link back to the literature review and the communities of practice theoretical framework identified in chapter 4. The first analysis in this section considers the model of supervision experienced by

trainees and the degree of satisfaction with the EPR grade. The results have been cross tabulated by question "2. What model was the teaching practice?"

10. Did you agree with the End of Practice Grade?	Faculty led Model (most observations and assessments by university tutor)	School led model (most observations and assessments by school based teachers)	Training Model (A school based teacher in training)	Totals
Yes	51 (84%)	20 (71%)	3 (75%)	74
No	10 (16%)	8 (29%)	1 (25%)	19
Totals	61	28	4	93

Figure 6.13: Model of the teaching practice and agreement with EPR grade (question 2 cross tabulated with question 10)

This analysis suggests that trainees are more likely to be satisfied with their EPR grade if the supervision model they experience is a faculty led model, where most of the lesson observations and assessments are completed by the faculty link tutor.

This is a tentative analysis with an awareness of the predominance of the faculty led model on this school experience. In fact 66% of trainees experienced a faculty led model and 30% a school based model. The remaining 4% of trainees were supervised by a school based teacher training to be a school based tutor.

The qualitative data provides more detail about the community support and the word count query suggests that two key data sources might offer more insights into this theme. The word count query identified words related to school appearing 16 times in the focus group discussion (see figure 6.4) and the school tutor BOS survey included frequent mention of support (18) (see figure 6.2). The coding of data related to this theme also identifies the trainee survey and tutor interviews as sources of data related to this topic. The Node analysis tool in NVivo has been utilised to summarise the data sources for the code 'support' and illustrates which data sources have been used to code data to this node; see figure 6.14.

Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
Focus Group Transcript	Internals	9	6.88%
Tutor interview F transcript 2014x	Internals/Interviews	1	15.67%
Tutor survey set 1	Internals	1	0.31%
Tutor survey set 2	Internals	8	6.96%
Y3 trainee survey	Internals	16	1.30%

Figure 6.14: Data sources related to the code ‘support’.

Many of the trainees commented positively about the support received from FLT's during their school experience:

I haven't had a School Based Tutor, but the Faculty Link Tutor, I found that they knew what they were doing, they came in, they did the job well-fantastic, they knew exactly what I'd got to do and helped me to progress (Focus group Trainee 3).

It was also evident that the trainees recognised the importance of establishing effective working relationships in the school:

A lot relies on the relationship you build with the Host Practitioner and how willing they are to give regular, constructive feedback (BOS 82).

Many of the trainees noted the support received from the school teachers and the impact this had on their progress:

My Host Practitioner was great, you know, she knew that the feedback needed to be positive, and was able to point out where I need to improve (Focus group Trainee 2).

There were comparisons, by some trainees, between faculty led and university led models, for example:

The FLT model works best, my last TP was school led and I am sure the university based tutors know the standards better and know exactly what you need to do to reach the standards (BOS 48).

However there was no discernible pattern in favour of one model or another and there were an equal number of trainees with positive comments about both models.

6.4.4 Lesson observations and feedback

In the questionnaire trainees were asked which assessment strategy they found most useful on the year 3 teaching practice (see figure 6.11), a substantial majority (91.4%) of the trainees identified lesson observation and feedback as the most useful strategy to help them to progress. Trainees were also asked about the assessment strategies used on their year 2 teaching practice and 73.1% also identified lesson observations as the most useful strategy to help them to progress, see figure 6.15.





14. Year 2 teaching practice.			
14.a. Lesson observations -- Select one response for each question 1 not useful 6 very useful			
1:		2.2%	2
2:		0.0%	0
3:		0.0%	0
4:		3.2%	3
5:		21.5%	20
6:		73.1%	68

Figure 6.15: Summary of usefulness of lesson observations (question 14a)

Trainees explained why they considered lesson observations and feedback to be the most useful assessment tool:

It's about improving your skills and acting as a reflective practitioner and responding to advice and feedback- that's why the lesson observation is the best strategy- it's personal and matched exactly to you (BOS 79).

The tutors assessing me provide advice, support and guidance. Helping to craft me into the teacher I believe I can be (BOS 78).

Good lesson observations celebrate success and give me reassurance, but also inform me of my next steps (BOS 85).

Tutors concurred with the trainees that lesson observation and feedback was the most effective assessment strategy and there were no negative comments about this aspect of the assessment process. Tutor D noted the importance of trainees developing a reflective approach to their teaching:

The last student I supervised did really well – she was really accurate in knowing her own strengths and development points when I did the observation feedback she could have written the feedback herself- that’s what it’s all about really- getting them to reflect and identify how to improve their teaching themselves as reflective practitioners (Interview D Jan 2014).

The first research question which is concerned with how the assessment tools are used to assess the trainees requires a more in depth analysis of the specific approaches taken at each stage of the process. Interviewee A offers some insights into the approach taken to discuss the lesson:

I make sure it’s a dialogue based on an analysis of the lesson- it’s got to be based on the student’s perceptions- we look at specific parts of the lesson. So, for example, if the children were dis- engaged we discuss the issues- why were they disengaged? It’s good professional development to discuss the lesson together like this. The focus is on what the children have learned. Then, when we have talked about the lesson we identify points to improve- only 2 or 3 action points- sometimes class teachers set too many points for the student and they get overwhelmed. The action points help the trainees move progressively through the practice- seamless progress (Interview A Jan 2014).

In all the university tutor interviews the tutors described the lesson feedback as taking place as soon after the lesson as feasible in a quiet location where there would be no interruptions. The school based tutors also established the same principles when completing the lesson feedback with the discussions concluding with action points to help the trainee to progress.

Because you are addressing real situations to which you can relate good practice through an evaluative approach highlighting cause and effect, both in bringing about good learning or the opposite. From these strategies to improve practice and self-evaluation can be discussed and set as agreed targets (BOS School Tutor 3).

The reasons for this overwhelming support of lesson observation and feedback as the most successful strategy will be discussed in chapter 7.

The final section of data is concerned with progress and development and leads on from lesson observations and target setting. I began by analysing the response to question 17 in the trainee questionnaire which asked the trainees to explain what they thought was the key purpose of assessment on teaching practice.

What is the purpose of assessment on teaching practice (question 17)	
Progress/ development / improvement	91%
Enabling trainee to help children progress	6%
Negative comments about PDP	2%
Other comments	1%

Figure 6.16: Summary of purpose of assessment (question 17)

The great majority of trainees (91%) mentioned progress, development and improvement, typical comments were:

It helps you to become a better teacher as the action points at MPR and EPR help you to know where you need to improve- even the EPR action points for this TP lead on to your NQT year (BOS 67).

To inform me of all the factors I am meeting successfully and areas and key things for improvement (BOS 38).

Some trainees recognised the importance of the children they are teaching and the need to ensure that they make progress and develop in their learning:

To give guidance and support to develop in the role as a good teacher. To ensure the children are all making progress whilst being taught by a student by giving professional support and help (BOS 4).

There were only 2 negative responses to this question which related to dissatisfaction with the grade attained at EPR.

The data analysis of school tutor responses to the same question also referred to progress, development and improvement but also included reference to some of the wider aspects of the role of a teacher including these comments:

Supporting trainees to build on teaching skills, identify areas for development. It also should help trainees to improve their own evaluative and analytical skills when considering their own teaching (BOS Tutor 9).

The main purpose is to improve the standard of teaching and use of assessment so that children in the lessons can be seen to be making progress. The assessment process needs to take a coaching and mentoring approach with trainees who are also 'learners' and need to be supported to develop (BOS Tutor 19).

The analysis revealed that two strategies within the teaching practice were considered to be key in supporting the progress of trainees, namely action point setting and feedback following lesson observations. Action point setting is an essential component of the lesson feedback process and is inherent in the MPR and EPR process. This was a prominent code in the NVivo data analysis with most of the data (58 references) arising from the trainee survey, see figure 6.17.

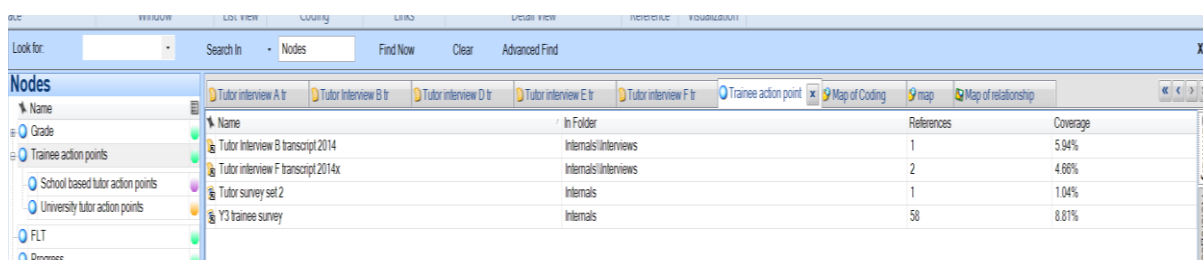


Figure 6.17: Data sources related to the code ‘action points’.

Trainees acknowledged the role of action points in the feedback:

The action points were areas suggested by my class teacher to ensure I could achieve the best I could during my practice. I found these were developing me and took the suggested points in a positive way.

From the analysis of the 58 Y3 trainee comments about action points only 5 were negative action points and most of these related to the action points being too general.

