College Cultures and Pre-Service Trainee Teachers: a study in the creation and transmission of ideas about teaching

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

September 2009

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This thesis analyses the college placement element of pre-service initial teacher training (ITT) and its impact on ideas about teaching in Further Education (FE). It considers both trainees and serving teachers to investigate this impact on ideas in relation to individuals' experiences of placement and in relation to ideas held in general society by distinguishing cultures and questioning how they each shape notions about teaching. The placement experience is examined within the broad context of work-based learning (WBL) and the thesis draws on and assesses the explanatory power of three theorisations commonly adopted within WBL research; communities of practice; Cultural Historical Activity Theory; and Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus.* Though trainees' experience of the placement is characterised by messiness and diversity, the small groups they work within at colleges generally cannot be defined as self-sustaining cultures. Moreover, ideas about teaching held in society are often more influential on trainees' development than the particular situation of their placement during training, even where trainees are placed within distinctive cultures. Trainee and serving teachers in FE, therefore, experience a hierarchy of influences, including government policy, as well as concomitant tensions between agency and control, all relating to the unequal structures of society. This understanding exposes the weakness of some theorisations in describing how ideas about teaching are formed and disseminated. This thesis argues that the Marxist concept of alienation more adequately describes the situation of trainees and teachers in FE and the formation of their ideas and practice. It finally argues for ITT for FE to be constructed around a body of professional knowledge as a counterbalance to the limitations of the experience of placement.

Contents

81, 071 words

List of abbreviations

CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CoP	communities of practice
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EV	External Verifier
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
FE	further education
FD	foundation degree
HE	higher education
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ITT	initial teacher training
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
PCET	Post-compulsory education and training
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SfL	Skills for Life
SVUK	Standards Verification UK
TLC	*Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* [research project]
WBE	Work Based Experience [placement]
WBL	Work-based learning
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

Chapter One: Starting Points

Introduction

The brass radiator key worn on a lanyard around the neck of the plumbing teacher or the bohemian attire of the arts teacher are symbolic of groups of staff working in English Further Education[1] (FE) colleges, each with their vocational background and corresponding conventions (see for example Robson 1998 and Lucas 2004b). This thesis seeks to analyse how distinctive these different cultures in an FE college are and to investigate their influence relative to other influences on FE trainee teachers during the college placement element of a full-time one-year initial teacher training (ITT) course in an English university. The political background to this kind of course has become more significant in the past decade as the government has increased its control over ITT in FE with very precise stipulations of what is to be achieved during ITT courses, including the placement element. The data on which this study is based were gathered during a transition from one set of ITT for FE regulations to another and so represent the state of permanent change the FE sector has been in since 1993 when it was removed from local authority control. The placement, which is a substantial element of the ITT course, is here considered within the field of work-based learning (WBL). WBL can be briefly and broadly defined as learning that takes place in a workplace; this may be as part of a course, while on placement, or independently while an employed worker.

While considering the specifics of training for FE teachers[2] I apply and evaluate three conceptualisations of WBL, namely Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) or activity theory; communities of practice (CoP); and Bourdieu's interrelated notions of *field* and *habitus*. I argue below that these theorisations are widely used within WBL research, somewhat interchangeably and occasionally uncritically, and here I

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[1] The section of the English education system that I am considering has been officially referred to as the Learning and Skills Sector, the Lifelong Learning Sector, the Further Education System, the Further Education Sector and the Post-Compulsory Education and Training sector. In this thesis I refer to FE as I am dealing mainly with colleges, and because the term has maintained general currency. I will make clarifications in the text as necessary.

[2] The generic term 'teacher' will be used throughout this piece of writing to refer to lecturers, trainers and teachers, except where specific distinctions need to be made.

test them in relation to the creation and dissemination of ideas about teaching during college placement. This will identify which elements of these theories are most helpful in explaining the processes involved. This testing is partly inspired by Winch (1998) who decried the obsession with building universal theories of learning at the expense of considering particular cases and understanding the very particular processes involved in an individual's placement is certainly central to my research. Nevertheless, such an approach risks the spurious claim to universality of individual experience made by phenomenology (Bourdieu 1990a: 26) and so broader theorisation has aided the analysis of both specific and wider circumstances.

Beyond an enhanced understanding of how trainee teachers develop, this thesis introduces three new elements to the study of ITT and to WBL more generally: a multi-faceted approach to data collection; an evaluation of three common conceptualisations leading to an analysis influenced by Marxism; and a related analysis of cultures within an FE college and their effect on new teachers. Moreover, through this research I was myself also undergoing a type of WBL, learning through participation with other teacher educators and academics. Writing this thesis was explicitly about developing my expertise as a researcher and my own alteration in understanding and attitude has intriguingly mirrored some of the changes made by the trainees I observed. This has influenced my writing, too.

Structure of the thesis

This first chapter describes the route this thesis will take starting from the questions that directed the research as well as describing the context of FE, the FE college and FE ITT, including my own small part. This chapter also sets out the existing literature on teacher training in FE which helped to focus this work. As well as drawing on empirical data collected over almost three years, this thesis has a strong theoretical element and in this introductory chapter I summarise three conceptualisations I have chosen to test. This is done early in the thesis so that the conceptualisations can inform each aspect of the study, which may facilitate a robust evaluation of each of them, albeit in relation to a small and specific aspect of WBL. To paraphrase Patrick Kavanagh, sometimes the parochial can tell us more about life than the provincial.

Chapter two is closely connected to this one and considers my methodology. Once again I draw heavily on approaches other WBL researchers have used before justifying and describing my own. Chapter two describes the importance of a theoretical framework and so commences the testing of the conceptualisations. Furthermore, chapter two is where I seek to define culture, learning and alienation, which are at the heart of this research. This chapter also describes and justifies the particular methods of gathering data.

Chapter three looks critically at FE policy in England both to explain the ITT course that the trainees followed and, significantly, to describe the situation that overarches and shapes FE. This chapter analyses the importance of FE to the government and hence the scrutiny of teacher training in the sector. However, I argue that what the government has required FE to do is impossible, so policy and the unreasonable expectations of policymakers are central to ITT and later to my findings.

Chapter four is a thematic consideration of the data gathered under broad headings to demonstrate the diversity and messiness of the trainees' experience on placement. This chapter also seeks to identify and compare local and structural factors in the creation and transmission of the trainees' ideas about teaching from before and during their placement in a college.

Chapter five attempts to more closely analyse the data to directly answer my questions and to consider how to conceptualise the findings of this study in order to better understand how perceptions about teaching are formed and maintained. Here I argue that a view that focuses too closely on the local situation of the workplace may miss more significant structural factors.

Chapter six briefly sets out some suggestions for ITT in FE in the light of all that I have found. In particular, I try to answer the question, *What constitutes a successful placement?* While the teaching placement in a college remains a crucial element of ITT, this study exposes the limitations of what trainees learn while on placement.

Therefore, I finish this thesis by arguing for a greater prominence to be given to professional knowledge on ITT courses.

The Context

FE in England is a heterogeneous sector with over three million students which has been described as what is not school and not university (Kennedy 1997: 1), though even those boundaries are becoming less defined. It remains the sector where the majority of vocational training and adult education take place, as well as academic study between the ages of 16 and 19. The New Labour government, elected in 1997, identified FE as a means to deliver two central policies in England: social justice through widening participation in education and enhancing national economic competitiveness through improving the workforce's skills (considered in more detail in chapter three). In 2001 Statutory Instrument No. 1209 introduced the compulsory requirement for all new teachers at FE colleges to achieve a Certificate in Education or equivalent within 2-4 years, depending upon their contract, and so brought teaching placements within a legislative framework. This instrument followed the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 and was part of a coherent national policy thrust to improve and professionalise teaching in what was then called the Learning and Skills Sector (for example FENTO 1999; DfES 2002; also described in Wallace 2002). A government report *Equipping our Teachers for the Future* (DfES 2004), echoes what Ofsted (2003) found in their survey of ITT in FE by estimating the need to train 20,000 new teachers for FE each year. During the period when data was being collected for this thesis, from mid 2005 to early 2008, each academic year around 1800 of these trainees were on full-time, one year bursary courses delivered at one of 30 Higher Education Institutions (HEI). My sample of trainees attended a course leading to Certificate in Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at one of these HEIs, referred to as Northern University.

When the collection of data began, trainee teachers on these courses were required to teach at least 120 hours of classes during their placement or placements, which from September 2007 rose to 150 hours. They consequently attended college for a

similar amount of time to that spent attending classes at the University and so their exposure to college life was a very substantial aspect of their course and for many the most important. The data I have collected supports Thies-Sprinthall's (1986: 14 quoted in Avila de lima 2003: 198) statement that the teaching placement has "a quality similar to an indelible print" on the new teacher, even if what the new teacher may indelibly learn is confused and is contingent both upon the situation in which they find themselves and their own personal propensities. This interplay between situation and individual, which has engaged many writers looking at what people learn at work, has formed my methodology for considering placements, which I look at in the next chapter. How the individual teacher is formed by and forms the culture in which they participate lies behind the four questions I have sought to answer:

- How distinct are the college cultures that trainees experience in colleges?
- To what extent are trainee teachers inculcated by what is around them?
- How does their participation in the specific culture form their approach to students and to teaching?
- How do they move from being trainees to becoming teachers?

Answering these questions immediately involves an understanding of *learning.* I take this up at length in the next chapter and before that I use the term in a very general sense. However, throughout this writing I am led by Marx's concept that:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.
>
> (Marx & Engels 1968: 96)

Here as elsewhere, Marx and his translators may be excused the limitations of their own historical situation exhibited by referring to all humanity as masculine. That to one side, Marx explains that individuals have agency to act independently but only within the historical constraints of their circumstances. These constraints exist physically and mentally. Physically, because the existence or availability of resources and organisation affect how each person develops; and mentally because

people can only use the conceptual tools available during their time. My grandmother was an intelligent and independent woman. However, growing up in rural County Donegal at the turn of the ninteenth century she quite literally could not have conceived what my teenage daughter takes for granted living in a major city at the beginning of the twenty-first century. So, it is how environment and individual interact and form each other, and so how people learn, that is at the centre of this study. It is with the environment that I start this introductory discussion of the existing literature on ITT in FE.

James Avis and Anne-Marie Bathmaker have considered the experience of trainee FE teachers on placements and how that has formed both their professional identity (Avis & Bathmaker 2006 and 2009; Bathmaker & Avis 2005a), and their attitudes toward pedagogy (Avis *et al* 2003; Avis & Bathmaker 2004; Bathmaker & Avis 2005b). They found little real integration between existing and trainee teachers, quoting one who said, "[s]ometimes I feel like I am sneaking around" (Bathmaker & Avis 2005a: 54-55). Like Wallace (2002) they also found a discrepancy between the hopes and expectations of trainees and what they experienced on their placements, which also signals the importance of their biography in the forming of those hopes and expectations.

Avila de Lima, in a paper entitled *Trained for Isolation* (2003: 215) argued that trainee teachers learned to be marginal. They were:

> thus socialised into a view of teaching as the production of individualised acts and products for which only the person who plans and performs them is accountable.

Avila de Lima's description bears a resemblance to aspects of the Marxist definition of alienation (looked at in the next chapter), which becomes important in my findings. Writing about FE teachers, though not trainee teachers, Gleeson and Shain (1999) were more positive in their description of "individualised acts". Looking at the effects of the transformation of governance in English FE in the 1990s they (1999: 482) described 'strategic compliance' as "a form of artful pragmatism which reconciles

professional and managerial interests", which they identified amongst lower level FE managers and teachers in FE. Strategic compliers retained a commitment to traditional professional and educational values but at least partially agreed to changes in line with senior college management in order to create space for manoeuvre and hence defend what they valued in their practice. Strategic compliers "did not comply for the 'sake of their own skins'" (p460) but made decisions to conform or not based upon the needs of their learners. Certainly, arguments that all collective activity is more progressive than individuals' activity would be mistaken. However, the space to express commitment to values described by Gleeson and Shain is more treacherous for trainees on placement, and is certainly more confined for all teachers than when they published in 1999 because scrutiny and control has increased.

Avila de Lima (2003: 214) uses the term "Balkanisation" to describe the relationship between the departments in the school he was investigating, which could also express the isolation of the college departments I consider in my own research. In attempting to explain the relationship of the trainee to the school, Avila de Lima (2003: 198) quotes Schutz (1971: 32):

> the cultural pattern of the approached group [the department] is to the stranger [the trainee] not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of adventure, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations, but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master.

What is suggested here is that the placement is not a means to learn about teaching; it is a means to learn about coping with the placement. Yet, paradoxically, and in anticipation of one of my conclusions, learning to cope with the problematic situation of being a trainee on placement may itself be useful preparation for a career in an English FE college.