School and university tutor data in this section was positive about the action points and the qualitative comments reinforced the trainee views:

She had really taken on board the advice she was given and the action points set at MPR about her teaching and especially her files – it was great to see how much she progressed (Interview F Jan 2014).

In contrast no students indicated that the EPR or the PDP were the most useful in helping them to progress (see figure 6.11). As the EPR is allocated at the end of the TP and the students responding to the survey had just completed their final teaching practice this provides some explanation for this response.

6.5 Summary

This is the first chapter of data analysis. It began with an overview of some of the issues arising from the data collection tools. The second section explained the coding strategy and use of NVivo10 as a supportive tool in the process. The themes arising from this coding were then used as the framework for the presentation of the data. Chapter 7 will concentrate on an interpretation of the analysis offered for discussion in this chapter and will address the third aspect of Miles & Huberman's (1994) model 'drawing conclusions'.

CHAPTER 7 DATA INTERPRETATION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is linked to chapter 6 where the data was presented and the first stage of the data analysis began. Chapter 7 will be used to discuss the data analysis in more depth with an interpretation of the analysis offered for discussion. This involves stepping back from the analysed data to consider what the data means and how it impacts on the research questions. Data has been gathered from different sources and different data collection tools as part of the triangulation method (Silverman, 1993). The data from different sources and participants will be analysed to illustrate where views corroborate or conflict. There will be a spotlight on the two research questions and a discussion about how far the data has addressed the questions. In the process, links to key ideas and theories introduced earlier in the thesis will be made explicit. The final section offers some summary comments and outlines the content of chapter 8. The organisation of the data analysis will continue to follow the structure provided by Miles & Huberman (1994) and will focus on the third aspect: drawing and verifying conclusions.

In this, second data analysis chapter, I will examine the opinions of trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors about their experiences of using the assessment strategies on teaching practice and reflect upon their opinion of the effectiveness of these approaches. The presentation of the data analysis will follow the four key themes identified by the coding and category strategy, namely assessment grades, the PDP, school support, lesson observations and feedback.

7.2 Assessment grades

Allocation of the summative assessment grades at Mid- point review (MPR) and End- point review (EPR) is one aspect of the assessment process that trainees have clear opinions about. The exploration of data related to assessment grades in the trainee questionnaire revealed that in the word analysis, grading was mentioned 47 times by the trainees in their responses to open ended questions. The analysis in chapter 6 revealed that overall most trainees agreed with their grades; 89.2% of respondents agreed with the MPR grade and 79.6% agreed with the EPR grade. The discrepancy between the agreement with the MPR grade and the EPR grade is worthy of note as there is a 10% drop in agreement with the EPR grade. The research question is concerned with discovering what trainees think about the assessment process so further analysis is required to interrogate this aspect of the data. As a subsidiary question was included after both these questions, asking participants to give reasons for their responses, it is possible to delve deeper into this analysis to investigate why 10.8% of trainees did not agree with their MPR grade and 20.4% did not agree with the EPR grade. In order to explore this in more detail the responses from the trainees who responded negatively to the question were extracted and analysed in more detail (see figure 7.1). In chapter 6 the summary data presented indicated that approximately the same number of trainees who did not attend the EPR or MPR meeting did not agree with their grade. The reasons for trainees not attending the assessment meeting could be explored in more depth as the qualitative data is limited in this area. Two trainees who comment on not attending the meeting indicated that the decisions about the grade were made by the assessment tutors in their absence and they were informed about the grade rather than being involved in

the process. The fact that the same number of trainees who did not attend the assessment meeting did not agree with their grade seems to suggest that trainees who did not attend the assessment meeting were more likely not to agree with their grade. The data will be analysed in more depth to identify if these are the same trainees or if there are other reasons for some trainees being dissatisfied with their grade. I begin with an analysis of the comments regarding the MPR grade.

Reason for not agreeing with MPR grade (question 6a) (n=13)	
Did not understand why I received this grade	47%
Did not attend meeting	23%
Grade was unfair	15%
Did not have the opportunity to address a specific standard	15%

Figure 7.1 Analysis of disagreement with MPR grade (question 6a)

Figure 7.1 provides a summary analysis of the reasons trainees disagree with the grade and largely refutes the hypothesis that non- attendance at the grade meeting corresponds to dissatisfaction with the grade. The data for each individual trainee was scrutinised and again, there was no pattern with the disagreement with grade and non-attendance at assessment meetings. In fact, the dominant reason for disagreeing with the grade is a lack of understanding about why they had received this grade. This might relate to the nature of the mid-point review in particular as the assessment process is both summative, allocating a grade, and formative, providing action points and feedback of areas to develop and relates to an issue introduced in chapter 2, section 1. Summative grades are allocated to summarise progress (Stobbart & Gipps, 1997), formative assessment is a process which involves guidance and suggestions to help the learner progress (Black & William, 2009). The MPR involves both aspects: the grade assigned is summative, the action points

allocated for the remainder of the practice are formative. The grading criteria, which is highlighted and then used as a best-fit to determine the grade, also acts as a formative model as the sections not highlighted provide guidance for the trainees about where they need to progress. There may be other reasons why trainees do not understand the grade allocated but this has not been revealed in the data analysis.

The discrepancy between the agreement with the MPR grade and the EPR grade will be discussed as there is a 10% drop in agreement with the EPR grade. For this analysis the comments made by dissatisfied trainees at MPR were compared with the trainees dissatisfied at EPR. In analysing the comments regarding the EPR grade an additional category was needed which is 'didn't appear to make progress as there were no sub- levels'.

Reason for not agreeing with EPR grade (question 11a) (n=22)	
Did not understand why I received this grade	11%
Did not attend meeting	27%
Grade was unfair	36%
Did not have the opportunity to address a specific standard	4%
Didn't appear to make progress as there were no sub levels	22%

Figure 7.2 Analysis of disagreement with EPR grade (question 11a)

The analysis in figure 7.2 demonstrates that fewer trainees disagreed with the grade at EPR than MPR because they didn't understand it but more trainees thought the grade was unfair at EPR than at MPR. A significant statistic is that 22% of the trainees disagreed with the grade at EPR as it appeared that they did not make progress as there were no sublevels. When this cohort of trainees completed their Y1 and Y2 teaching practices the grades allocated included sub grades (1a, 1b, 1c...); on this practice grades were allocated as whole grades (1, 2, 3). Grade 1 is the highest grade, grade 3 the lowest. Many trainees were allocated a grade at MPR and

achieved the same summative grade at EPR so trainees appeared to have made little or no progress; this is best explained by trainee 66:

I was awarded level 1b on my second year practice. I was therefore very happy to be a solid 2 at midpoint in year 3, and continued to work with my class teacher to underline more and more of the criteria. However at my end point review I was awarded a 2, therefore appearing to have made no progress throughout the final 4 weeks.

This allocation of summative grades was introduced as part of the assessment policy for trainee teachers in response to the publication of the revised standards for teachers in July 2011 (DfE, 2011b). The grading benchmarks are based upon a criteria adopted widely in the ITT sector (UCET/NASBITT, 2012). The issues arising from this grade allocation resonates with Bloxham's (2008) classification as assessment for 'certification' and for 'quality assurance' as two of the fourfold purposes of assessment, the other two being: '*student learning and lifelong capacity*' (Bloxham, 2008, p. 13). Assessment, in this context, relates closely to the Qualified Teacher Standards (QTS) and the certification and quality assurance purposes of assessment where grades are allocated to judge trainee achievements. The allocation of sub levels within each grade band provides additional measures to judge trainees. Some trainees prefer the detailed sub grade allocation to enable them to identify their progress in a quantifiable form. The disagreement with the grade relates to the conflict in the assessment process which Bloxham (2008) identifies and relates mainly to the summative grade allocation. Formative assessment where trainees identify the next steps are in their progression as teachers by identifying specific action points, does not appear to be an area of disagreement for trainees. This could be seen as a positive aspect of the assessment process as it might suggest that the formative assessment processes are regarded as effective

assessment strategies. Further analysis of the formative assessment strategies in section 7.4 are needed to test this hypothesis.

Despite this analysis of the negative responses it was noted that the questionnaires indicated a high level of agreement with the grades awarded and one of the reasons for this is exemplified by university tutor interview B:

Then we decide the grade for the MPR- using the grading criteria that we have highlighted as the guide. Some students are a bit hesitant about deciding the final grade so again I prompt them but I always ask them if they agree before it's recorded – if there are any disagreements I ask the student to show further evidence- maybe from their TP folder, or PDP, or sometimes from the children's books to show evidence of progress in that area (University tutor Interview B Jan 2014).

At MPR the student is asked if they agree with the grade awarded before it is allocated. This enables any differences between the grade expected by the student and the grade identified by the tutor to be discussed at the first stage. In this way differences can be identified based on a professional discussion about the evidence to support a specific grade.

7.3 PDP: reflection, standards and evidence

The discussion of the PDP file in chapter 6 concluded with noting that the PDP is a professional development profile which is used throughout the whole of the BAQTS course to assess students against the QTS standards. Although the PDP is regarded as a key component of the TP assessment process it does not seem to be regarded as an integral strategy when determining summative grades at MPR and EPR. This section will analyse, in more depth, some of the findings emerging from the data and relate this to evidence in previous studies.