Work-based learning has been described as "informal" by Eraut (2004), amongst others. In contrast Billett (2002a: 457) wrote:

> Workplace experiences are not informal. They are the product of the historical-cultural practices and situational factors that constitute the particular work practice, which in turn distributes opportunities for participation to individuals or cohorts of individuals.

FE colleges may at first sight appear relaxed and free-flowing in comparison to the rigidity of schools but they can be just as highly structured, even if the structure is not so visible, which becomes salient when I discuss what trainees learn on placement. Billett here points to a recurrent theme of his own writing (Billett 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b; 2004) and an important concern for anyone looking at WBL, which is the availability of opportunities to participate, which Billett (2004: 191) refers to as 'affordances'. In his investigations of learning at work Billett (2001b: 209) has found:

> learners afforded the richest opportunities for participation reported the strongest development, and that workplace readiness was central to the quality of experiences.

The availability of 'affordances' and the readiness of the workplace to accept or welcome the trainee depend on the structure of the college at institutional and sectional levels. Billet found that the key contributors to successful learning for the trainee were "engagement in everyday tasks"; "direct or close guidance of co-workers" and "indirect guidance provided by the workplace itself and others in the workplace". Elsewhere Billet (2002b: 30) wrote:

> The negotiation with and resolution of these (even if it is partial) has cognitive consequences as these activities transform individuals' knowledge.

For my sample of trainees these elements were all highly contingent on the college where they were placed and the individual staff working alongside them. For Billet workplaces are rule-bound structures that are only informal in so far as the rules are unwritten and just how rigid these social constructs are becomes clearer when people threaten or break them. This mattered for my research because structures within a college pre-date any placement and determine what the trainees are able to do during the placement. While some writers, such as Eraut (2004) use the term 'informal' learning to distinguish it from learning at an educational institution, Colley *et al* (2003a: 1) suggest that 'formal', 'informal' and 'non-formal' are not discrete

categories and attributes of 'formality' and 'informality' exist wherever learning takes place. I develop these ideas in the next chapter, but throughout I use these terms carefully and relative to the circumstances I am describing.

In any case, following Billett's argument, to develop as teachers, trainees need to be meaningfully involved in the workplace, which cannot be taken for granted in colleges. Moreover, to negotiate and resolve these key elements also depends on the confidence and capacity of the individual trainee but as Billett (2002b: 36) has written, "Contingent workers [amongst whom, arguably are trainee teachers] are particularly susceptible to securing only limited workplace affordances", because structures can be formed that prevent the full participation of in-comers.

In a similar tone Beckett and Hager (2000: 300; my emphasis) ask, "What do practitioners actually *do* at work from which they learn?" They go on:

> If 'experience is the best teacher' the time has come for experience – that great 'given' of adult learning theory and practice – to show what it is made of.

In seeking as I do to expose what is learnt in workplaces they eschew the frequently used notion of "tacit knowledge" (for example Eraut 2000). "In attempting to de-mystify such knowledge, the danger is that ascription of 'tacitness' re-mystifies it" (Beckett & Hager 2000: 302) and I similarly have avoided the term. Their discussion of the development of expertise seen in the ability to make judgements has informed how I have assessed learning during college placements (see chapter two). More generally, their questioning of the assumption that WBL is necessarily purposeful has helped me to, in their own words, "…get beneath the surface of experience', rather than merely report it" (Beckett & Hager 2000: 303). Learning to navigate social constructs effectively, that is learning to 'fit in', is not the same as learning to teach well, so there is a judgemental, even moral aspect to an analysis of WBL and hence ITT. The question of what trainees need to learn, if not just to cope in difficult circumstances, is addressed in chapter six.

In a similar questioning of assumptions Doornbos *et al* (2004: 252) criticise, "the tendency to ground most of the conceptualisations of learning at work in educational theory and terminology." They go on to say that "work-related learning often pertains to new, messy, ill-defined problems" (p257). Understanding how people cope with that messiness, and what they learn in the process, are central to understanding WBL. Yet, however trainee teachers cope, learning, meaningful or otherwise, is taking place. Viskovic and Robson (2001: 223) quote Wenger (1998: 8):

> Learning is something we can assume – whether we see it or not, whether we like the way it goes or not, whether what we are learning is to repeat the past or shake it off. Even failing to learn usually involves learning something else instead.

Eraut (2004: 203), however, accuses Lave and Wenger of attempting to "eradicate the individual perspective on knowledge and learning" because they do not recognise the need for an "individual situated", as well as a socially situated concept of knowledge. For Eraut this individual perspective is important due to the "complex, rapidly changing, post-modern world." Here, Eraut misses the point. To return to Marx (Marx & Engels 1968: 96) quoted above, the *relationship* between the situation and the individual is significant, not the complexity or otherwise of that situation, because it is only complex or otherwise in relation to the person experiencing it. Microsoft messenger, so straightforward for my daughter, would have been impossible for my grandmother. Billett (2002a: 463) also alludes to this relationship:

> Beyond the affordances of the social practice is the agency of individuals, which determines how they engage in work practices, with its consequences for their learning.

Though occasionally difficult to discern precisely, the importance of what trainees carry with them biographically and how this affects their individual agency is apparent in the data collected for this thesis. Avis and Bathmaker (2005b) also noted the significance of FE in the earlier lives of the trainee teachers they researched (p7). Many had been attracted to teach in FE because their experience of studying in the sector had been so different to their experience of compulsory school (p8). This previous experience of FE may partly explain their approach to teaching and learning

and above all their opinion of existing lecturers, which Avis and Bathmaker uncovered in their work with trainee teachers (2004). In an article entitled '*I think a Lot of Staff are Dinosaurs": further education trainee teachers' understandings of pedagogic relations* Avis *et al* (2002: 187) quote a trainee saying, "I think that they [lecturers] forget that at the end of the day, these students are human beings."

Such antipathy to the attitudes of existing staff is apparent in this work as well, and like Avis *et al* (2002) and Avis and Bathmaker (2004) I will argue that this derives from a commitment to social justice, which itself derives from the trainees' biographies. I will also argue in chapter five, though, that this reflects a pervasive social construction about the role of the teacher and an idealised notion of her general benevolence. But, what is also apparent is how the cultures within which trainees find themselves can alienate some of them from their initial commitment and altruism (Avis & Bathmaker 2009). This is aggravated by the unreasonable expectations of government policy, discussed in chapter three.

Colley researched the biographies of existing FE teachers (Colley 2006 and Colley *et al* 2007), which expose the diversity of reasons for becoming teachers in colleges, and how an individual's experience of work can evolve, improve or worsen. The pursuit of identity formation has paradoxically led her to warn against focusing solely on the individual's biography in studies of professionalism or becoming professional because a narrow focus on the individual extracts her from the surroundings that may have encroached upon or formed her identity (Colley 2006: 119). FE teachers cannot simply be extracted from the wider lives that they lead and how these affect their identity and practice (Colley *et al* 2007). This important consideration has informed my methodology which attempted to locate the trainees within their lives as well as their colleges. Similarly, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004:169) justify the biographies they have written as presenting:

> a version of truth about these teachers – an authentic, supported and plausible way of understanding parts of their identities, as they relate to learning.

I can claim nothing more than that for my own sample. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (p167) further cite Billett (2001: 22) and in so doing concur with Colley above.

> It is necessary to offer an account of learning for work which acknowledges the independence of individuals acting within the interdependence of the social practice of work.

Colley also used Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explain "learning as becoming" (Colley *et al* 2003b: 471) which I discuss below and which has influenced my own investigations of trainee teachers, as discussed in the next chapter.

Location of the research

Much of this work was carried out within *The College Experience: work-based learning and pre-service Post-Compulsory Education and Training [PCET] trainee teachers* research project funded by Huddersfield University[3]. I was one of four new researchers who investigated the experience of pre-service trainee-teachers on college placements at FE institutions throughout the north of England. While we shared the same broad aims, to find out what happened on placements and how they might be improved, each of us looked at the landscape of WBL from different perspectives using different theoretical and data-collection methods, and each of us travelled in our own direction according to our own research questions. Nonetheless, we occasionally accompanied each other before once again carrying on alone. We challenged each other, questioned each other's data and argued about theorisations and my own work is much stronger for their help. When appropriate in this thesis I refer to the work of my colleagues, which I reference accordingly. Cooperating with a team of new enthusiastic researchers, led by three highly experienced academics was stimulating and wholly enjoyable, though what you read here is ultimately my own work and I take responsibility for it all.

My own research centred on a very large general FE college in a major city in the north of England which I refer to as City College. I was employed as a teacher-

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[3] This project was led by Prof. James Avis, Prof. Terry Hyland and Dr Roy Fisher. The other college-based researchers were Liz Dixon, Anne Jennings and Jonathan Tummons.

trainer at City College during the first year of this project, which raised ethical questions that I consider fully in the next chapter, before I took up a post at a university. Neither my research nor this writing is autobiographical, but it is influenced by my own educational experiences and so I will briefly describe my former context. I start by describing the college where I used to work and where the research was based and I then briefly discuss my role in FE and my own attitudes towards it.

Victorian paternalism, industrial training and religious fervour all played a part in the making of the vibrant City College. Passing through the automatic doors of the city-centre building the visitor enters an imposing, light-filled, full-height atrium that speaks more of a large business headquarters than an educational establishment. This is the smallest of the four main campuses and one of over twenty-five sites that City College uses. To the left is the reception desk with staff in uniform; leaflets and brochures are displayed on boards by the reception desk, and there are piles of papers and post on the desk itself. To the right are tables and chairs laid out in rows with people sitting around drinking coffee and eating cooked breakfasts. The look may be corporate; the smell is greasy spoon, which incongruously pervades the whole building. Directly in front is a small reception stand for business clients and walking to the stairs one passes the bell from the original St. John's Sunday School built on this site in 1827. The smell and the building's slick business seem at odds with the lofty philanthropic aspirations of the Sunday school's founders.

Here, I quote what a colleague wrote about her impressions of visiting the site to observe me teaching in March 2004.

> The building was very modern, blue and white, sparkling, light. Heavily-built foreign students with big moustaches decked the entrance, smoking. The receptionist asked Kevin to come down and he showed me round: the usual messy, overcrowded staff room (although as he commented, in a new building, you'd think they'd have put in some storage space); a quiet, carpeted library. Apparently the staff think the new building might eventually get sold off for offices, as, in many ways, it doesn't seem designed for educational use at all.

This site has many overseas and migrant students, though I noticed few moustaches. There was, however, a rich, vital babble of languages and accents, and I certainly recognise the occasionally jarring combination of office building and educational use.

The newly-built main college campus is situated around three miles away on a main road out of the city and its past mirrors that of the city as a whole. The buildings are partly situated on land that was the Council's direct works headquarters and before that an armaments factory; and partly situated on the land of a philanthropic Victorian factory owner. Walking up to the main entrance one passes through a landscaped area complete with fountains before entering a vast, bright, busy space, more airport than FE college. There are sofas, easy chairs and a smell of coffee, and at the end of this space is the open-plan library. This building makes a strong first impression suggesting a progressive and well-resourced institution, and each of the college sites has to varying degrees been re-built or refurbished over recent years. However, as shall be clear from my data, many of the teaching and staff areas remain crowded, cluttered and dingy.

City College went through upheaval during the three years that I collected data from staff and trainees working there, but such upheaval has become intrinsic to FE as chapter three will describe. By any measure City College is a large organisation with many hundreds of staff and tens of thousands of students and it continues to expand, partly by absorbing smaller institutions. The college is regularly in the news, though not always for the right reasons as allegations of corruption and bullying of staff persist. Nevertheless, this college is arguably more important to the lives of people in the city than any of the three local universities since more local people attend it, albeit part-time. I taught at City College and before that in two other colleges in the same greater urban area making a total of sixteen years as a teacher in FE, the last four and a half as a teacher educator. I was drawn to FE for the same reasons as many of my sample; a belief in the value of education and its transformative potential for individuals as well as a commitment to social justice, both of which I maintain because education has allowed me what my parents were not.

My own education was at a very traditional Northern Irish grammar school followed by a red-brick university in England where my degree included the opportunity to teach the equivalent of FE students in France. I enjoyed the experience enormously and later took a one-year full-time course to gain a PGCE to teach in FE in England. My current post in Higher Education (HE) is still closely focussed on the FE sector, which remains important to me.

Theories applied to Work-Based Learning

Why theory?

Theory relates to practice by systematically aiding explanation of the past and prediction of the future; it is therefore "an interaction between things done, things observed and (systematic) explanation of these" (Williams 1983: 317). Theorisation as systematic explanation is what differentiates research from scholarly enquiry that may only describe practice and so theorisation makes findings more readily generalisable through conceptualisation. Theory is "a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organised" (Silverman 2005: 99). Hager (2005) has described how theories of workplace learning can historically be divided into those that conceptualise learning as a product, and those that conceptualise learning as a process (this distinction is more fully discussed in the next chapter). This latter approach overlaps with a participation account of learning, which the great majority of recent writing on WBL has employed (Sfard 1998) and which is the strand I concentrate on in this thesis. Within the wide range of theorisations applied to work-based learning, I have chosen to concentrate on three: CHAT, CoP and Bourdieu's interrelated *field/habitus* concepts. This choice is mainly based upon their widespread use (Hager 2005: 832-835 and see for example Wells & Claxton 2002; Rainbird *et al* 2004; James & Biesta 2007), but also because they analyse WBL within a context of wider human behaviour to explain how knowledge is produced through social practice, in the workplace or elsewhere, as part of human social activity. In the next chapter I look at metaphors for learning, but it will suffice for now to say that all of these conceptualisations stress learning through participation rather than acquisition and so locate relationships and standpoint as the crucial issues

relating to learning. What is learnt, how it is learnt and what value learning is given are dialectical processes that depend on the social milieu within which the learning occurs. These assumptions in common are the starting points for my own consideration of the complexity of WBL in general and the experience of FE trainee teachers in particular. Here I confine myself to a broad description of the three theories of learning I seek to test, which will be subject to thematic critique in chapters four and five. CHAT and CoP both derive explicitly from the work of Vygotsky who I consider first, before looking at the two overlapping derivations separately. Grenfell (2003: 10-11) argues that "the social psychological constructivism of Vygotsky is perfectly congruent with Bourdieu's own structural constructivism" because both "see categories of thought as a social product and thus explainable in terms of social differentials." This is persuasive and Bourdieu refers to Vygotsky in his own work on language, albeit briefly (for example Bourdieu 1998: 130-131). Vygotsky's emphasis is, however, psychological, while Bourdieu's is sociological and that difference is salient because it affects the main focus of the research; the individual or society.

Vygotsky

Just as Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* or Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* startle with their modernism despite being eighty years old, so Vygotsky's writing appears fresh and contemporary though of a similar age. The journey that his ideas have made from obscurity in Stalinist Russia to mainstream orthodoxy in the West (for example featuring in a speech by Ken Boston from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 2007) is too long to be discussed here in any detail, though the story is fascinating. His concepts have not reached us unaltered, though, because even theories of situated learning alter according to their situation.

Lev Semyonovitch Vygotsky was born in Belorussia in 1896 to a middle-class and well-educated Jewish family. As a teenager his intellectual interests lay in literature but at his parent's insistence he attended the Medical School of Moscow University, which had a quota for Jews of three percent (Kozulin 1986: xii). However, in his first

semester there he transferred to studying law, though his PhD, completed in 1925, was on the psychology of art. During the time that Vygotsky was studying in Moscow all that was solid was melting into air with the circulation of new ideas in the arts, sciences and politics culminating in the October revolution of 1917, which brought the Bolsheviks to power. This transformation of society at first allowed artists like Vertov, Eisenstein and Malevich to flourish, and similarly it allowed Vygotsky, a young Jewish man with a formal literary and legal training, to become influential both in the development of psychological theory and its application. At the age of twenty-eight Vygotsky was appointed to work in the People's Commissariat for Public Education (Daniels 2001: 2) and later helped to found the Institute of Defectology in Moscow, which he maintained links to throughout his life. His work with people who were blind, suffering from aphasia and other debilitating psychological conditions provided an opportunity to attempt to understand mental development while seeking effective treatment.

Significantly, this work was carried out in a society newly committed to universal literacy and the fulfilment of every child's potential (Cole & Scribner 1978: 9). In the early 1930s with Stalin firmly in power and tightening his grip over every aspect of society, including the study of psychology, however, Vygotsky and his ideas lost favour as they were considered individualistic and bourgeois. As a result, some of his students, including Alexei Leont'ev, left Moscow to set up a research institute in Kharkov in the Ukraine. It was this group who went on to form an independent set of theories associated with CHAT, which is analysed below. Vygotsky died in 1934 from tuberculosis and his writing was only rehabilitated in Russia in the late 1950s; and in 1962 *Thought and Language* was published in English. By the 1970s, according to Kozulin (1986: lv-lvi), "Vygotsky's ideas ceased to be viewed as an exotic fruit of Soviet psychology and started to take root in the American soil." They are now a feature of teacher training courses and an influence on school curricula throughout the West.

Vygotsky's debt to Marx is illustrated in these comments from his notebooks (quoted in Cole & Scribner 1978: 8):

> The whole of *capital* is written according to the following method: Marx analyzes a single living 'cell' of capitalist society—for example, the nature of value. Within this cell he discovers the structure of the entire system and all its economic institutions. He says that to a layman this analysis may seem a murky tangle of tiny details. Indeed, there may be tiny details, but they are exactly those which are essential to 'micro-anatomy.' Anyone who could discover what a 'psychological' cell is—the mechanism producing even a single response—would thereby find the key to psychology as a whole.

This grounding in Marxism has sometimes been overlooked as Vygotsky has become respectable in the West and as his ideas have been extended and reformed. Nonetheless, Vygotsky "sought to develop a Marxist theory of human intellectual functioning" (Cole & Scribner 1978: 1) and as the quotation above indicates he sought how society represented itself within the individual.

Through the theory of historical materialism Marx relates changes in human consciousness to changes in material being and society: "the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought" (Marx 1976: 102). This connection between the material world and the mind is summed up in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (often referred to as *Grundrisse*) where Marx (1968: 181) famously wrote:

> It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness.

This relationship between environment and individual is central to Marxism and to Vygotsky's own theoretical developments, as was Marx's dialectical approach that considers phenomena to be dynamic and constantly interacting. Each phenomenon has a history that is characterised by change which may at first be quantitative and then qualitative[4]. Vygotsky also advanced the writing of Engels on human development. In *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*

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[4] My own epiphany for this aspect of dialectics came from traffic on a motorway. If the cars in front of a flow of traffic slow from 70 to 30 mph, the cars following will also decelerate only more so, until towards the back of the queue the cars stop: so a quantitative change of speed becomes a qualitative change between being in movement and being stopped within the same flow of traffic. The changes involved in becoming a teacher in FE are, however, a little more complex.

Engels analysed how the use of material tools had formed humans by describing how the human hand not only shaped tools, but was in turn shaped by those tools.

> Thus the hand is not only the organ of labour, *it is also the product of labour.* …But the hand did not exist alone, it was only one member of an integral, highly complex organism.
>
> <div align="right">(Marx & Engels 1968: 355, original emphasis)</div>

In the same work, Engels (p357) relates this development to speech, but Vygotsky's extension was to consider conceptual tools and language in particular, in a similar way to how Engels had done physical tools. Cole and Scribner (1978: 7) argue that Vygotsky "creatively elaborated on Engels' concept of human labour and tool use as the means by which man changes nature and, in so doing, transforms himself." Just as systems of tools like those used in agricultural production have been formed over time by societies and in turn shape those societies through a division of labour, so Vygotsky believed that the internalisation of culturally-created conceptual tools affects individual human development and consequently also affects the development of societies. His general genetic law of cultural development explains how every function in the cultural development of a human appears in two planes first, the social, then the psychological; first between people as an "intermental" category then within the person as a "intramental" category (Chaiklin *et al* 1999: 13). Vygotsky makes a distinction between the lower mental functions, such as basic perception, memory, attention and will; and higher mental functions such as language, gestures and mnemonic techniques. Therefore, these higher functions are mediated through culturally-produced psychological tools. They are internalised forms of social activity (Bakhurst 1997: 147) and they also tend to be semiotic (Kozulin 1986: xxv). According to Cole and Scribner (1978: 14) mediation for Vygotsky described:

> his notion [that] in higher forms of human behaviour, the individual actively modifies the stimulus reaction as a part of the process of responding to it.

Edwards (2005c: 3) explains this often unconscious process as follows:

the conceptual tools we bring to bear when doing our accounts or making an omelette are revealed in what material tools we select for the job, the way that we use them and in the language we employ.

Mediation is the "central concept in the Vygotskian thesis" (Daniels 2001: 7). The term implies that comprehension is not a passive process: "experience is already an interpretation" as Bruner (1995: 19) pithily puts it. Humans apply the psychological tools in order to comprehend the world, and these tools affect the form of that comprehension or, in other words mediate it. Vygotsky (1978: 39) refers to these tools as signs and describes them as "artificial or self-generated". This sign comes between the simple stimulus and response of other conceptualisations as the diagrams below illustrate, and their form depends on the task in hand.
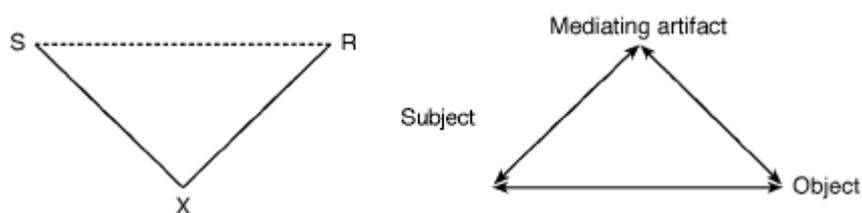
Vygotsky's model of mediated act and its common reformulation from Engeström (2001: 134)

> The intermediate link in this formula [x or the mediating artifact] is not simply a method of improving the previously existing operation, nor is it a mere additional link in an S-R [stimulus-response] chain. Because this auxiliary stimulus possesses the specific function of reverse action [that is, it operates on the individual, not the environment], it transfers the psychological operation to higher and qualitatively new forms and permits the humans, by the aid of extrinsic stimuli, *to control their behaviour from the outside*. The use of signs leads humans to a specific structure of behavior that breaks away from biological development and creates new forms of a culturally-based psychological process.
>
> (Vygotsky 1978: 40, original emphasis)

As is indicated in this extract from *Mind in Society,* the construction of those tools takes place outside of the individual in society, or more precisely in inter-personal relations. To use Chaiklin *et al's* terms again there is a move from "intermental" to "intramental". So, what makes Vygotsky's concept so radical is that he argues that the human mind is not just influenced by society, it is created by society.

Intriguingly, even the term *mediation* is a conceptual tool. For Vygotsky (1981: 139-40 cited in Daniels 2001: 17) such a tool:

- Introduces several new functions connected with the use of the given tool and with its control;
- Abolishes and makes unnecessary several natural processes, whose work is accomplished by the tool; and alters the course and individual features (the intensity, duration, sequence, etc.) of all the mental processes that enter into the composition of the instrumental act, replacing some functions with others (i.e. it re-creates and reorganises the whole structure of behaviour just as a technical tool re-creates the whole structure of labour operations)

Therefore, the term *mediation* enables memory of what mediation involves without having to explain each time and it also enables speculation about the future when the term is applied to a situation; what is going to be said can be guessed. Moreover, the word acts as a shortcut around the process of understanding mediation (however inadequately), and it also shapes how what is being mediated can be considered. Just as a mould gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure" (Vygotsky 1978: 28). What applies specifically to a single term like the word *mediation* also applies more broadly to the learning of language and using semiotic systems. These then induct people into a culture's prevailing ways of making sense of experience through its modes of classification, moral and aesthetic values and so on (Wells & Claxton 2002: 4). By these means, individual functions find their origins in collective culture.

The notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is perhaps Vygotsky's most commonly used concept. In fact he wrote little about the ZPD but its simplicity maintains a powerful attraction for educationalists. He (Vygotsky 1978: 86) defined it as:

> the distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Wells and Claxton (2002: 5) give the example of a toddler who cannot walk alone being helped by holding her father's fingers. This supported practice allows the girl to

gain the individual ability to walk. They argue that "the way we think and learn and know" develop in the same way, which is a dynamic and interactional means of analysing and assessing learning. Nevertheless, Vygotsky's definition has been expanded often beyond its origins, and the term now floats free of moorings (see for example, Ken Boston's speech mentioned above). Lave and Wenger (1991: 48) identify three different uses of the term.

- To describe in purely individualistic terms the distance between what can be done without help presently and what could not be done even with help. This is the way it is used, for example, in the ESOL core curriculum document for Skills for Life. This is a "scaffolding" interpretation.
- To describe the distance between what is possible within a given historical period and what the individual has presently achieved within that society. This is a "cultural" definition.
- To describe a more holistic cultural transformation taking into account the conflictual nature of social interaction. This is a "societal", collective interpretation.

Therefore any reference to Vygotsky, or even this single aspect of his writing, has to be qualified. Similarly, he wrote mainly about children's development not adult learning so any use of Vygotsky in this research or in WBL more generally is immediately an extrapolation, however reasonable.