The literature review in chapter 2 provided an overview of the use of portfolios as an assessment tool and the suggestion from the evidence is that portfolios were effective where they complemented other assessment tools (Meeus, et al., 2009).

The university tutors explained that they regarded the PDP file as an integral part of the assessment process and used it, in particular, to monitor the reflective evaluative comments to determine how far the trainees were developing a reflective approach to their practice. Zeichner & Wray (2001) also identified how portfolios could be used to develop a reflective approach and improve professional development.

The school based tutors had a different response to the question about the PDP with more than half of the tutors regarding the PDP as part of the university's responsibility. The school based tutors who did look at the PDP, commented on the evidence and did not refer to the reflective nature of the comments in the file. The analysis of the school based tutors identified a common approach to the use of PDP as a tool to be used by the trainees and although some of them noted that they contributed to the PDP they did not refer to it when deciding the grade. This difference in approach to the PDP between school based and university based tutors may relate to the model of supervision for that teaching practice.

It is appropriate to recap that there are three models of trainee supervision and assessment. As figure 7.3 illustrates, the faculty led model is the most common model. 93 trainees responded to the question about the model of teaching practice operating for their final teaching practice in year 3 and 65.6% of the supervision models were led by the faculty. 19 school based tutors were participants in this study and 16 of the group were supporting trainees in faculty led models of supervision. As the school based tutors were predominantly (16/19) involved in faculty led models of

supervision they were not taking the lead on assessments of the trainee in the school and it may explain why they don't engage with the PDP as an assessment tool.




2. What model was the teaching practice?			n=93	
Faculty led Model (most observations and assessments by university tutor):		65.6%	61	
School led model (most observations and assessments by school based teachers):		30.1%	28	
Training Model (A school based teacher in training):		4.3%	4	

Figure 7.3 Summary of model of teaching practice (question 2)

The responses from university based tutors regarding the PDP are very different to the school based tutors. The university tutors have a more formal involvement with the PDP at university level and consequently use the PDP to support the assessment process. This explains some of the negative comments, from trainees, about the PDP where some trainees stated that the assessment tutors had not reviewed the PDP. There was inconsistency in the responses from trainees about this which indicates an inconsistency in the use of the PDP in practice.

29.1 % (categories 5 and 6) of trainees commented negatively about the PDP (figure 6.10) and suggested that it could be used more effectively as part of the assessment activity. Most of the comments about this aspect of the teaching practice assessment experience were suggesting that the PDP could be integrated more effectively into the assessment process. During the focus group discussion with trainees it was useful to probe, in more depth, about how they thought the portfolio could be used.

The focus group trainees understood that the PDP was a tool to demonstrate achievement of standards to monitor and organise evidence for each qualified teacher standard as they progressed through the course. A great deal of the focus group discussion revolved around the need for evidence to validate achievement of the standards:

You gather evidence for the standards; you put things in to show how you have met the standards (Focus group Trainee 3).

Trainees were also confident in articulating the use of the PDP as a tool to record reflective, developmental comments regarding their progress as teachers on their initial teacher training course and how this supported them in their ability to apply for teaching posts:

I took sections of my PDP to an interview, it was good because I had the evidence there and the reflective statements and I could talk about it easily at the interview (Focus group Trainee 1).

This concurs with the study completed by Willis & Davies (2002) where they noted the benefit of portfolios for job searching for the cohort of trainee teachers in their sample.

This theme of using the PDP to support a reflective approach to teaching was also revealed in the analysis of responses in the trainee questionnaire with 20% (figure 6.12) of trainees recognising this opportunity in the use of the PDP. This concurs with the tutors' view of the purpose of the PDP and relates to the review of literature in this area.

Berg & Curry's (1997) research involved an analysis of how supervising tutors assessed a group of 30 trainee teachers by examining the portfolio created by each

of the trainees. The researchers explored how the portfolios enabled tutors to look beneath the teaching itself and examine the decisions that shaped the trainee teachers' actions. Their conclusions identified that over time (one year) the trainee teachers' reflection on practice showed measurable growth and encouraged introspection (Berg & Curry, 1997, p. 84).

Research conducted more recently also demonstrates the benefits of a portfolio to develop a reflective approach. Research conducted by Willis & Davies (2002) was aimed at evaluating the impact of portfolios on trainees' professional development and related mostly to the portfolio as a tool for assessment. The conclusions of the study synthesise with Berg & Curry's (1997) findings and conclude that the portfolio *'programmatically encourages ongoing professional development through reflective practice'* (Willis & Davies, 2002, p. 24).

The data collected from my research is not as conclusive as the research projects identified above (Berg & Curry, 1997; Willis & Davies, 2002) about the benefits of portfolios as a tool for reflection. There are indications that some tutors and trainees recognise the potential for the PDP to be used as a professional development instrument but the evidence is not conclusive.

The data from trainees indicates a confusing picture for some about the way the PDP is used as part of the assessment process and there were suggestions that it could be used to support the grade allocation process more clearly at MPR and EPR.

When additional probing questions were asked to expand on this aspect in the focus group, trainee 4 commented:

We have to complete the PDP- then sometimes- it's not really looked at by some faculty link tutors – or it's only looked at the end of the TP. It would be better if it we knew what to add to the PDP to get better grades- to know how the PDP links to the grade- or if it's connected at all (Focus group Trainee).

The research indicates that some participants regard the PDP as an effective assessment tool but there is the potential for improvements to the use of the PDP in the assessment process before we are able to confidently identify the benefits of using the professional development file suggested in the review by Moyles & Yates (2003):

'Portfolios were found to increase personal and professional growth and development, allow teachers to express themselves creatively, provide an unprecedented insight into the mind of the student teacher, create a strong bond between the assessed and the assessor, as well as to increase the confidence, reflective capacity and self-awareness of the trainee' (Moyles & Yates, 2003, p. 2).

7.4 School support

In chapter 6 the data presented about school support noted a number of positive comments by trainees in relation to the support they had received on teaching practice. The data will be scrutinised in more detail to verify and test the validity of this conclusion. Questions 6a asked trainees to give reasons for their choice of response about the MPR. The responses to this question provide more data about the role of school support and relates to Wenger's (1998) notion of the community of practice as a model of situated learning.

The trainees gave a number of reasons for agreement with their grades and these have been discussed and summarised in figure 6.8 where 39% of the trainees agreed with the grade because the grading criteria was discussed at weekly meetings. A more detailed analysis of the qualitative responses to question 6a

revealed that most of the 39% of trainees in this category agreed with the grade because of the discussions and oral feedback they had received during the practice.

Some of the comments were:

The class teacher discussed the grading with me every week at our meetings and we highlighted what I was doing so I could see what I needed to do next (BOS 52)

It was easy to see where I was because me and the class teacher looked at the grades each week and highlighted where I had completed part of a standard (BOS 33)

I played an active role in my MPR. With the university's new method of formative assessment (reviewing practice each week with the class teacher at the weekly meeting and underlining standards as an ongoing process) I was able to see where I was working at, and what I needed to do to improve. This system has much improved since last year, when the MPR grade came as more of a shock (BOS 20).

The weekly meeting is identified as a key tool in supporting this shared dialogue. This has resonance with Tang's (2008) research which identified the positive aspects of professional dialogue in supporting the progression of trainee teachers. The trainees discussed with the tutor how they were progressing using a shared repertoire of resources (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2012) which links to the 'practice' identified in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

For a community of practice to work effectively secure relationships need to be an implicit feature of the group. This has been identified by some trainees in the survey but was not a distinct feature of the focus group discussion.

The university tutors also consistently mentioned the use of dialogue and negotiation as tools in the assessment process, this was a typical comment:

I try to see if the teacher can attend the MPR- but if not I talk to them during the lesson at some time- to discuss the MPR and the targets for the rest of the teaching practice. After the feedback about the lesson we go through the standards and look at the grade for each one. I make it a discussion- use is as an opportunity to discuss

how to develop practice and identify what they need to focus on for the rest of the practice (University Tutor Interview C Jan 2014).

In relating my findings to those of other research projects there is some synthesis. For example, in Lewis's (2013) study the findings conclude that a collaborative approach to developing learning environments where trainees progress with guidance from expert teachers is the best way for trainee teachers to develop. This approach links in with the views expressed by the tutors;

The teacher had arranged for the trainee to go into the reception class to observe phonics teaching as this was a development point. The action points were easy to set and were agreed by everyone (University tutor Interview E Jan 2014).

Wray (2007) discussed the joint approach in supportive school communities where experienced practitioners worked alongside trainees to ensure completion of portfolios of evidence to demonstrate teaching proficiencies.

'Participation in the teacher learning community provided the students a location to engage in a collaborative portfolio development process...Moreover, the community offered an environment where a feeling of collegial support was embraced' (Wray, 2007, p. 1148).

This approach was in contrast to the views expressed by trainees in my research study. None of the students identified a collegiate approach to the completion of the portfolio and there was an opinion that the responsibility for completing the portfolio lay with the trainees. Interestingly one university based tutor commented positively on the practical arrangements put in place by the school to support the assessment strategies:

It was an eye opener as the school had arranged cover for the class teacher in advance of the meeting so I didn't need to do any negotiating! It was a joint observation with a teacher in training. We had a quiet room to meet and we talked about the lesson together first to discuss what we had seen. It's always good to do joint observations as the class teachers see more about the progress of individual children - they know them so well. We agreed the positive aspects and the

development points and when the trainee came into the meeting we fed this back to her (University tutor Interview E Jan 2014).

It is clear that the school were engaged in the assessment processes and by structuring a joint lesson observation the trainee was provided with quality feedback which related to the progress of individual children. As part of the university policy a teacher in training completes a joint observation with a university based tutor.

Interviewee E comments favourably on the tacit knowledge (Rust, et al., 2005) acquired by the trainee in the supportive school environment.

In summary, the trainees and university tutors recognised and valued the support of the school community on a day to day basis and identified the role of school staff in helping them to develop the trainees' teaching. Although there were no positive comments regarding support for the PDP there were many more positive examples of supportive strategies surrounding lesson observations which will be discussed in the next section.

7.5 Lesson observations and feedback

Lesson observations and feedback is regarded by trainees and tutors as the most effective assessment strategy and the data illustrating this has been presented in chapter 6. The evidence will be analysed in depth to verify the findings and to make tentative suggestions as to *why* lesson observations and feedback are regarded as valuable strategies.

In the questionnaire trainees identified lesson observation and feedback as the most useful strategy on all of their teaching practices. The data is unequivocal; 73.1% in year 2 and 91.4% in year 3 (Figure 6.11). This is based on the highest 'very useful' category on the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). There are 6 options ranging from 1 not

useful to 6 very useful. When categories 5 and 6 are combined the figures are even more explicit 94.6% year 2 and 98.9% overall. In the school based tutor survey 100% of the tutors identify lesson observation and feedback as the most useful strategy. The university based tutors were asked to explain how the lesson observation was conducted to find evidence for the first research question;

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?

The predominant approach identified by all interviewees was the use of professional dialogue and a shared understanding of the assessment process based upon the use of the qualified teaching standards (DfE, 2011b).

Then after the lesson and the feedback we looked at the grading criteria to agree her grade. The trainee agreed with the grade as she could see where she had progressed on this TP. I spent quite a lot of time asking her to show me evidence – in her PDP file- of standards- the things I hadn't seen in the lesson- and this helped her to understand the importance of good filing and the administrative aspect of teaching (Interview F Jan 2014).

...generally I think the assessment works well so long as we make time to complete the observation feedback as it's the best way to help the trainee to improve- to talk properly, and in detail, about the lesson and what the children have learned (Interview F Jan 2014).

This approach resonates with White's (2009) study which identified the need for a contextual framework to act as a scaffold for the assessment process.

The process of feedback will be discussed to identify the specific structure used by tutors. The detailed description of the observation feedback noted in the tutor interviews provides a largely consistent approach to the feedback process and key features can be identified. The feedback consists of a professional dialogue about the lesson where key aspects of teaching and learning are discussed. Trainees

identify, with the tutor, which aspects of the lesson were successful and which areas need to develop.

I ask the trainee to look at each of the sections and they identify where they think they are- I usually prompt them by referring to something I have seen in their lesson or their TP folder, usually it works well as the students have already looked at it with their class teacher- it helps them to take responsibility. Then we decide the grade for the MPR- using the grading criteria that we have highlighted as the guide. Some students are a bit hesitant about deciding the final grade so again I prompt them but I always ask them if they agree before it's recorded.- If there are any disagreements I ask the student to show further evidence – maybe from their TP folder , or PDP, or sometimes the children's books to show evidence of progress in that area (Interview B Jan 2014).

This then leads to action point setting based upon the areas of development. This model of feedback is underpinned by learning theories. The concept of a conversational theory of learning discussed by Pask (1976) which speculates that learning occurs through conversations about a subject matter has particular resonance. Laurillard (1993) used this theory of learning as the basis of her 'Conversational Framework' for teaching and learning based upon an ideal teaching and learning scenario: a one-to one tutorial. All of the assessment strategies conducted on teaching practice are carried out on a one to one basis which corresponds with this model. Laurillard's framework consists of four interrelated processes: interactivity, adaptivity, discursiveness and reflectivity which are evident in the feedback processes identified by the tutors:

I always complete the feedback following the lesson as quickly as possible- straight after the lesson- that's the best thing for the students. I make sure we have a quiet place where we will not be interrupted. I always start by asking the student how they think the lesson went- and ask them to tell me what went well- so we start with a positive aspect of the lesson...(Interview F Jan 2014).

This process of feedback appears to be effective because of the positive impact on the trainees' learning and is evident in the qualitative data from trainees and tutors

where a substantial number of comments identify the link between the feedback and the trainees' ability to make progress:

The regular weekly meetings with the class teachers and daily chats ensured I was aware of how I was performing and what I need to do to progress (BOS 4).

It was an open discussion and I was able to explain what I had achieved and I could see from lesson observations and the feedback where I needed to improve (BOS 41).

The action points were suitable to develop my own professional practice, also ideas were given by my faculty link tutor and class teacher on how to achieve the targets (BOS 5).

She was aware she was making good progress from her weekly meetings with her class teacher (BOS School Tutor 5).

The focus on each standard enables strengths and weaknesses to be identified. This is helpful in identifying the next steps (BOS School Tutor 8).

This relates to the theoretical model of formative assessment as a tool to aid learning which came to prominence in education following work by Black & William (1998b). I will consider, in more depth, what other factors about the lesson observation and feedback are significant.

There is a resonance with the concept of authentic assessments as a key feature of the lesson observation and feedback strategy which might explain why it is regarded as an effective strategy. To draw conclusions about this aspect I will refer to the literature review regarding authentic assessments to attempt to verify these emerging conclusions.

Trainees value assessment activities which are worthwhile in themselves (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007) and where they regard the task itself as valuable. Trainee teachers in classroom settings will perceive the lesson they are teaching as worthwhile and authentic. This concept of authentic assessments has been defined as a task which

is 'practical, realistic and challenging' (Torrance, 1995). Comments from trainees in response to question 17 in the survey, 'What do you consider to be the main purpose of your assessment on TP?' reinforce this view of lesson observations as authentic assessment tasks:

To shape your teaching. It is an opportunity for professional discussion. It allows you to reflect on your lesson and then have a conversation with a teaching professional about this (BOS 88).

It's about being given advice and ideas about how to improve your teaching (BOS 36)

This view was supported by tutors:

It's day to day and it's what really matters to the students- they can see quickly how to improve (BOS School Tutor 7).

You are helping trainees identify good practice and develop their skills and knowledge practically (BOS School Tutor 11).

It provides instant feedback and areas for development (BOS School Tutor 17).

The idea that good assessment involves real life learning tasks may seem evident when examining assessment processes routed in professional practice. However it may be that trainees regard the lesson observation and feedback as *the* authentic assessment but other strategies as less effective.

The PDP is regarded by most trainees as a less effective strategy than lesson observations and this view has been noted by some research on this subject. One of the criticisms of portfolios as a form of assessment is the question regarding how far the portfolio is linked to classroom based teaching experiences and the development of teaching skills. Zeichner & Wray (2001) examined the use of portfolios in ITT institutes in the USA and concluded:

'It is important that future studies of the use of teaching portfolios in teacher education help us move beyond the obvious conclusions that portfolios promote greater reflection by student teachers and provide teacher educators with more "authentic" assessments of the teaching of their students'

(Zeichner & Wray, 2001, p. 620).

The review of portfolios by Zeichner & Wray (2001) established that portfolios were used in many different ways in different institutions and although they noted that reflections were evident in the portfolios it was unclear how far the trainees' reflections were an accurate reflection of the trainees' teaching skills in the classroom.

To conclude this section it is evident that trainees and tutors regard lesson observation and feedback as the most effective assessment strategy; the research data and literature review (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Torrance, 1995; Zeichner & Wray, 2001) appears to suggest that this is due to lesson observations being seen as an authentic assessment task.

7.6 Summary

This is the second of the data analysis chapters and in it I have examined the opinions of trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors regarding the assessment strategies used on teaching practice using four themes: assessment grades, the PDP, the school community and lesson observation and feedback. Issues have been considered in more depth with an interpretation of the analysis offered for discussion. The examination has revolved around what the data means and how it impacts on the research questions. It is clear that there is a good deal of positivity about the assessment strategies as well as a number of suggestions about how to improve the assessment processes.

The majority (89.2% at MPR and 79.6% at EPR) of trainees agree with their assessment grades. Where there is disagreement with the grade the main reason is that trainees either do not understand why they were allocated a particular grade or they do not agree with the grade. It may be that the aspect of feedback is the main issue in this context. The social constructivist approach to feedback identified in chapter 4 section 3 has particular relevance. This model (Black & William, 1998; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004) of feedback places trainees at the centre of the feedback process and enables them to be actively involved in the process. The data related to lesson observations has identified the feedback process as a strength. It appears that the feedback during MPR and EPR is not as positive for some trainees.

Alternatively it may be that the emotional responses to the grade have impacted on trainees' perceptions of the grade (Sadler, 1989).

Discussions about the PDP suggest a confusing picture about the use of the portfolio as a tool to support the assessment process. The literature related to the purpose of assessment has particular significance. Effective assessment strategies are understood by the stakeholders and the purpose of the strategy is clear to all those involved. Four key purposes of assessment have been identified (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007) and the tension between these purposes has been discussed by a number of researchers in this field (Bloxham, 2008; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). The purpose of the PDP as an assessment strategy does not appear to be clear to all trainees and consequently there is some dissatisfaction about this aspect of assessment.