Less well known than Vygotsky's ideas about mediation and conceptual tools is his interest in how these related to human development. However, Bakhurst and Sypnowich (1995: 11) made the point: "Vygotsky recognises that as much as culture creates individuals, culture itself remains a human creation". Similarly, Shotter (1993a: 111) wrote that:

> Vygotsky is concerned to study how people, through the use of their own social activities, by changing their own conditions of existence, can change themselves.

In an essay entitled *The socialist alteration of man* Vygotsky (1994:181) quotes Marx from the *German Ideology,* "My relationship to my environment is my consciousness" and added (175-176):

> As an individual only exists as a social being, as a member of some societal group within whose context he follows the road of historical development, the composition of his personality and the structure of behaviour turn out to be a quantity of which is dependent on social evolution and whose main aspects are determined by the latter.

Implicit within this analysis of the interplay of the person and their culture is the relationship between individual agency and determinism. For Vygotsky language is at the crux of the relationship; language is formed collectively by individuals; it performs a social purpose; and it then shapes the mind of the individual. The same speech that is a form of external social communication becomes internalized (for Vygotsky, as the child develops) and becomes the means for the process of thinking. Vygotsky (1994: 353) argued:

> The child's higher psychological functions, his higher attributes which are specific to humans, originally manifest themselves as forms of the child's human behaviour, as a form of co-operation with other people, and it is only afterwards that they become the internal individual functions of the child himself.

Thus the individual mind is an integral part of the social environment, though individual agency exists. Though people are determined by society, that is different to being controlled by it: people make their own history, but not in circumstances they have chosen for themselves. Culture only mediates individual agency.

In CHAT and CoP Vygotsky's salient ideas about the relationship between society and individual; mediation; and the role of conceptual tools are all still recognisable, as discussed below, even as his conceptualisation has been developed.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

> At the risk of oversimplification, Vygotsky privileged sign or semiotic mediation, especially in the form of speech, whereas the activity theorists

succeeding him widened the scope to view object-related practical activity as the proper unit of analysis

(Roth & Lee 2007: 189)

Roth and Lee, cited above, concisely encapsulated the point of divergence from Vygotsky's ideas, which led to the development of CHAT or activity theory. Bedny and Harris (2005: 129) make a distinction between these terms, though I follow most writers in using them interchangeably (see for example Engeström 2001, Wells & Claxton 2002). Engeström and Middleton (1996: 4) describe CHAT as the "collaborative and discursive construction of tasks, solutions, visions, breakdowns and innovations" across complex human systems (Edwards 2005c: 10). CHAT has widened to include very many different theorists and to have several different hues, so here I describe only the main tenets supporting the theory. Activity theory, it is argued, connects the abstract notion of activity with practice in the real material world through the idea of *purposeful* action. According to Bedny and Harris (2005: 130) it portrays:

> Human activity … as a hierarchically organized structure, consisting of conscious, goal-directed actions. Actions can be both mental and practical; although mental actions manipulate images and symbols, practical actions explore and transform real objects. Actions are themselves constituted through smaller units, operations, which are automatic and unconscious.

The terminology used within CHAT is often confusingly similar (action, activity; object, objective) and meanings are occasionally elusive, but in the clearest terms I can muster, an activity system involves people in a consciously directed and organised process of mental and physical actions working towards the broadly shared goal. Cole *et al* (1997: 4) saw the activity system as:

> a collective, systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure. Activities are not short-lived events or actions that have a temporally clear-cut beginning and end. They are systems that produce events and actions and evolve over lengthy periods of socio-historical time. … As a consequence, activity theory calls for historical analysis of the collective activity system.

Within this perspective, the object is the goal of the activity, which is a deliberate, even if imprecise, cognitive representation of a desired result. Leont'ev (1978: 62),

the initial theorist behind CHAT, explained the relationship between object and activity thus:

> The main thing which distinguishes one activity from another, however, is the difference in their objects. It is exactly the object of an activity that gives it its determined direction. According to the terminology I have proposed, the object of an activity is its true motive.

Epistemologically, the system is what gives meaning to behaviour because it is only through the object of the system that the activity makes sense. Edwards (2005c: 6) illustrated this well by considering how the same task can be interpreted or understood in a variety of ways depending on its purpose:

> A classroom task in the English curriculum may be interpreted as something to be completed quickly, a vehicle for exhibiting neat presentation skills, an opportunity for discussion or a chance for exploratory writing. How pupils and teachers interpret the task provides a key to understanding what is important in the English lesson as an activity system.
>
> […]
>
> In brief we seek meaning in the objects we work on and that meaning in turn is evident in how we engage with that object. If, for example, the meaning in the classroom task is seen as neatness, then that is how pupils interact and act on the task.

In a very widely cited article, Engeström (2001: 133-136) described the evolution of activity theory through three generations, though the distinctions are less abrupt than he indicated. The first relates to Vygotsky's notion of mediation through psychological tools, particularly language, as described above.

> The insertion of cultural artifacts [conceptual tools] into human actions was revolutionary in that the basic unit of analysis now overcame the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure.
>
> (Engeström 2001: 133)

Yet, while describing the interaction of culture and person this first generation was, according to Engeström, limited by being focussed upon the individual. This interpretation conflicts with my reading of Vygotsky who was interested in the individual as "society in miniature" (see the quote above on 'micro-anatomy' from

Cole & Scribner 1978: 8 and Shibutani 1971: 131). Engeström's second generation evolved around Vygotsky's former student Leont'ev who explained the difference between an individual action and a collective activity. He (Leont'ev 2009: 187) used the example of a 'primeval collective hunt' to explain the relationship between action and activity. I will quote this in full because it has been seminal in the development of activity theory.

> When a member of a group performs his labour activity he also does it to satisfy one of his needs. A beater, for example, taking part in a primaeval collective hunt, was stimulated by a need for food or, perhaps, a need for clothing, which the skin of the dead animal would meet for him. At what, however, was his activity directly aimed? It may have been directed, for example, at frightening a herd of animals and sending them toward other hunters, hiding in ambush. That, properly speaking, is what should be the result of the activity of this man. And the activity of this individual member of the hunt ends with that. The rest is completed by the other members. This result, i.e. the frightening of game, etc. understandably does not in itself, and may not, lead to satisfaction of the beater's need for food, or the skin of the animal. What the processes of his activity were directed to did not, consequently, coincide with what stimulated them, i.e. did not coincide with the motive of his activity; the two were divided from one another in this instance. Processes, the object and motive of which do not coincide with one another, we shall call 'actions'. We can say, for example, that the beater's activity is the hunt, and the frightening of game his action.

Therefore the reason for doing something may only be apparent within a broader context that involves other individuals doing other different things, but all towards the same broad goal (leading back to Edwards's English lesson). Human actions, therefore, cannot be understood solely by looking at individual goals. The object, in this case successfully hunting an animal, represents the meaning, the motive and the purpose of a collective activity system (Engeström & Kerosuo 2007: 337). Therefore, collective activity, not individual actions enable comprehension of the world. As Engeström (2001: 133-134) wrote:

> The concept of activity took the paradigm a huge step forward in that it turned the focus on complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community.

Contradictions that arise within the system, and the way in which they are coped with drive the system forward and keep it evolving over time. The third generation

expands the unit of analysis from a single activity system, as with Leont'ev, to the interaction of two or more activity systems. Engeström (2001: 136-137) summarised this third generation of the theory in five principles:

1. A "collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis."

2. The "multi-voicedness of activity systems": participants have their own personal histories, and the division of labour within the activity system also creates differing positions, which is "a source of trouble, and a source of innovation."

3. These activity systems take shape over long periods of time, which needs to be studied; "historicity".

4. "The central role of contradictions as sources of change and development" which may be a more consensual way of saying conflicts and problems. Otherwise expressed, when a new element is adopted by a system, how does that affect the system as a whole? Engeström uses Marxist terms to describe the primary contradiction of capitalism as the contradiction between use value and exchange value of commodities.

5. The "possibility of expansive transformations" in activity systems. Contradictions within a system mean some participants begin to question and deviate from established norms. This can lead to a collective and deliberate change. "…a collective journey through the zone of proximal development of the activity".

This view takes in not just the activity system, but how various activity systems interact and collide. For Engeström, the contradictions exposed in this way provide

opportunities for change through 'expansive learning', which is Engeström's own influential contribution to CHAT. This optimistic concept:

> enables a longitudinal and rich analysis of inter-organizational learning and makes a specific contribution in outlining the historical transformation of work and organizations by using observational as well as interventionist designs in studies of work and organizations.
>
> (Engeström & Kerosuo 2007: 336)

Expansive learning takes participants beyond the known and so occurs at the margin of their ZPD because the contradictions within a system set up problems that demand a solution is sought. Moreover, Engeström offers a way that these solutions may be found which emphasises not internalisation, but externalisation of the problem from individual to systemic; from specific experience to a reforming of the activity system. This process of expansion is not, however, inevitable, but may elaborate into a coherent collective analysis that may lead to questioning of convention and to experimentation. As the new activity becomes settled, something new comes into existence at the social level with new contradictions relating to existing and neighbouring activity systems. So, received ideas can be continually challenged and mores altered. Significantly, this understanding encourages organisational intervention in an effort to improve processes, much in the manner of management consultants (for example Engeström 2001; Daniels & Warmington 2007: 278; see also Avis's 2007b and 2009 critique). Indeed, Langemeyer (2006) argues that he treats the activity system as an agent itself. Marx wrote (1970: 123 original italics) that "philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it". For Engeström it would seem the point is to make organisations work a bit more smoothly.

I return to this critique later in chapter five, but CHAT may allow insights for those researching WBL because it potentially exposes thought and learning. CHAT removes the divide between the individual mind and one's actions because it holds that mental life exists in its concrete expression; consciousness is revealed in how people act.

> Thus the process of internalization is not the transferral of an external activity to a pre-existing internal plane of consciousness: it is the process in which this internal plane is formed.
>
> (Leont'ev 1981: 57).

This has its roots in Marx's (1968: 181) insight quoted above that "[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines consciousness". Correspondingly, cultures objectively exist in the form of conceptual tools and human practices (Bakhurst 1997: 148; Edwards 2005a: 5).

Therefore during my research project, understanding the activity system and in particular its object, enabled understanding of the process of trainees' learning on placement. This also resonates in Daniels and Warmington's (2007: 38) notion of "identity in practice" (also derived from CHAT), or identity as existing within a system, which may let the researcher see how human agency is contained in everyday, mundane tasks and interactions (Engeström & Middleton 1998:1). I was aware, though, of Axel's (1997: 140) warning that since it is the researcher who may differentiate short term actions from longer term activities, "[a]ctivity is what the researcher perceives as motivated". Moreover, alienated labour, often activity which is ostensibly without meaning, may also be difficult to explain within CHAT.

Nevertheless, the concept of collective and dynamic activity systems usefully suggests that professional knowledge may not be stable and readily acquired or absorbed. Rather, professional knowledge and professional expertise are constructed in an interface between previously existing values and solving currently presenting problems (Edwards 2005c: 10-11), which is a useful entrance to learning on placement. However, this recognition of complexity within activity theory is confounded by the algorithmic reductionism of Bedny and Harris's (2005) exposition showing once again how theories mutate depending on their situation; one person's emancipatory discourse can become another person's strategy for improving "human work processes" (p128). Not everyone is interested in CHAT's emancipatory promise (Avis 2007b and 2009).

Communities of practice

Some writers consider Communities of Practice theory to be within the tradition of CHAT (see Daniels 2001 and Gipps 2002, for example) and certainly they share a common heritage and common emphases. However, I am treating them separately for the sake of analysis and also because CoP theory has a life of its own. Felstead *et al* (2008: 1) masterfully understate how community of practice "is widely used to describe the ways in which people work in and learn in organisations." It features in many government initiatives and within the world of education and training CoPs have become as ubiquitous as mission statements and stakeholders. The term lends purpose or consensus or gravitas to all manner of organisations, gatherings and meetings. If it was challenging to settle on the essential elements of CHAT through its evolution, it is impossible to generalise the current uses of CoP except to say blandly that they involve communication. For that reason and because my interest is in better understanding the development of trainee teachers, I have returned to the originators of the phrase, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger.

The term CoP, coined by Lave and Wenger in 1991, remains potent because it takes us quickly beyond formal training and qualifications to how knowledge, skills and capacities are developed in the workplace through the relationships workers have with each other. What they have borrowed from Vygotsky is the understanding that knowledge is dialectical (within a zone of proximal development); that knowledge is formed and held in social relations; and therefore that learning is situated. As Tennant (2000: 131) wrote, "In work-based learning, where work is the curriculum, context is all." Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the process of "legitimate peripheral participation" where established workers afford marginal engagement to newcomers as the newcomers move towards full participation in the community as their skill, knowledge and enculturation develop.