The data related to school based support indicates overall satisfaction with the support of staff in the school settings and there is some evidence of a community of

practice. It was interesting to note the importance placed by trainees on the relationships they develop with the class teacher.

The most satisfactory strategy identified is the lesson observation and feedback and seems to relate to the meaningful feedback based upon an authentic assessment scenario.

Having explored the themes in relation to the data and literature I am now in a position to draw together the main findings from this research project and will consider them collectively through the lens of my central research questions in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter has four main purposes which collectively provide a sense of cohesion and integrity to the thesis, synthesise the key findings and identify the contribution to knowledge. Firstly, there is an acknowledgement of the project's weaknesses and a discussion of issues related to the research design and data collection tools and the impact of these issues on the research project. Secondly, there is a summary of the research findings arising from the data which is presented using the themes discussed in the data coding chapter. In the second section I also consider the implications of the findings in relation to the two main research questions and discuss how far the aim of the thesis has been achieved. The third purpose of this concluding chapter is to review the thesis as a response to the expectations of doctoral study and emphasise what the thesis achieves in terms of contribution to knowledge. The final purpose is to outline suggestions for further research and to identify how the research leads to further questions.

The four sections of this concluding chapter address the two research questions and identify how far this research has addressed these questions, namely:

- How are assessment strategies used to assess trainee teachers on teaching practice?
- What do the trainees, school based tutors and university based tutors think about the effectiveness of these strategies?

8.2 Issues related to the research design

The first section provides a critical evaluation of the research process. A cross sectional research design was used to gather data from a particular point in time to

find out how the assessment strategies were used and what the stakeholders thought about these strategies. Chapter 5 provides the rationale for using this research design strategy. This research design proved to be a practical approach to the research questions and enabled data to be gathered quickly and economically. One aim was to explore differences that already exist, for example, in the way university based tutors use the PDF compared to the way in which school based tutors use it. As the study included a descriptive analysis of the assessment strategies the research design was appropriate and enabled appropriate data to be collected to answer the questions.

The limitations to this cross sectional research design are that causal links between the variables cannot be confirmed. For example, I was unable to identify how the assessment processes impacted on the trainees' development during the BAQTS course, alternative research designs will be suggested in section 8.5.

8.2.1 Reliability and validity

Some researchers in the field of social sciences suggest that it is difficult to have reliability in qualitative research because the range of variables makes replication of the research methods unworkable (Cook 2002). Others contest this view and note that if replication of key strategies and features including methods of data collection, the social situations and context and status position of the researcher, can be established, then reliability can be claimed (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 148).

In designing this research project careful consideration was given to selecting the tools which best answered the research questions. Additionally I aimed to maintain high ethical standards and to complete quality research (Gorard & Cook, 2007). The

research validity was reinforced by the research design and transparent approach throughout.

In chapter 1 I outlined my stance as an insider researcher and my role as a lecturer of trainee teachers. My aim is to enable the trainee teachers in the faculty to become outstanding teachers. The aim has been to make the bias explicit and to contribute to a meaningful interpretation of the findings (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998). With this transparent stance I aimed to maintain a rigorous approach to any potential bias. However, I acknowledge that this is not always feasible and there may be instances within this research journey where inadvertent bias has become part of the process.

8.2.2 Issues related to the data collection

The research design was selected specifically to address the research questions and the data collection tools enabled both quantitative and qualitative data to be gathered.

8.2.3 Questionnaire

In chapter 5 some of the main benefits and limitations of on line surveys were outlined, the specific issues related to this research will be evaluated. One concern in the pilot study was the low response rate (31%) from the trainees and the impact this may have on the findings, as Bryman (2008) notes:

'The significance of a response rate is that, unless it can be proven that those who do not participate do not differ from those who do, there is likely to be a risk of bias' (Bryman, 2008, p. 235).

The survey in this study was launched in January 2014 to a cohort of 180 students in the form of a URL link attached to a message sent via the virtual learning platform.

The use of on-line surveys have a number of advantages and disadvantages which have been well documented (Cohen, et al., 2007). The advantages include reduced costs, time and elimination of researcher effects (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 230). In order to circulate the internet link to trainees another form of communication was also used, an email message, sent directly to each trainee. The response rate at this stage was 22%.

Researchers (Bryman, 2008; Sharp, 2010; Thomas, 2009) suggest a range of tactics to improve response rates to self-completed questionnaires including follow up messages and incentives. Following the launch of the survey via email personal contact was used to improve completion rates. The cohort of year three students attended a whole group lecture in the spring term where the purpose of the research project was outlined, students were asked to complete the questionnaire using mobile devices (where available) in the lecture. After this input, and a follow up reminder on the virtual learning platform, the final response rate was 52% from a cohort of 180. Cohen et al., (2007) note that this is a satisfactory response: '*Be satisfied if you receive a 50 per cent response to the questionnaire*' (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 343).

In evaluating this research I understand that although a response rate of 52% is satisfactory an increased response rate would boost the reliability of the sample representing the population of Y3 BAQTS trainees. This was a purposive sample which appears to represent the total population under study based on data gathered in the pre-pilot and pilot study. However, with a greater response rate there would be increased validity. Strategies to increase the response rate could be more first-hand contacts as this proved to be a successful approach in improving the response rate.

The questionnaire was presented to 20 school-based tutors in 9 different schools and was completed by 19 of them. The school teachers were initially contacted in person. This was followed up with an email invitation to complete the on-line survey. After one week the response rate was 30%; this was followed up with hard copies of the survey as two teachers had mentioned that they disliked on-line surveys. Following some face to face reminders the remaining teacher participants completed the survey. To ensure a consistent approach to the data analysis the hand written data was inputted into the Bristol on-line survey. In evaluating the data arising from the school-based tutor questionnaire it is evident that useful data emerged which contributed to answering the research questions.

8.2.4 Interviews

The second tool used in the research design was the interview. The participants were six university based tutors. The interviews were conducted in a professional manner, setting the participant at ease and stating the purpose and scope of the interview (Bryman, 2008). As the interviews involved colleagues discussing an aspect of shared professional practice I avoided revealing my values and views about the assessment processes and ensured the interviews progressed to address the questions identified in the interview schedule. The main issue arising was the *'interpersonal, interactional, communicative and emotional aspects of the interview'* (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 362) and maintaining the balance between being respectful and moving the interview forward. The interviews generated useful data to answer the first question. However, on reflection, further refinements of the questions used in the schedule to include more questions to address the second research question

regarding the effectiveness of the strategies used, would have improved the data arising from the university tutors.

8.2.5 Focus group

The focus group interview involved 6 trainees from the Y3 cohort who volunteered to be involved. This strategy has been evaluated by analysing the focus group transcript and identifying the amount of data coded and used to support the data analysis chapters 6 and 7. The focus group interview elicited some useful data which added depth to some areas particularly in relation to the school based support and discussions regarding the PDP.

It was also evident from the transcript that the focus group was a less controlled discussion than the interview (Morgan, 1997) which was anticipated and resulted in more open ended discussions.

8.3 Summary of findings related to the research questions

The research questions were aimed at understanding how the assessment strategies are used on teaching practice to assess trainees and how effective each of the stakeholders considered these strategies to be. In summary, both research questions were answered in this research project. A review of the findings will be presented using the key themes identified by the coding and categorising method discussed in chapter 6.

8.3.1 Assessment grades

Sections 6.3.1 and 7.1 in chapters 6 and 7 respectively outlined the specific findings regarding assessment grades. Most (89.2% MPR and 79.6% EPR) of the trainee participants described the grade allocation as a discussion at MPR or EPR with the

trainee and at least one tutor, based around the grading criteria. Some university based tutors explained that the grade was moderated by the trainee, class teacher and university tutor before the grade was allocated. This concurs with the literature discussed in chapter 2 which outlines the benefits of dialogue in the assessment process (Foster, 2006; Tang, 2008; Warford, 2010; White , 2009). A small group of trainees were not present at the grade allocation meetings but this does not seem to have a detrimental impact on their satisfaction with the grade. The majority of trainees agreed with their grades although some trainees preferred a sub level which identified incremental levels of progress.

There were no negative responses about the principle of allocating grades at MPR and EPR. This may be because the questions asked about existing strategies, although in the final question in the survey there was an opportunity to make suggestions about improvements to the processes used. This implies that trainees are accepting of a culture which relies on summative assessment processes and the assessment values inherent in the current UK education system. This resonates to the ideas discussed in chapter 3 where the review of literature identified the notion of assessment as synonymous with conformity and control (Furlong 2000 et al., 2000). Teacher education has a political focus (3.4) with a standards based agenda (Cochran-Smith, 2000) linked closely to assessment. Students applying to become teachers are aware of this agenda and in enrolling on a QTS course accept the notion of regular summative grades and assessments. Also the majority of the trainees on the BAQTS course at this university have completed a UK based education in which regular summative assessments are embedded as part of the educational framework.

The findings show that the allocation of grades is a key assessment strategy used on teaching practice and the grades are allocated using a negotiated approach. The majority of trainees and tutors are confident with the reliability and validity of the grades allocated. The grading criteria used at MPR and EPR to determine the summative grade at these points ensure that the assessment relates closely to the stated learning outcomes (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). The grading criteria are related very closely to the QTS standards and provide a secure valid framework.

8.3.2 The PDP: reflection standards and evidence

The PDP is used to assess and monitor the progress of trainees. It is implemented in different ways to assess trainees on teaching practice and this has been explained in chapters 6 and 7. 59.2% of trainees found the PDP useful on their second teaching practice but no trainees identified it as *the* most useful strategy for supporting their progress. On the other hand, university tutors regard the use of the PDP as an integral part of the assessment process. This contrasted with the views of the school-based tutors who had minimal engagement with the PDP especially if they were involved in a faculty led module where most of the supervision is completed by the university-based tutors. The PDP is regarded as an effective tool to record reflective comments of trainees' professional development by university-based tutors. When trainees use the PDP to record reflective comments and it is monitored by tutors the trainees also regard it as an effective tool. However, where the PDP is not monitored, mainly by school-based tutors it is clearly not regarded as an effective strategy. The data arising from this section has provided detailed information about how the PDP is used in the assessment process.

8.3.3 School support

The support provided in school impacts on the assessment of trainees as it links to the guidance and consequent progress that trainees make on teaching practice. A synthesis of the research in this section indicates a positive response from trainees for the support they receive both from university and school based colleagues. There was recognition, from some trainees, of the importance of effective positive relationships and the value of the school support in helping them to progress (Wenger, 1998).

In chapter 4 the discussion and exploration of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice identified key relevant features related to the school teaching practice model. This research provides evidence that some trainees (6.4.3) in the school environment on teaching practice consider themselves as members of the school community and this view is endorsed by some school tutors (7.4). During the pre- teaching practice visits trainees are peripheral members of the school community and move to active members of the community of practice during the block teaching practice. Discourse, which is a central aspect of communities of practice, is a key component identified by all stakeholders in this project and resonates with Wenger's (1998) model. There is a suggestion, within the context of communities of practice, that school based training offers the best opportunity for trainees to develop the tacit knowledge of teaching (Rust et al., 2005). It would be interesting to research communities of practice, within school based training models, to explore this issues particularly as this is increasingly the training structure suggested by governments (Furlong, 2013).

8.3.4 Lesson observations and feedback

The feedback provided following observation of the trainees' teaching is regarded by all participants as the most effective assessment strategy on teaching practice. Some suggestions as to why this strategy is seen to be so effective have been outlined in chapter 7.4. My contention is that lesson observations and feedback are regarded as an authentic assessment strategy and they are successful due to the effective processes in place which enable quality 1:1 feedback to be provided:

The trainees are training to be primary classroom teachers so an assessment which is ensconced in that context is very applicable and regarded highly by the trainees.

Formative feedback is a component of Piagetian epistemology where positive feedback provides a stimulus for intellectual growth. The theoretical model illustrates how positive feedback provides the impetus for self-reflection and transformation (Piaget, 1970). This resonates with the explanations provided by trainees and tutors about the lesson feedback process. The trainees reflect on their teaching and then mediate action points with the tutor. The action points generated from the feedback given in the discourse about the lesson provide the stimulus for improvements in the trainees' motivation and teaching skills. The data about lesson observation and feedback addressed both research questions in depth.

8.4 Review of thesis and identification of the contribution to knowledge

Following the summary of research findings in the previous section of this chapter I will identify what this research has revealed and identify my contribution to the knowledge base in this area.

Assessment in education is not a new phenomenon and has been part of the education process for thousands of years (Min & Xiuwen, 2001). The works of early philosophers such as Socrates and psychologists such as Vygotsky include links to the role of assessment in learning. The importance of assessment in education has been reinforced by consecutive governments in the UK and has cumulated in a number of policy documents, reports and statutory requirements. The most significant of these was in 1988 when the National Curriculum (DES, 1988) was established and was followed by the introduction of SATS. In 1998 (DFEE, 1998b) the introduction of teaching standards for trainee teachers marked the start of the recent focus on assessment in ITT.

The literature review revealed that in the higher education context there is dissatisfaction with assessment processes in higher education (Kovacs, et al., 2010). In the National Student Survey universities are allocated low scores for assessment and feedback (HEFCE, 2012). This research set out to explore the views of trainees school based tutors and university tutors about the assessment strategies used on teaching practice. The findings reveal that overall, the stakeholders in this study are satisfied with the assessment processes used. This data provides a unique contribution to the knowledge base in this area and is contrary to the evidence arising from the National Student Survey. This leads to a discussion about why this contradiction arises.

My contention is that trainees and tutors regard the assessment processes used on teaching practice as effective overall because the assessment takes place in the work based environment of the classroom. The data clearly reveals that the lesson observation and feedback is the most highly regarded assessment tool. This

confirmation of lesson observations as authentic assessment opportunities contributes to the knowledge in this area (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Zeichner & Wray, 2001) and provides secure qualitative data which outlines *why* the lesson observations and feedback are regarded as effective strategies in enabling trainee teachers to progress in their teaching skills.

The most significant reason identified by trainees and tutors is that the lesson observation and feedback strategy helps the trainees to progress because the feedback process clearly leads to specific action points which identify what the trainee needs to improve. Further exploration of the data (7.5) explaining how the action point process contributes to the knowledge base identifies the dialogic process of the feedback as the most effective aspect and contributes to the knowledge identified by Warford (2010). This finding resonates with the theoretical framework which regards assessment as a socially constructed process (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). The literature review (2.5.3) identified the dialogic processes as an effective assessment strategy and the research findings adds to the knowledge in this area and confirms the positive nature of professional conversations as a tool for professional development.

Formative assessment was discussed in depth as part of the literature review (2.2).

This research reveals that formative feedback is regarded as a very effective approach by tutors and trainees and that there is a clear positive link between feedback and trainees' ability to progress. This finding has contributed to the knowledge in this field and concurs with work conducted by a number of researchers (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Laurillard, 1993; Pask, 1976; White, 2009). The unique

contribution to knowledge is in the context of this research and the link made to action point setting within the school based environment.

In chapter I, the thesis began with a discussion about the techno-rational (Shils, 1978) approach to assessment and the impact this has on current policy within teacher education. The evidence for this assertion can be seen in recent policies (DfE, 2010) where the approach to teacher education is as a competency-based profession with a focus on practical skills. The increased inclusion of more school-based training with Schools Direct (DfE, 2010) places gaining prominence in teacher education is a clear example of the manifestation of this policy. The introduction, in chapter 1, suggested that this approach to teacher education might impact on the assessment practices used to assess trainee teachers. It was suggested that the assessment practices are linked to the philosophy of the training and a techno-rational approach to training, could lead to a techno-rational approach to the assessment strategies. My hypothesis was that an emphasis on summative grades and skills might have an impact on the 'soft' skills of reflection and professional development (Schoen, 1987). Primary school teachers need to have both sets of skills and attributes in order to be effective teachers. The data gathered in this research project indicates that some trainees and all assessment tutors are concerned with developing reflective approaches to teaching. The research project contributes to the knowledge in this area by providing evidence which identifies reflective skills as important aspects of ITT (6.4.2, 7.3). Assessment tutors in university identify the development of reflective skills as essential components for trainee teachers and regard this as a key component of the assessment process.

Portfolios are used as a tool to track progress towards QTS on ITT courses. This study has confirmed that where the purpose of the assessment is clear the assessment tool, in this case the PDP, is effective. Research (Moyles & Yates, 2003) in this area discussed in 7.3 illustrates that there is potential for the PDP to be used as a strategy to develop the reflective capacity of trainees when the purpose of the portfolio is clear to all stakeholders. The findings in my study have contributed to the knowledge in this area by confirming the importance of clearly defining the purpose of each assessment strategy (Bloxham, 2008).

The school context has been explored in the theoretical context of communities of practice (4.2.4) and the discussions of this context add to the knowledge base in this area by identifying the link between the theoretical framework and the practice. The domain, community and practice of Wenger's (1998) model have been linked to the , components of the teaching practice context to provide a framework for examining the community of practice on teaching practice. This research identifies the tacit knowledge assessed and gained in the school context as a key aspect of professional development and contributes to the knowledge in this area (Bloxham, 2012; Price, O'Donovan, & Rust, 2007).

In the literature review (2.6) it was noted that there was less evidence of the trainee voice in some contemporary ITT based research projects. This study has contributed to the knowledge in this area by providing empirical data gathered from trainees which has been analysed and discussed in detail. The trainee voice is a strong component of this study and the rich qualitative data presented in chapters 6 and 7 adds depth to the study.

The literature review (2.1) revealed that much of the research based in ITT is based in the US so the addition of an ITT research project based in the UK has added to the research in this context. Bloxham & Carver (2014) have noted that there is limited research in the area of the assessment of trainees on teaching practice (2.6) and this project has contributed to the knowledge in this context . This has implications for further studies into the area of assessment in ITT.

The research has led to a review of assessment strategies within university based training. Part of my role as module leader includes the responsibility to design assessment strategies for new modules. The convincing evidence of the importance of authentic assessments has led to the introduction of more applicable assessment strategies in module reviews. In this way the contribution to knowledge has influenced curriculum design.

8.5 Further research, implications and impact

The final section of this chapter will outline suggestions for further research and the implications of some of the findings.