> The skilful learner acquires something like the ability to play various roles in various fields of participation. This would involve things other than schemata: ability to anticipate, a sense of what can feasibly occur within specified

> contexts…a prereflective grasp of complex situations…timing of actions relative to changing circumstances: the ability to improvise.
>
> (Lave & Wenger 1991: 20)

Their focus is on the individual becoming part of the community that collectively holds the expertise, and LPP is a means to talk about the process of becoming a full member of the collective.

As does Bourdieu (described later), Lave and Wenger quote from Marx's (1970) Grundrisse to discuss the relationship between theory and practice which in the Marxist tradition are not separate. "The goal in Marx's memorable phrase, is to 'ascend (from the particular and the abstract) to the concrete'" (Lave & Wenger 1991: 37). Consequently, for CoP theory which connects knowledge and practice, the central issue for WBL is access to experience as a means of learning (p85): the point for newcomers is not to learn from talk, through instruction; but to learn to talk, through participation (p109). As Fuller *et al* (2005: 49) point out, Lave and Wenger challenge the idea of a learner in a workplace as receptacle; rather they are "co-participants" because experience and understanding are interactive and mutually constitutive within a group of people. "[L]earning is an integral part of the generative social practice in the lived-in world" (Lave & Wenger 1991: 35), and so, incidentally, they do not restrict their conceptualisation to workplaces. They do explicitly exclude schools from their 1991 study (p39) and by extension other structured educational courses, such as the one the trainees were on. Wenger readdresses this in his 1998 work, however, where he discusses how a structured *architecture* might provide an opportunity for formal learning. Moreover, and again like Bourdieu, they eschew the distinction between mind and body to consider learning holistically, not just cognitively (p49), and relate learning to a sense of self or identity:

> social communities are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities.
>
> (Lave & Wenger 1991: 53)

Learning inevitably occurs as a consequence of participation within a community of practice, which is a group of people who are occupied in similar and related activities. Groups of communities may exist within large and complex organisations such as City College (Wenger 1998 refers to these groups as *constellations*) and individuals may be members of several such communities in or outside of work, but membership of any one community of practice entails learning through engagement with others in that community. This may involve learning how the community works together, how to use the resources and tools (in Vygotsky's sense as well as literally) that the community has developed over time in order to carry out its practice but it also may involve learning about the community's expectations of behaviour and its values.

Not all groups of people working together constitute a CoP. Wenger's (1998) later development of the concept isolates three identifying elements: mutual engagement; joint enterprise; and shared "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions and concepts" (p82). Interpreting this, Felstead *et al* (2007:1) highlight:

> the degree to which work tasks are: jointly carried out; discussed before, during and after completion; and used to enhance belonging at and beyond the workplace.

For Felstead and his colleagues, the extent to which those features exist in a workplace is the key to there being a CoP (p2) and so they "operationalised" the concept to produce a "single communities of practice score" (p15) which signifies the extent to which respondents worked within a community of CoP.

Wenger's (1998) later book was a significant development which sought to overcome some of the shortcomings of *Situated Learning* (1991)*.* He suggested (pp3-17) that to develop a social theory of learning required consideration of eight sets of theory:

- social theory
- power
- identity

- subjectivity

- situated experience

- meaning

- practice

- collectivity

In its initial form CoP is an analytical viewpoint, though like Engeström's expansive learning it has become a basis for intervention (Wenger *et al* 2002). Nonetheless, the potential importance of this viewpoint in researching trainee teachers is described by Viskovic and Robson (2001: 234):

> If learning is viewed as 'situated', as something that cannot be separated from the rest of our activities, then the importance of teachers' informal learning becomes clear. The focus shifts to their relationships and interactions with others, to their participation in communities of practice.

Therefore the analysis should be of the community and the opportunities to practise as part of that community. So, having a mentor who encourages the trainee's involvement will aid her development just as lack of a desk or a place to sit in a staffroom may preclude involvement in a CoP, and thus prevent her development. Viskovic (2005: 393) quotes Wenger (2000: 243): "The organisational requirements of social learning systems run counter to traditional management practices." How true that is will be seen in chapter four. Perceptively, Edwards (2005c: 7) notes that Lave's ideas do not derive from Marxism, though she uses Marx's ideas, and the same could be said of Wenger. Some of the weaknesses in CoP that I return to in chapter five may be the failure to adequately look at learning as being situated not just in a vocational setting, but also within society. However, despite these weaknesses, CoP theory has greatly aided my analysis because, following Colley *et al* (2003: 475)*,* this approach permits complex questions about why people are prepared to become teachers in FE: such as questioning why they feel suited to this occupation and how their sense of identity changes as they become a member of the community.

Bourdieu

According to its publisher, Pierre Bourdieu's book, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* is amongst the most cited in social sciences, and Reay (2004: 431) has identified "the habitual use of [Bourdieu's concept] *habitus* in educational research". *Habitus*, she argues (432) is "sprayed throughout academic texts like 'intellectual hairspray' (Hey: 2003), bestowing gravitas without doing any theoretical work." So, it is with trepidation that I too will justify my use of this and other of Bourdieu's concepts, but I start by briefly situating his work. As Vygotsky's ideas can be traced back to the situation of revolutionary Russia, Pierre Bourdieu's can in part be traced back to his own boarding school education and his time in Algeria, particularly his experience of the Algerian War for Independence (Orr 2008a).

Bourdieu was born in the remote rural area of Béarn in the French Pyrenees in 1930 where he spoke the now extinct language of Gascon before starting elementary school (Grenfell 2004). His father was a minor civil servant in the post office, and his mother had unusually remained at school until she was sixteen and was keen for her son to be educated. After attending *lycée* as a boarder in Pau and then Paris he gained a place in the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure from which he graduated in 1955. After a year as a teacher in a *lycée* he undertook his military service in Algeria just as the war there was intensifying. He subsequently taught in the University of Algiers while also carrying out field research in the Kabyle region of the country. In 1960 Bourdieu returned to France and went on to a successful career in French academia; in 1981 he was named as Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France. Towards the end of his life, Bourdieu became France's leading public intellectual and he was involved in progressive politics until his death in 2002.

After his death *Le Nouvel Observateur* described Bourdieu's memories of his own schooling with its dislocation between home and *lycée* as his 'Rosebud', referring to the revelatory final words of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, defining Bourdieu's acute awareness of cultural mores (Grenfell 2004: 10). While at the University of Algiers, Bourdieu taught a course on Algerian Culture, which was enough of a provocation to the French colonial authorities to place him on a list to be arrested (Le Sueur 2001:

292). Bourdieu's frequent collaborator Loïc Wacquant identified the Algerian war as a major influence on his co-writer since:

> the normally innocuous activity of teaching could not but take, in this context, a highly charged political dimension that mandated an analytical return upon the analyst and his practice.
>
> (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 45)

This background of Béarn and Algeria helps to contextualise Bourdieu's preoccupations with the inequality of power, often expressed very subtly (even just the 'correct' short trousers of the urban-dwelling boys at school) and the mutually constructive relationship between individual and environment. His ideas have a coherence and work within a whole, though at this stage I extract only four to consider; *field*, *habitus*, *doxa and symbolic violence*. Elsewhere in this thesis I refer to other of his conceptualisations, in particular those relating to capital, which I will define in the context I use them. As already noted, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) starts with a quote from Marx's Thesis on Feuerbach (Marx 1970: 121), which serves to frame Bourdieu's writings and incidentally to relate them to the previous Vygotskian conceptualisations.

> The principal defect of all materialism up to now—including that of Feuerbach—is that the external object, reality, the sensible world, is grasped in the form of *an object or an intuition*; but not as *concrete human activity,* as *practice*, in a subjective way. This is why the active aspect was developed by idealism, in opposition to materialism—but only in an abstract way, since idealism naturally does not know real concrete activity as such.

This indicates Bourdieu's interest in explaining human practice, or in his own words, finding "a general theory of the economy of practices" (Bourdieu 1990a: 122) through the interplay of individual agency and cultural situation; between Sartre's humanistic individualism and Lévi-Strauss' structuralist denial of agency (Bourdieu 1990a: 2-3 and Callinicos 1999: 292). The conceptual tool he used for this was *habitus*, his most cited term. However, what is forgotten in some uses of *habitus* is that inequality and consequent tension are central to Bourdieu's conceptualisations, which have been useful in my understanding of the impact of culture during placements. For Bourdieu (1990a: 141):

The object of social science is a reality that encompasses all the individual and collective struggles aimed at conserving or transforming reality, in particular those that seek to impose the legitimate definition of reality, whose specifically symbolic efficacy can help to conserve or subvert the established order, that is to say, reality.

Field and *habitus*

Though as Reay (2004) remarked, *habitus* is most commonly cited, that concept has a dialectical relationship with *field* and so cannot be understood until the *field* is understood. "To think in terms of the *field* is to *think relationally*," (Bourdieu 1989a: 39; original emphasis). Bourdieu here defined a *field* as:

> a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation … in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the *field*, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). Each *field* presupposes, and generates by its very functioning the belief in the value of the stakes it offers.

For Jenkins (1992: 85) Bourdieu's concept of *field* "is the crucial mediating context between where external factors are brought to bear on individual and institutional practice." The *field* is more than a background for practice; it gives practice a meaning and value that is particular to the *field* and that elsewhere may have no meaning or value. It is the contested area where social forces interplay and struggle over resources and status, for example, prestige or intellectual distinction, because people operating within a *field* seek the particular return that the *field* provides. Therefore, Bourdieu (1989b: 18) repudiates "the universal subject, the transcendental ego of phenomenology" because "mental structures through which [people] apprehend the world, are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world." The *field* forms and constrains any individual's perception of the world through their *habitus*. Bourdieu's (1989a: 39) indications that the parameters of the *field* may only be ascertained through analysis, which will also define the most significant forces in the *field*, are important for my research; I have to

judge how the *field* operates based on the data that I find. Similarly important (1989a: 41-42) are his three steps to conducting a study of the *field*; firstly it is necessary to analyse its relation to the wider *field* of power, and hence my chapter on policy in FE. The divisions between academic and vocational education will become pertinent in this regard, too. Secondly, the relationships between participants must be mapped out to show their relative competing positions. Only then, thirdly, can the *habitus* of participants be analysed.

Bourdieu describes *habitus* as a person's set of individual dispositions and behaviour; it is 'a product of the incorporation of objective necessity' or having a 'feel for the game' (1990b: 11). What constitutes that objective necessity or the game itself is the *field* within which a person lives and operates; *habitus* is "a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future" (Bourdieu 1977:82). In the relationship between *field* and *habitus* Bourdieu describes how people adapt to the structures and relationships they find around them, internalising rules which they may be unaware of and which may never have been formally constituted. For example, in City College which has no dress code, the staff in one staffroom wear suits while in another they wear jeans.

People enter a *field*, however, with their existing *habitus* formed elsewhere, which will either help or hinder their incorporation into the new *field* which can lead to people feeling out-of-place or unsure of how to deport themselves as the dispositions and behaviour that are acceptable or have status in one (for instance) vocational area may be regarded as inappropriate elsewhere, which Bourdieu (1977: 78) refers to as the *hysteresis* effect. When the practices learnt elsewhere do not fit the new environment, they do not gain the return in the *field* that they did in another.

Bourdieu stresses that individuals are not controlled by the *field*, and that they maintain individual agency, indeed *field* and *habitus* are mutually constituting. Moreover the field will itself develop: the expectations and routines on a construction site from 30 years ago whilst certainly recognisable today, have also evolved and changed over time. Similarly, what exists today will feel normal to today's construction workers. Bourdieu explains how the social practices involved in any

situation have an objective reality (conditions on building sites have altered) and a subjective reality (those conditions feel normal to those who work on today's building sites).

> Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in *field*s and in *habitus*, outside and inside of agents. And when *habitus* encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself "as a fish in water," it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about it for granted.
>
> (Bourdieu 1989a: 43)

This conceptualisation acknowledges the dynamism of the relationship between the individual and the situation with all its complexity and contingency. It is also reminiscent of the Vygotskian move from inter-personal to intra-personal planes.

> What must be emphasized is… that the external determinations that bear on agents situated in a given *field* (intellectuals, artists politicians, or construction companies), never apply on them directly, but only through the specific mediation of the specific forms and forces of the *field*…
>
> (Bourdieu 1989a: 41)

This describes a subtle, contingent process of influence that can only be understood within a specific situation. People learn to improvise according to what is around them and in so doing internalize, or learn attitudes and behaviour. Such a conceptualisation understands learning as a collective and socially situated process that reflects the immediate circumstances as well as broader society, and so lends itself to the situation of trainees' placements.