This thesis explored how effective the current assessment practices are in assessing trainee teachers. Implicit in this has been an enquiry into the specific aspects of skills development identified in the assessment processes. In reviewing this research I would suggest that more explicit questions related to *what* was assessed by each of the assessment strategies would generate more information about the types of skills identified by each assessment strategy. Some data did emerge which suggested that the PDP was used more frequently as a tool to record reflective comments about the trainees' teaching. This is not surprising as the PDP is presented to trainees as the

tool to record their reflective comments about each standard as they progress through the 3 year training course. A change in the way the PDP is used will come into effect next academic year and should have a positive impact on the use of the PDP. At the start of the new academic year trainees will be required to write one extensive reflective statement at the end of each week. This statement will relate to the standards and will be an essential component of the PDP. The reflective statements will be monitored at the weekly meetings taking place in school between the trainee, school teacher and school- based tutor and will embed a more secure monitoring and assessment process into the use of the PDP. It would be useful to evaluate this strategy to find out if it leads to a more consistent approach to the use of the PDP. Other links between the assessment strategy and the specific skills and knowledge assessed by the strategy would provide knowledge to ensure assessment strategies are fit for the purpose.

Another impact of the research links to the use of the PDP and the different ways in which tutors use the portfolio. The data revealed that school tutors and university tutors perceive the PDP in different ways. This has implications for the university assessment process as it leads to inconsistencies and a confusing picture for some trainees. At the start of next academic year joint observations of *all* trainees will be conducted by school and university based tutors which will lead to more consistent moderated assessments of trainees' teaching skills. The post observation discussions between university and school partners could lead to recommendations to improve the use of the PDP to develop a more consistent approach.

Further research with a focus on identifying the specific aspects of school support that are regarded as effective would be beneficial. Explicit questions about the school

support and how this impacts on trainee progress would enable stronger links to be established between the theoretical models (Wenger, 1998) related to communities of practice and the teaching experience. The aim would be to identify which aspects of school support best enable trainees to develop teaching skills.

An action research study could introduce some of the specific characteristics of the effective assessment strategies used on teaching practice, in this project, to a university based assessment. For example, the authenticity of the lesson observation is a particularly effective feature and there are aspects of this strategy which could be replicated in university-based training. Assessments in the university setting with a closer alignment to the classroom environment could ensure that: '*Effective professional learning is contextualised practice*' (Bloxham, 2008, p. 17). Trainees could be assessed using an interactive examination, an example was used in Malmo University in Sweden (Jonsson & Baartman, 2006) where students viewed short films of classroom contexts and then described and analysed how the teachers should act. The students also accessed transcripts of the dialogue and background information. Bloxham (2008) explains how this interactive examination can be linked to teaching standards by providing an authentic assessment linking theoretical knowledge to practical teaching examples. Other examples of authentic assessments of teaching within the university setting are outlined by Darling-Hammond & Snyder (2000) in their article which examines how teacher training programmes across the US have integrated authentic assessment of teaching in context. Some of these approaches, such as case studies and problem based inquiries, have been adopted in ITT settings and would be worthy of an action based research project. This has impacted upon my practice as I am currently discussing these approaches with

colleagues with the aim of including more authentic assessments in university based modules. Consequently effective aspects of the way trainees are assessed on teaching practice will be replicated in university based training.

A longitudinal research design study investigating the trainees over a period of time would offer the opportunity to gather data to explore the assessment strategies and might identify a causal link to trainee progress. A research project which used a longitudinal research design where a cohort were tracked from their initial teacher training into their first teaching posts in school could provide evidence of the link between training and practice. A longitudinal study would generate data over a period of time from the same respondents and would contrast with the cross sectional cohort research design used in this study which has looked at a snapshot of the population at a specific point in time (Cohen, et al., 2007).

A repeated cross sectional design would enable changes to be measured and causal links to be identified. In a repeated cross sectional design the same research tools could be used with different cohorts in other ITT institutions which could provide an opportunity for direct comparisons to be identified. Although, I recognise, that within the field of social science research '*cause-effect is still difficult to isolate*' (Gorard, 2002).

Governments are increasing school based training opportunities (Furlong, 2013). A study comparing the assessment strategies in university based training with strategies in school based settings would provide information about these two approaches to ITT and links to the themes introduced in 3.2.

The summative grade method led to the allocation of a specific grade and within this process all stakeholders commented on using the grading criteria to support this process. In this grading criteria there are a number of statements which refer to a reflective approach to teaching. This relates directly to the QTS where reflectivity is mentioned explicitly in standard 4 in relation to teachers' skills: '*Reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching*' (DfE, 2010). A reflective professional approach is also implicit in a number of other standards, for example in standard 8: '*Take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development...*' (DfE, 2010).

Further research could be conducted into this area to investigate and compare the strategies used to assess techno- rational skills development with strategies to assess reflective skills whilst recognising that:

'The promotion of reflective practice for example, is difficult in a policy culture underpinned by accountability, school improvement and raising standards (DENI, 2009).

The impact of this would be to identify the most effective assessment strategies to assess specific skills and knowledge including techno- rational and reflective skills.

This thesis has investigated the assessment strategies used to assess primary trainee teachers on teaching practice. The two key questions have been answered, the aims were largely achieved and some relevant information has emerged which contributes to knowledge in this area. The findings indicate that contrary to the National Student Survey (HEFCE, 2012) students are satisfied with the assessment and feedback strategies used on teaching practice. This research argues that the key reason for this satisfaction is the authentic nature of the assessment processes.

I conclude the study with a positive view of the assessment processes used to assess teachers on teaching practice and a view that the range of strategies are generally fit for purpose in terms of assessing trainees' teaching skills.

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Glossary of Terms

BAQTS	Bachelor of Arts Qualified Teacher Status
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EPPI	Evidence for Policy and Practice Information
EPR	End-point Review
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LEA	Local Education Authority
MPR	Mid-point Review
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
TP	Teaching Practice
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACT	Performance Assessment for California Teachers
PDP	Professional Development Profile
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

- QTS** Qualified Teacher Status
- SATS** Standard Assessment Tests
- URL** Uniform Resource Locator
- ZPD** Zone of Proximal Development

Appendices

Personal contact details and names of institutions have been deleted

Appendix 1: Bristol on line questionnaire for trainees

Questionnaire for Trainees: 2014

Investigating the strategies used to assess primary initial teacher training students on teaching practice Welcome

This survey is designed to find out what you think about the assessment strategies used to assess your teaching skills on teaching practice. The survey will only take about 10 minutes to complete and the information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing system. Your help is greatly appreciated.

The survey is completed anonymously and can be saved part way through. By completing this survey you are giving permission for the information you have provided to be used for the research project.

Last Teaching Practice: The following questions are about the last teaching practice in Year 3 and how your teaching skills were assessed on that practice.

1. Did you complete your last teaching practice in Autumn 2012?

- Yes
 No

2. What model was the teaching practice?

3. What age group were you based in?

4. Who contributed to the Mid Point Review?
(select all that apply)

- Student
 Host practitioner

- Faculty link tutor
- School based tutor
- Other (*please specify*):

5. Did you agree with the MPR grade?

- Yes
- No

If you answered no to question 5 explain your reasons

6. Did you find the MPR action points useful?

- Yes
- No

If you answered no explain your answer

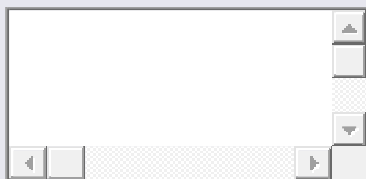
7. Who contributed to the End of Practice Review?
(*select all that apply*)

- Student
- Host practitioner
- Faculty link tutor
- School based tutor

8. Did you agree with the End of Practice Grade?


- Yes
- No

9. If you answered no please explain your answer



10. What was your final grade on your last TP?

11. How did the Professional Development File contribute to the assessment of your skills during the practice? Explain



Previous teaching practices

This section is about how you were assessed on your previous teaching practices in Year 1 and Year 2

12. Year 2 teaching practice.
How useful did you find each of these assessment strategies? 1 not useful 6 very useful

	Select one response for each question 1 not useful 6 very useful					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Lesson observations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b. Mid Point Review	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. End of Practice Review	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Professional Development Profile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Year 1 teaching practice.
How useful did you find each of these assessment strategies? 1 not useful 6 very useful

	Select one response for each question 1 not useful 6 very useful					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Lesson observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mid Point Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. End of Practice Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Professional Development Profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of all assessments on teaching practice throughout your course

Think about the progress you made on teaching practice.

14. Which assessment strategy used on teaching practice has been the most useful in helping you to progress?

If you selected Other, please specify:

15. Outline any suggestions you have for improving the assessment of students on teaching practice

16. If you have any questions about the project please contact me via the email address below. If you are willing to complete a short interview about the assessment strategies used to assess you on teaching practice please contact me using my email contact:

CONFIDENTIAL

Any additional comments?

I have read the Participant Consent Form and give permission for my responses to be used in this research project. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my permission.

Yes

No

Submit

Submit

Appendix 2: Bristol on line questionnaire for school tutors

Assessing trainees on teaching practice

Welcome

This survey is designed to find out what you think about the assessment strategies used to assess trainees on teaching practice. The survey will only take about 10 minutes to complete and the information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing system. Your help is greatly appreciated.

The survey is completed anonymously and can be saved part way through. By completing this survey you are giving permission for the information you have provided to be used for the research project.

Assessing Year 3 trainees

The following questions are about the last student you supervised and how they were assessed on that practice.

1. Did you complete most of the assessments of the student?

- Yes
 No

2. What model was the teaching practice?

3. What age group did the student teach?
(Select the category that represents most of the teaching) *(Optional)*

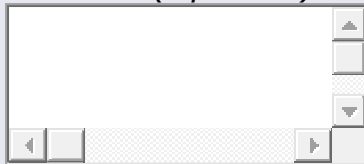
4. Who contributed to the Mid Point Review? *(Optional)*
(select all that apply)

- Student
 Host practitioner
 Faculty link tutor
 School based tutor
 Other *(please specify):*

5. Did the student agree with the MPR grade?

- Yes
 No

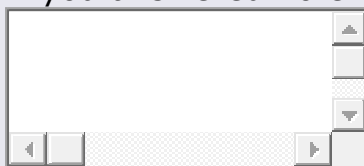
If you answered no to question 5 explain the reasons *(Optional)*

A rectangular text input field with a white background and a thin grey border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons with upward, middle, and downward arrows. On the bottom side, there are two small square buttons with left and right arrows.

6. Did the student contribute to the MPR action points?

- Yes
 No

If you answered no explain your answer *(Optional)*

A rectangular text input field with a white background and a thin grey border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons with upward, middle, and downward arrows. On the bottom side, there are two small square buttons with left and right arrows.

7. Who contributed to the End of Practice Review? *(Optional)*
(select all that apply)

- Student
 Host practitioner
 Faculty link tutor
 School based tutor

8. Did the student agree with the End of Practice Grade?


- Yes
 No

9. If you answered no please explain your answer *(Optional)*

A large rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains several small, light gray rectangular buttons with arrows, arranged in a grid-like pattern on the right and bottom edges, likely for navigating through the text.

10. What grade did the student get at the EPR?

11. Did the Professional Development File contribute to the assessment of the student's skills during the practice? Explain

A large rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains several small, light gray rectangular buttons with arrows, arranged in a grid-like pattern on the right and bottom edges, likely for navigating through the text.

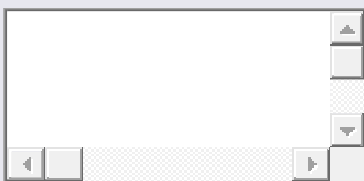
Other students

This section is about how other students you have supervised were assessed

12. Which assessment strategy used on teaching practice do you think is most useful in helping students to progress?

If you selected Other, please specify:

13. Outline any suggestions you have for improving the assessment of students on teaching practice *(Optional)*

A large rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains several small, light gray rectangular buttons with arrows, arranged in a grid-like pattern on the right and bottom edges, likely for navigating through the text.

14. If you have any questions about the project please contact me via the email address below. If you are willing to complete a short interview about the assessment strategies used to assess you on teaching practice please contact me using my email contact:
CONFIDENTIAL
Any additional comments? *(Optional)*

I have read the Participant Consent Form and give permission for my responses to be used in this research project. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my permission.

- Yes
- No

Submit

Submit

Appendix 3: Interview schedule for university tutors

Interview Schedule: Tutors

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to take part in this interview. Firstly can I assure you that there will be no records of the interview kept with your name on them and that your responses will be totally anonymous. The purpose of the interview is to find out what you think about the assessment strategies used to assess students on teaching practice

Warm up

Main body of interview

Thinking about the assessment of student teachers and the processes involved can you tell me about the assessment of the last student you supervised?

What happened at the observation feedback?

Probe

Who identified the development points?

How were they translated into action points?

What happened at Mid-Point Review (MPR)?

Probe

Who attended the MPR?

How was the grade criteria used?

Did the grade allocation match the student's expectations?

What happened at the End of Practice Report (EPR)?

Probe

Who attended?

How was the grade criteria used?

Did the grade allocation match the student's expectations?

How was the Professional Development File (PDF) used?

Probe

How were you involved in the PDF?

What do you think about this strategy as part of the assessment process?

How did the PDP contribute to the assessment process?

Closure

Thank you for time and commitment. Is there anything else you want to add about the assessment strategies used on teaching practice?

Appendix 4: Focus group interview schedule

Schedule of topics/ questions: Trainees

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to take part in a follow up focus group discussion following the questionnaire. Firstly can I assure you that there will be no records of the focus group discussion kept with your name on them and that your responses will be totally anonymous. The purpose of the focus group discussion is to find out what you think about the assessment strategies used to assess students on teaching practice

Warm up: Establish effective communication set scene- explain that the purpose of the focus group is to discuss some of the issues arising from the trainee on- line questionnaire

Main body of interview

Thinking about the assessment strategies used to assess your teaching on Teacher Practice, what do you consider the purpose of the assessment processes?

What do you think about the Professional Development file? (Open discussion about the PDP as assessment tool- suggestions for improvements)

Discuss the midpoint review and the end point review - what do you think about them?

Some people in the survey are suggesting that the lesson observation and feedback are the most positive aspects of the assessment process- what do you think about that and why?

What are your experiences of faculty led models of supervision and school led models of supervision?

Thank you for time and commitment. Is there anything else you want to add about the assessment strategies used on teaching practice?

Appendix 5: Participant consent forms

Participant Consent Form: Focus Group

“Investigating the strategies used to assess primary initial teacher training students on teaching practice”

You are being invited to take part in a small-scale pilot research project. Before you agree to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read carefully the background information provided below. Please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to investigate what trainee teachers and assessors think about the assessment strategies used to assess them on teaching practice.

The research is part of an EdD research project and will be carried out by Christina Siekierska

The aims of the research are:

- To explore trainee teachers’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore school based tutors’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore faculty based tutors’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice

The research will involve a focus group (6-10) meeting for trainees led by C.Siekierska. All data collected will be anonymised in any published material. Responses will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else.

Consent Statement

I agree to take part in the above research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the above background information. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that any information that I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researchers or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without disadvantage to myself and without giving any reason

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Christina Siekierska Researcher	_____	_____
	Date	Signature

Copies:

Once this has been signed by both parties, the participant will receive a copy of this signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed consent form will be stored securely by the researcher.

Participants can ask to withdraw their data up to 30th April 2014 Contact Details CONFIDENTIAL

Participant Consent Form: School based tutors and trainees

“Investigating the strategies used to assess primary initial teacher training students on teaching practice”

You are being invited to take part in a small-scale pilot research project. Before you agree to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read carefully the background information provided below. Please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to investigate what trainee teachers and assessors think about the assessment strategies used to assess them on teaching practice.

The research is part of an EdD research project and will be carried out by Christina Siekierska

The aims of the research are:

- To explore trainee teachers’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore school based tutors’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore faculty based tutors’ experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice

The research will involve completing an on line questionnaire. All data collected will be anonymised in any published material. Responses will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else.

Consent Statement

I agree to take part in the above research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the above background information. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that any information that I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researchers or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without disadvantage to myself and without giving any reason

Participants can ask to withdraw their data up to 30th April 2014

Contact Details:

CONFIDENTIAL

Participant Consent Form: University tutors

“Investigating the strategies used to assess primary initial teacher training students on teaching practice”

You are being invited to take part in a small-scale pilot research project. Before you agree to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read carefully the background information provided below. Please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to investigate what trainee teachers and assessors think about the assessment strategies used to assess them on teaching practice.

The research is part of an EdD research project and will be carried out by Christina Siekierska

The aims of the research are:

- To explore trainee teachers' experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore school based tutors' experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice
- To explore faculty based tutors' experiences of the assessment process on teaching practice

The research will involve taking part in an interview. All data collected will be anonymised in any published material. Responses will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else.

Consent Statement

I agree to take part in the above research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the above background information. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that any information that I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researchers or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without disadvantage to myself and without giving any reason

Participants can ask to withdraw their data up to 30th March 2014

Contact Details: CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix 6: Confirmation of ethical approval

Re: Application for Ethics Review ERN_12-1217A

Thanks for your recent ethics amendment application. The Committee Chair has looked at this and has confirmed that she would be happy to approve if you could amend the participant documentation to include information about the focus group and the arrangements which will be made for this. If you could send through these amended documents, we can finalise your application.

Any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group
Room 119, B Block
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 8825

CONFIDENTIAL DETAILS DELETED

Appendix 7: Examples of word clouds

Word Cloud: University tutor interviews



Word Cloud: Trainee survey



Appendix 8: National Student Survey data

National Student Survey: UK results

		National Student Survey 2013	National Student Survey 2014
Questions		Satisfied*	Satisfied
1-4	The teaching on my course	86%	87%
5-8	Assessment and feedback	72%	72%
9-12	Academic support	80%	81%
13-15	Organisation and management	78%	78%
16-18	Learning resources	84%	85%
19-21	Personal development	82%	82%
22	Overall satisfaction	85%	86%

* The percentage satisfied is calculated by combining the 'strongly agree' and 'mostly agree' responses

National Student Survey		
Sector results for full-time - England		
	2011 full-time	2012 full-time
Question	Taught HEI	Taught HEI
The teaching on my course		
1 - Staff are good at explaining things.	88	89
2 - Staff have made the subject interesting.	81	82
3 - Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.	85	87
4 - The course is intellectually stimulating.	83	84
Assessment and feedback		
5 - The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	72	74
6 - Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	73	75
7 - Feedback on my work has been prompt.	62	65
8 - I have received detailed comments on my work.	66	68
9 - Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.	60	63

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