> The world is comprehensible, immediately endowed with meaning, because the body, which, thanks to its senses and its brain, has the capacity to be present to what is outside itself, in the world, and to be impressed and durably modified by it, has been protractedly (from the beginning) exposed to its regularities. Having acquired from this exposure a system of dispositions attuned to these regularities, it is inclined and able to anticipate them practically in behaviours which engage a *corporeal knowledge* that provides a practical comprehension of the world quite different from the intentional act of decoding that is normally designated by the idea of comprehension.
>
> (Bourdieu 2000: 135, cited in Fowler 2000: 4)

This notion of corporeal knowledge suggests that what a trainee learns may literally be visible from her stance, her gait, or as Bourdieu would have it, her *hexis.*

In his critique of phenomenology and its limitations Bourdieu (1990a: 26) describes:

> the coincidence of the objective structures and the internalized structures which provides the illusion of immediate understanding, characteristic of the familiar universe, and which at the same time excludes from that experience any inquiry as to its own conditions of possibility.

Elsewhere he describes this settlement between objective reality and subjective description of experience of reality as *doxa.* People normally have neither desire nor capacity to question the situation of their existence, so they take it for granted, which is what Jenkins (1992: 71) describes as the "subjective expectation of objective probability". In this way, a person gets a feel for a situation which may look like the result of rational consideration, yet it is not based upon reasoning, but upon an unstated and usually unnoticed incorporation of culture, which is simultaneously shaped through individual participation (Bourdieu 1990b: 11). This means that researchers need to scratch beneath descriptions from participants (for example in interviews), but also that the researchers themselves need to be aware of their own *doxa* so as not to "[exclude] the question of the conditions of possibility of this experience" (Bourdieu 1990a: 25-26). Consequently, any theory of practice should also be able to theorise the perspective of the analyst and any analysis should involve "a robust form of reflexivity" (Bloomer & James 2001: 10) which was one of the features of a Bourdieuian approach identified by the *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (TLC) research project.

This ambitious and wide-ranging project investigated how students learn in FE over a period of three years and at a variety of different learning sites throughout England (see James & Biesta 2007). The TLC researchers sought to identify and authentically describe what enabled successful learning to take place and they drew on Bourdieu's concepts to analyse the transformations involved in learning. They used the term *learning culture* (James & Biesta 2007: 4) to express the interaction between an individual student and the environment of the college.

> Thus learning cultures exist through the actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants. They exist through the interaction and communication and are (re)produced by individuals just as much as individuals are (re)produced by learning cultures. Individuals' actions are therefore neither totally determined by learning cultures, nor totally free.

This approach has also influenced the way that I have looked at the learning of teachers and I return to it in the final chapter.

Above all, it is worth remembering that for Bourdieu *habitus* and his other conceptual tools were not just elegant means to describe practice; they represent the inculcation of social inequity and its many disguises. *Symbolic violence* is the term that Bourdieu used to describe how the lives of the weak in society are almost always perceived and therefore judged from the viewpoint of the powerful, even by the weak themselves (Bourdieu 1998b: 9). The victim is blamed for her situation. Within societies submission is not normally perceived as forced by dominant groups, nor is subjugation normally perceived as repression. Rather these are "collective expectations" or a "doxical submission to the injunctions of the world" (Bourdieu 1998: 103). For Bourdieu (1990: 84-85) the "realization, *par excellence*" of *symbolic violence* is the law. It is violent in so far as it is about domination but it is symbolic as it takes the form of code, convention and respect so that force can be exerted without revealing its true face.

Above all Bourdieu reminds the social scientist that inequality in society is expected to the point of its invisibility. This is an important consideration in any study but especially within the under-privileged FE sector, and it shaped my methodology and findings.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has set out the structure of the thesis and the questions relating to ITT in FE that it attempted to answer, as well as explaining my own position within the research. City College, the venue for most of the data collection, has been introduced, and the project has been placed within existing literature relating to ITT

in FE and to WBL more generally. The major conceptual focus of this thesis and the three existing theorisations of situated learning that I drew on have been outlined, uncritically at this stage. In applying these theories to the situation of trainee teachers on placement I have then tested their capacity to conceptualise and explain the processes involved in the placement experience. However, an important element of this is the way those theories conceptualise and explain how the broader structures and influences of society affect the college and the trainee. In the next chapter I continue some of the work of conceptualisation and focus on my methodology, both aided by the theorisations I have highlighted.

Chapter Two: Concepts, methodology and data collection

Introduction

This chapter identifies the influences on my decisions relating to methodology and subsequent data collection through discussion of the concepts used and assumptions made. These decisions can be briefly characterised as ethical, conceptual and technical and I will deal with them each in turn. I start by reiterating my questions:

1. How distinct are the college cultures that trainee teachers experience in colleges?
2. To what extent are trainee teachers inculcated by what is around them?
3. How does their participation in the specific culture form their approach to students and to teaching?
4. How do they move from being trainees to becoming teachers?

Each of these research questions contains assumptions in the words chosen: the meaning of culture; what makes a culture distinct; the meaning of inculcation and what constitutes participation; what 'becoming' entails. In addressing such conceptual issues I clarify the aims of this research, the material I interpreted and hence how my methodology was formed. I also review the methodology of others who have researched different aspects of WBL and from there I move on to explaining and analysing the technical issues related to gathering data on ITT.

Ethics

The British Educational Research Association's *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004), which centre on the informed voluntary consent of participants has informed the ethical decisions taken during the research for this thesis. Each person who took part in interviews, focus groups, questionnaire completion or other means of data collection was informed about the project and its aims before they signed written consent forms. Participants were informed both verbally and in writing of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, though

none did, and their identities have been anonymised both in how data relating to them has been securely stored and within this writing. They received no incentive to take part and I am grateful for their cooperation.

Aside from these broad considerations relating to all educational research there were specific ethical issues for this project. The participant trainee teachers were on placement at the college where I worked and after I changed job, the later participants were on a course at the university where I worked. However, I was never their tutor and played no part in assessing their teaching practice or written course work, though obviously inequalities of power remained which I attempted to alleviate through reassurance of my intentions and their anonymity.

One issue is worth detailing as it exposes my ethical priorities. During an interview a participant teacher trainee made specific allegations of racism relating to how she had been treated at the college where she had been placed. I immediately suspended the interview and switched off my recorder. We then discussed how she might be able to reach a satisfactory outcome, either by pursuing the allegations or, as she chose, to seek another placement. With some discretion, I helped her find this new placement where she thrived. She was adamant that she wanted to remain a part of my study and I did interview her once again. Even with hindsight I believe I acted ethically: there was a specific accusation of racism which I would not ignore in any situation and I dealt with it in the way that the victim wished by helping to remove her from the situation. Although I would have preferred to pursue the allegations, that specifically was not what the trainee chose because she wanted to complete her placement without further distraction. This episode occurred early on in my study and it demonstrated how abstract research ethics can and should have practical implications, even if these are to the detriment of the project.

Theoretical frameworks
Theory provides methodology with focal points and structure and the three broad theorisations that I drew on, CHAT, CoP and *field/habitus*, informed my methodology by providing features of practice to identify and investigate. These included, for instance, the features of communities of practice identified by Wenger's (1998)

criteria or the existence of discernible activity systems with an identifiable object. Consequently, the conceptualisations influenced my methodology by targeting data to collect to help answer my research questions, which in turn tested the explanatory power of those conceptualisations. Although there was a risk of missing significant features of practice that were not sought, explicitly describing how these conceptual frameworks shaped my approach reveals for scrutiny the suppositions made, as does justifying the definitions adopted for learning, culture and alienation. Clifford Geertz (1993: 24) emphasises the role of a theoretical framework by warning against the inadequacy of untheorised interpretation in research.

> Imprisoned in the immediacy of its own detail, [an interpretation] is presented as self-validating, or worse, validated by the supposedly developed sensitivities of the person who presents it…

This echoes Bourdieu's (1990a: 26) criticism of phenomenology's individualistic universalism, but it also exposes a need to expose assumptions in research, to apply the rigorous reflexivity that Bloomer and James (2001) called for. From within the FE sector, the shortcomings of untheorised research are apparent in *From Little Acorns* (Cox & Smith 2004), which investigated "good practice" in colleges. In Cox and Smith's research, devoid of conceptualisation, the notion of good practice is left unexamined and therefore assumed to be unproblematic and uncontested. Good practice was unassailable, 'correct' and apparently separate from context, so that it could be passed around like a handout in a seminar. This resulted in findings that are little more than a description of procedures without discussion of relationships or contingency. Any such description will inevitably be partial, but Cox and Smith did not explain that partiality since the findings were presented, to repeat Geertz's words, "as self-validating". Their research was less valid and useful than it might have been and is symptomatic of what Avis *et al* (1996: 164) have called "answerism". This describes enquiry that narrowly focuses on a question, often relating to policy implementation, which it then answers in a technical manner without analysing the question being asked nor the interests of those doing the asking.

In the first chapter I argued that theory was systematic explanation, which emphasises and connects certain elements considered important because of their place within a scheme or a moral construction. Therefore, a theory represents or interprets the world by providing a vocabulary and reference points to represent an external reality. However, for me representation does not constitute or construct reality in the way of postmodernism; for Foucault (1974: 49) discourses were "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." For a postmodernist researcher this implies discursive practices are not just the vehicle for interpretation, but are the aim of the research and hence their stress on 'telling stories' (see Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 11 and Ellis & Bochner 2000: 733-768). I am in accord with Hammersley (2008: 173) who was highly critical of this approach.

> Reality is about more than perception. What [postmodernist] constructionism does is take the fact that social reality is socially constructed and draws the conclusion that only the process of production of reality can be understood. The new focus is therefore how the phenomena are perceived and discussed, not the phenomena themselves.

This distinction between reality and social-constructions of reality was crucial to my approach in this thesis and it was congruent with the theories I sought to test. Following Hammersley, my position is essentially "neo-realist", or postpositivist in Denzin and Lincoln's (2000: 3) more disparaging terms; the world is knowable, but people cannot know it all at once nor from one perspective. The Bourdieuian distinction that for my participants as for everyone else there is an objective reality and subjective experience led to deploying multiple methods to capture as much as possible of the world of FE and placements, as well as how this world was perceived. Importantly, this postpositivist standpoint allowed a distance from which to sift, evaluate and interpret data. The implications of this approach and consequent decisions related to this research are taken up below, but I start with definitions.

What constitutes a culture?

According to Williams (1983: 87) culture "is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language", so any attempt at definition is made with trepidation. Nevertheless, culture is crucial to any understanding of activity theory, CoP and the

work of Bourdieu, as well as being central to my own research questions. Lave and Wenger generally eschewed the term culture and used the more limited one, community. This distinction, in so far as there is one, is based on scale, which I consider later but here I am seeking a broadly applicable, general definition that could include communities of practice. Moreover, education has an important role in circulating cultural norms within society: "All *pedagogic action* is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 5; original emphasis). Arbitrary, that is, because it has no inherent or objective right to cultural superiority. Nevertheless, this thesis stresses the influence of culture on the teacher not the teacher's role in perpetuating culture, though the two are inextricably linked. For Geertz (1993: 5) the definition of culture was semiotic because "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" and so the study of culture is a search for contingent meaning; that is, the meanings that humans attach to their world and its processes and actions. He was critical of how culture can be obscured by the ways it is conceptualised:

> One is to imagine that culture is a self-contained "super-organic" reality with forces and purposes of its own; that is, to reify it. Another is to claim that it consists in the brute pattern of behavioural events we observe in fact to occur in some identifiable community or another; that is to reduce it.
>
> (Geertz 1993: 11)

Culture is a human construct that does not exist separate to the group of humans who constructed it so culture should not be essentialised (it is "arbitrary" for Bourdieu and Passeron). On the other hand, Geertz (p11) was most critical of the view that culture exists "in the minds and hearts of men"; culture is not just a reification of beliefs or understandings, it is discernable in how lives are lived through actions and social relationships. CHAT connects these by understanding that mental life, the mind, is expressed in activity and so some Vygotskian psychological theorisations comprehend the mind as replicating aspects of culture as a 'society in miniature' (see below). Accordingly what people say about themselves and the meanings attached to their utterances, the symbolic forms, are important in the study of culture

but so is what people *do*. Similarly, Shotter (1975: 13-14 cited in Shotter 1993a: xii) warned against an overly deterministic interpretation of culture:

> people must not be treated like organisms that respond directly in relation to their position in the world, but as rather special organic forms which deal with nature in terms of their knowledge of the 'position' in a culture; that is, in terms of a knowledge of the part their actions play in relation to the part played by other people's actions in maintaining (or progressing) the culture.

This warning is particularly cogent for the theories I am applying, with Bourdieu in particular being criticised for being overly deterministic in his analysis of the connection between *field* and *habitus* (see for example Jenkins 1992). Bourdieu stresses inequality and competition in culture.

> In any given social formation, legitimate culture, i.e. the culture endowed with the dominant legitimacy, is nothing other than the dominant cultural arbitrary insofar as it is misrecognised in its objective truth as a cultural arbitrary and as the dominant cultural arbitrary.
>
> (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 23)

Sometimes this cultural legitimacy through domination is apparent: most of western Europe drinks litres, drives kilometres on the right and has a legal system based on Roman law because Napoleonic armies occupied those countries and imposed 'rational' norms. Napoleon never reached Britain so people drink pints and drive miles on the left. More normally the domination is unseen and the violence, in Bourdieu's term, is 'symbolic' so the imposition of cultural norms may be internalised and a feature of *doxa*. Nevertheless, domination and imposition remain important in understanding culture. The marginal position of trainees relative to colleagues and the college institution was significant in this research and so an adequate definition of culture had to transcend essentialism to include the particular relationships, power and social constraints within a situation. Williams (1983: 90) indicates three broad meanings for culture in modern use and it is the second of these that is relevant here:

> the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general.

So, initially for this research there was a strong temptation to comprehend culture as *'that which is shared'*; a place where converging interests meet and Jarvis's (2007: 24) description of culture is an example of this all-encompassing sweep:

> all the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions that we, as human beings, have added to our biological base. It is a social phenomenon; it is what we as a society, or a people, share and which enables us to live as a society.

This definition gets to the complexity and multifaceted nature of culture, though the explicit separation from biology is moot or at least vague if the relationship of mind and body is considered in the light of Vygotsky or Bourdieu. However, such a definition tends to highlight consensus when domination, tension and conflict may be inherent and even formative of the values in a culture, so ultimately it was not useful for the purposes of this thesis. Richardson's (2001: 3) formulation that "culture is the material form assumed by humanity's social activity" that has evolved over a period of time was stronger. That "material form" can be perceived in language, artefacts or habitual practice, which are both an expression of culture and a means by which people reproduce culture; the process of human relationships produces the material form of the culture, which in turn shapes the process of human relationships. James and Biesta (2007: 23), influenced by Bourdieu put this succinctly:

> Cultures … are both structured and structuring, and individuals' actions are neither totally determined by the confines of a … culture, nor are they totally free.

This conceptualisation describes a dialectical process that accounts for how both cultures and individuals can form and evolve through interaction, which was critical to this thesis. In seeking to answer my first question on how distinct the cultures that trainees experience in colleges were, I was looking at the relationship between cultures to examine if one part of the college workforce had a culture different from another. To help discern these differences I was looking for Richardson's "material form" such as a common linguistic register or shared practice, which under analysis had to be distinct to that found elsewhere. The notion from CHAT that mental life exists in its expression was helpful in interpreting meaning from trainees' and

teachers' practice. Moreover, the distinction made by CHAT between the purpose of a specific activity and the goal of an activity system called for methods that enabled a view of the specific as well as the general. To answer my second question (*To what extent are trainee teachers inculcated by what is around them?*) I was judging not just how distinctive cultures were, but also how these cultures then affected the trainees, which necessitated means of understanding the purpose of practice in various situations in the college. For example, by understanding what different individuals and groups considered a good teacher to be and to do helped to explain not just their practice, but its object, which then could show any distinctiveness.

A difficulty remained, however, regarding the critical mass for a culture to exist. Is there a smallest 'unit of culture' or is the term community more useful? These questions resonate with the discussion in Hodkinson *et al* (2007: 418) who use the metaphor of maps and scales to analyse what is visible or distinguishable within studies of culture. A metaphor of perspective may be helpful: for a passenger in an aircraft 30,000 feet up in the sky major conurbations can appear well-defined and homogenous with only major routes clearly visible. On the approach to landing the shapes and colours of buildings reveal themselves, as do residential streets, cars and then people. Neither of these views is illusory and both are useful depending on what is being investigated; but perspective (and not just in the sense of ideological positionality) is crucial as to what can be discerned. I was considering the FE sector (from 30,000 feet, as it were), as well as focusing more closely on the college and more closely still on small groups and individual teachers. What I found was partly determined by how narrowly I looked at each of these levels of the research subject, and that also influenced the range and choice of data collection methods. In other words, when I looked closely at the precise context of trainees' placements, for example, that aspect seemed of overwhelming importance in the creation and transmission of ideas. However, when I took in the whole college and wider society the precise context seemed relatively less important. Had my methodology just focussed on the specific, I would have missed the significance of the general.

The workplace where the majority of data comes from has over six hundred teachers on several campuses. Within these are departments that straddle various sites, and within departments there are smaller groups of staff who work together. A case in point is the fashion section of the art and design department. This department has around sixty staff in various buildings; and the fashion section has around ten staff all based in one small suite of rooms. Although this group is small, I will argue that there are discernible features in the material form of their culture. The consistency of these features distinguishes the culture of the group even from sections elsewhere in the same department with rooms on the same corridor. More important than the size of the group are the coherence, extent and stability of its common history, partly because these factors influence whether or not the culture will maintain even when individuals leave. This in itself is a marker of the existence of a culture (Schein 2004: 11) and is more explanatory than a necessary size or quorum. But there is a caveat: a researcher's coherent and systematic description does not constitute a culture (Geertz 1993: 17), which is why theory must stay close to the evidence it derives from and explains. Therefore, the scope of research methods (how much they can 'see' and in what detail) must be explicit.

I adapted Schein (2004: 17) to create a definition of a culture which applied at the levels I was researching: *a dominant pattern of shared basic assumptions held by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has had stability and so can withstand tension and conflict. It, therefore, arbitrarily exists as the correct way for new members to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems and is apparent in the language, behaviour and artefacts used by members.*

This complex formulation may overstress the deterministic aspect of culture because newcomers can bring about change, as Lave and Wenger argue. However, I am considering those who enter a culture for a short time on placement and for this group attempts to bring about change would be difficult and risky (Colley *et al* 2003b: 490). Moreover, this definition stresses the crucial moral aspect of culture; that within a culture there is a right and a wrong way to behave. When considering my second

and third questions, (*How does their participation in the specific culture form their approach to students and to teaching? How do they move from being trainees to becoming teachers?*) the collective notion of a right and wrong way to teach, or even what characterises the good and the bad student are significant. Such analysis was also to expose connections between culture and pedagogy.

What is learning?

The term 'inculcate', meaning to impress or fix something in someone's mind through frequent repetition, was used in my second question in order to avoid an unexamined use of *learn*, because the nature of learning was at the centre of my thesis. Biesta's (2009) insightful criticism of the over-emphasis on learning rather than on education in current pedagogical discourse is briefly discussed in the final chapter, but here that emphasis on learning is justified since it is the process with which I am mainly concerned. Winch (1998: 4) described any discussion of learning as being fundamentally epistemological since it centres on *How do we know any learning has taken place?* Moreover, he warns (p183) that "grand theories of learning…are underpinned…invariably…by faulty epistemological premises", so once again I proceed with trepidation. A definition or description of learning is ignored within government policy (see Coffield 2008) and is often evaded in research on WBL (Boud & Solomon 2003: 331) leading to hazy epistemology. Having looked at vocational education and training in FE Colley *et al* (2003b: 493) urge us:

> to think about learning more broadly than official accounts suggest. We need to consider its social, cultural and emotional aspects, its unwritten and hidden curricula, and go beyond explanations related to prescribed curricula, and the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge.

That is what I have sought to do. The terms *learning* and *learner* pepper articles and official papers as if their meaning were undisputed and unproblematic. Even the standard textbooks used by the trainee teachers on their course make little effort to question what learning or the learner entails (see for example Reece & Walker 2004) and yet what these terms entail reveals the values, interests and ontology of the social setting in which they are used. With an echo of Bourdieu's symbolic violence, Boud and Solomon (2003: 331) argue that:

every time these words are used in workplaces, they have meanings beyond what researchers may expect. They inevitably provide indicators of power relations at work and are part of its social construction.

This applies also to trainees on placement. It is the accepted procedure for all pre-service ITT courses in FE that trainee teachers are sent on placement in order to learn through participation and yet how and what they learn there has been little explained. Of the two terms *learner* is the more straightforward to explain as it describes the person who in given circumstances is expected to learn, by whatever means. Despite notions of the teacher and students developing together, there is little doubt which one is assumed to be doing most of the developing in the classroom; and on placement the trainee is the learner who is expected to emerge changed. An examination of learning, however, is much more problematic. The notion of *pedagogy* is a useful grounding from which to explain consciously planned and so formal learning, even if only to contrast or compare that with the unconscious and unplanned learning that takes place during ITT placements. Bernstein's (1999a: 259 cited in Daniels 2001: 6) definition is useful in this regard.

> Pedagogy is a sustained process whereby somebody acquires new forms or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria, from somebody or something deemed to be an appropriate provider or evaluator. Appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by some other body(s) or both.

Pedagogy carries an explicit notion of what are and what are not appropriate forms, which exposes how learning, all learning, carries value judgements which derive from its setting. Therein exists the connection between culture and learning (or Bourdieu's pedagogic action), but in this respect as in others the separation between formal and other learning is occasionally indistinct and they can and do coexist as my own data later demonstrates. However, much of the literature of WBL has tended to ignore this often mutually dependant relationship considering workplace learning as something entirely separate and unrelated, a lack also noted by Hodkinson (2005a: 521):

> Much of the literature [relating to WBL] either ignores off-the-job learning altogether or, where college based learning is considered, regards it as inferior and unsatisfactory. Also, the literature is based upon a central, if sometimes implicit assumption that educational learning and workplace learning are fundamentally different phenomena.

Conceptually, and from my own empirical evidence this is a false dichotomy, especially as with my sample (and that of Hodkinson) both university classes and college placement were part of one course. Similarly, as described in the previous chapter, Colley *et al* (2003a) argue that because 'formal' and 'informal' are not discrete categories of learning there is a need for precision when these terms are used to describe particular situations (p68). This echoes Billet (2002: 57 cited in Hodkinson 2005a: 524):

> Workplaces and educational institutions merely represent different instances of social practices in which learning occurs through participation. Learning in both kinds of social practices can be understood through a consideration of their respective participatory practices. Therefore to distinguish between the two… [so that] one is formalised and the other informal …is not helpful.

So, both types of learning exist within a spectrum of formality and informality since learning is a form of normal social practice wherever it occurs. Nevertheless, as a heuristic my focus was on more unplanned, less pedagogic learning because trainees on placement are expected to 'absorb' from what is around them as if through osmosis.

Hager (2004b: 243-244) described the three assumptions behind what he termed the "standard paradigm of learning": firstly "the basic image of … the individual human mind steadily being stocked with ideas"; secondly that "the most valuable form of learning is focused on thinking… rather than action in the world"; and thirdly if "we have really learnt well, we will be able to bring the learning to mind" and identify it. This understanding of learning emphasises the individual over the social, and the mind rather than the body. It also suggests that learning is 'knowable' by the learner and so can be recalled, described and measured. This "standard paradigm" is what underpins educational policy and specifically the assessment within GCE A levels and even competency-based qualifications which all depend on the learner's

capacity to express or exhibit what she has individually achieved or gained. Moreover, it underpinned the assessment criteria that the trainee teachers had to comply with. By contrast in what Hager (p246) terms the "emerging paradigm of learning", "the main outcome of learning is the creation of a new set of relations in an environment" by changing both learners and their environment. Hence, individuals, teams and organisations all hold knowledge, and learning is characterised by and evident from the ability to make judgements (pp248-249). Learning is about more than accumulation of skills or knowledge; it is about changing relationships within a situation and so managing or shaping that situation more effectively. Furthermore, this paradigm recognises that knowledge and ability are not just cerebral but can be held bodily. To watch a bricklayer scoop mortar up and flick it onto one side of a brick before turning the brick in the air and applying the remaining mortar on the other side, all in one smooth, effortless movement is to watch a form of knowledge and ability contained in the body as much as the mind. Hager's "emerging paradigm" is certainly apparent in the literature of WBL, though it has yet to greatly influence policymakers as argued in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it is at the centre of my thesis. Hager's paradigms chime with Sfard's (1998) metaphors which are explored below, but he did not consider them to be polar opposites because they co-exist and overlap. The standard paradigm is more limited and refers to formal or classroom learning, while the emerging paradigm better conceptualises learning outside of formal education and especially learning at work. The latter also recognises that, as Polanyi (1983: 4; original emphasis) wrote, *"we can know more than we can tell."* Polanyi continues

> This fact seems obvious enough; but it is not easy to say exactly what it means. Take an example. We know a person's face, and can recognise it among a thousand, indeed a million. Yet we usually cannot tell how we recognise a face we know. So most of this knowledge cannot be put into words.

Even describing how to tie one's shoelaces is difficult so more complex knowledge such as that deriving from teaching placements will be deeply problematic, which is significant when considering how trainee teachers are assessed. Moreover Polanyi's point had methodological implications for this research because it exposed the

limitations of some interviews. Asking people what they have learnt through participation may reveal little because the vocabulary associated with learning derives from and so favours description of the standard paradigm. Polanyi's aphorism will be reiterated often in this research to recall the difficulty of expressing what is known.

Illeris (2007: 3) adopts a very wide definition of learning which rises above divisions of formality and informality:

> any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing.

The stress on permanent alteration may be misleading as one can forget what one had previously known, but the idea of lasting rather than momentary change was useful. Moreover, this definition does not fall into the trap of assuming all learning to be socially or morally positive, although such an all-encompassing definition holds problems. Edwards (2006: 126-127) explains:

> It is one of the paradoxes with which educators work that expanded understandings of learning—the   range of practices we can name as learning seems ever-expanding—might actually produce a reductionism, where all social practices are taken to be forms of learning.

If everything is described as learning, then learning loses any distinctiveness or useful meaning. Learning is a discernable element of social existence, which is different to saying learning is the same as social existence, which brings me back to learning being defined by noticeable, lasting capacity change (for example in making judgements or efficiently applying mortar to a brick). Yet, while this may explain the effect of learning, arguably it does not explain how that change happens. To do that, the researcher needs to take in the collective as well as the individual and analyse the active interaction between the two.

For Jarvis (2007: xi) learning is:

> The combination of processes whereby the whole person — body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) — experiences a social situation, the perceived

content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person's individual biography resulting in a changed (or more experienced) person.

This is an expansion of Marx's (Marx & Engels 1968: 96) social constructivist understanding of the interaction of individual and environment mentioned in the first chapter; humans make their own history, but not in circumstances they have chosen for themselves. While Marx's insight may lack the explicit precision of Jarvis's definition, it is a better point from which to consider the notion of enculturation. I have used this word as shorthand for both a means of learning through engagement with the social world; and for how culture and individual reflect and form each other. Enculturation takes place, as it were, over the borderline of the two parts of Marx's notion. At the risk of an over-expansive definition, I am considering enculturation as a form of social learning. Salomon (1993: 3 cited in Daniels 2001: 70) gives a broad rationale for this perspective:

> a clearer understanding of human cognition would be achieved if studies were based on the concept that cognition is distributed among individuals, that knowledge is socially constructed through collaborative efforts to achieve shared objectives in cultural surroundings and that information is processed between individuals and tools and artefacts provided by the culture.

This view of knowledge implies that it "can never be *completely* present in the head of any one of the individuals involved in its use" (Shotter 1993a: 3; my emphasis) and is common to the three theorisations set out in chapter one. Knowledge is shared because it is constantly, dynamically and socially constructed using and adapting existing "tools and artefacts provided by the culture" as well as creating new ones. This social construction takes place through enculturation whereby the perspective or behaviour of the group becomes the perspective or behaviour of the individual. The individual becomes "a society in miniature" (Shibutani 1971: 131) in terms that reflect Vygotsky's influence. Another significant element of this is what is valued, even what is considered to be knowledge, is socially constructed. However, the social development of knowledge has a developmental effect on the individual, even if a full understanding of knowledge or learning cannot be individualised.

> In this scheme of things, then, the ways of 'being ordinary' available to us in our society, are just as much socio-historical constructions as our ways of being a scientist, or a lover. In other words, not only do we constitute (make) ourselves and reconstitute (remake) our own social worlds, but we are also made and remade by them in the process.
>
> (Shotter 1993a: 13)

This conceptualisation of knowledge as social and its relationship with the individual supports an understanding of 'becoming ordinary' (in this case as teachers in FE), which was the focus of this research. In other words, the way in which what is learnt and acted upon becomes unnoticed permits membership within a culture, (or a community of practice), which chimes with learning as an alteration in identity or 'becoming', often associated with enculturation. "Identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet" according to Hoffman (1998: 324 cited in Sfard & Prusak 2005: 14) and CoP theory has been seminal in this regard. As described previously this conceptualisation places participation in social communities at the centre of learning and these communities both define and are defined by the relations of people within the community. Learning implies "becoming a different person" according to what these relations between people enables and so learning "involves the construction of identities" (Lave & Wenger 1991: 53). According to Sfard (1998) most recent writing on learning favours a 'learning as participation' metaphor, which is certainly true within the field of WBL. This means, to quote Sfard (1998: 6):

> learning a subject is now conceived as a process of becoming a member of a certain community. This entails, above all, the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms.

The symbiosis of learning with a sense of self informed my methodology and so what I sought in the data, though the relationship between identity, social environment and learning is complex. Sfard and Prusak (2005: 14) define identity "as a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person. These stories, even if individually told, are products of a collective storytelling." To be clear, in the article cited Sfard and Prusak argue that stories *constitute* identities, not that stories merely represent identities, but this transformation of metaphor for identity into characterisation is a step too far. Once again, *"we can know more than we can tell"* (Polanyi 1983: 4;

original emphasis), so not everyone's story can be told, though everyone has an identity. More persuasive is Daniels and Warmington's (2007: 389) call for the "general working hypothesis of learning" to be expanded:

> to include notions of experiencing and identity formation within an account that includes a systematic and coherent analysis of the wider structuring of society as an inseparable part of the analysis.

Identity is only meaningful within a social space through relating to others (literally *identifying* with them or not). The dialogic explanation from Holland *et al* (1998:4) is helpful: "identities are improvised—in the flow of activity within specific social situations—from the cultural resources at hand." This is a cultural rather than an essentialist view which understands identity as a response to circumstances and overlaps significantly with *habitus* as does their (p18) description of identity as one's "history in person" which:

> is the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present.

This recognises the constraining and enabling effects of past experience as well as current agency, or the capacity to act upon the world in a purposeful if restricted way according to circumstances. Therefore, identity is not fixed and relates to agency, which exists in how people improvise with what they have in the present. These associated conceptualisations show how learning, identity and practice connect.

Identity formation as an aspect of learning within a social context was echoed by Colley *et al* (2003b) who looked at vocational courses in FE colleges and suggested that "class stratum, family background and gender" (p483) combine to predispose young women for caring occupations and young men for engineering. They described learning as "becoming" and refer to a *vocational habitus,* which is "choosable" and not "unitary or essentialising" (p488). This influenced my own approach because as my fourth question implies, a better understanding maybe gained of how people become teachers in FE by considering the process of identify transformation within a social context that includes but is not limited to the workplace

or ITT course. In other words, were the trainees' ideas about teaching mainly formed before they even entered the ITT course, never mind the placement and what had they learnt about being a teacher prior to placement? This may have entailed an assumption about FE teaching being a certain type of occupation for a certain type of person (Colley *et al* p488 write about "a sense of what makes 'the right person for the job'") and in my data I examine the pervasive influence of a shared cultural idea of what teaching is.

Sfard's (1998) article on the ubiquity of the two metaphors for learning, as acquisition and as participation, described how these metaphors themselves can shape and constitute discussion of learning, so identity formation and participation often correlate in the literature. Although this broadly defines the type of learning that I was most interested in as regards the trainees, learning to be a teacher involves some cognitive shifts apart from feelings of identity or community. Trainees learn to do things they could not previously do. So, to paraphrase Sfard, I needed more than one metaphor, to combine a notion of identity formation alongside or as part of the acquisition of specific knowledge. Anne Edwards (2005a: 6) made the following connection between acquisition and participation approaches to learning:

> Acquisition approaches to learning are underpinned by a belief that careful encoding, that is the storing of knowledge in efficient ways, will produce the appropriate application of knowledge to problems we encounter. Strict participation approaches, with their emphases on induction into established bodies of knowledge also privilege existing knowledge.

This is a potential lack in both conceptions (participation and acquisition) as neither explains well how people manage culturally new problems and so how people learn to do what they have not done before. Furthermore, Edwards (2005b: 57) identified how learning as participation models and communities of practice in particular emphasised aspects of learning related to socialisation into beliefs, values and identity and so excluded changes in cognition. Echoing Sfard, Edwards argued that the participation model of learning does not fully do justice to the intricacy of this relationship between mind and world, because it does not indicate cognitive change. She (p57) criticised CoP conceptualisation because it "does not tell us what is learnt,

only what is done", a revealing criticism that I will return to later. Certainly the identity and values of trainees on placements in college develop, but there is also cognitive change; to reiterate, they learn new things. The acquisition of these new things, however, may also be a factor in identity change. A detailed enquiry of this was beyond the scope of this research and since learning as enculturation was my focus, the identity and attitudes of a group were paramount. Neverthless, a robust conceptualisation of learning, including enculturation had to involve some sort of cognitive change (in Edwards's terms) and so the dynamicism of her (2005b: 50) "deeply cognitive definition" of learning influenced my thinking. For Edwards, learning:

> reflects a concern with within-person changes, which modify the way in which we interpret and may act on our worlds. Learning is therefore a change in state, which alters how we act on the world and in turn change it by our actions.

She went on to say that:

> This definition does not prioritise information storage as learning, rather it considers how the mind is shaped by and then shapes the world.

This returns to the dialectical notion of quantitative change leading eventually to a qualitative change so that what trainees learn, even mundane technical skills such as using an interactive whiteboard, are a part of what eventually modifies how they see the world and themselves within it. This conceptualisation retains the necessary social aspect of learning but recognises individuals' cognitive alteration as part of identity formation because identity is more than a sense of belonging. These considerations led me to a conceptualisation of learning as situated, which is common to the three theories set out in the last chapter. Though there remains the problem of understanding de-contextualised knowledge, or knowledge that is learnt in one situation but which is entirely transferable like my using this keyboard, albeit rather amateurishly. I will return to this, because some learning is more situated than others.

Engeström's "expansive learning" mentioned in the previous chapter differentiates itself from other theories of learning.

> Theories of learning typically speak of the outcomes of learning in terms of knowledge, skills and changed patterns of behaviour. In expansive learning, the outcomes are expanded objects and new collective work practices, including practices of thinking and discourse.
>
> (Engeström & Kerosuo 2007: 339)

I did not draw on this conceptualisation because I centred on the formative relationship between individual and social, rather than organisational change. Moreover, as I have argued before a trainee on a relatively short-term placement is unlikely to influence "new collective work practices". More useful in understanding the learning of trainees was Edwards's summary (2005b: 61), which shows her Vygotskian influences:

> In brief, learning can be seen as a process that starts with immersion in a language community where we might hear and use the terms that carry key concepts (public meaning in the intermental plane), but not understand them. We then move onto a process of increasingly making sense and refining those concepts (the intramental plane). Finally, we are able to use the concepts and engage in and contribute to the processes of public meaning making.

Therefore, there is a need to grasp the arbitrary cultural contingencies inherent in any use of the term 'learning' or 'enculturation' as well as its connection to agency. But this must include a sense of palpable change, comprehension or capability on the part of the learners and so how the world is understood and is acted upon which may lead to a change in their identity. Learning, whether through enculturation or in an institution, is a process of constant formation and re-formation between communicating individuals according to the circumstances in which they find themselves, and who they are as individuals. The definition of learning that Coffield (2008: 7) developed is the one I have found most useful, partly because it is explicit about the morality involved in deciding what intended learning involves.

> Learning only refers to significant changes in capability, understanding, knowledge, practices, attitudes or values by individuals, groups, organisations or society. Two qualifications. It excludes the acquisition of factual information

when it does not contribute to such changes; it also excludes immoral learning as when prisoners learn from other inmates in custody how to extend their repertoire of criminal activities.

This places learning firmly in the compromising and tricky context of how people live rather than relying on some rarefied ideal. This resonates with the need to keep the social and the individual within view, which has directed my methodology. While I appreciate Coffield's care in identifying the importance of purposeful, valuable learning, I think the term 'learning' can still be used to describe what people pick up or discover or adopt that, at least subjectively, may not be so purposeful or valuable. In this regard I will later consider the notion of learning to cope with alienation.

Methodology

The assumptions detailed above that cultures are structured and structuring and that learning is a dialogic, situated process determined the methods adopted, which attempted to reveal the characteristics of the relationship between the individual and their context. Working within a CoP paradigm Viskovic and Robson (2001: 234) stated that:

> If learning is viewed as 'situated', as something that cannot be separated from the rest of our activities, then the importance of teachers' informal learning becomes clear. The focus shifts to their relationships and interactions with others, to their relationships and interactions with others, to their participation in communities of practice.

This is useful, but only if not just what the trainees do alongside others (participation) is considered but also what they learn from it (transformation), both of which are implied in enculturation. What I was considering was a relationship between the trainee and the people they were placed with, and what they learnt from that relationship. The central question from a methodological perspective was how to consider these complex, related aspects of learning. If learning is more than accumulation, as I argue, the difficulty arises of how the researcher can perceive it. Hodkinson's (2005a) conceptualisations helped, as follows. Firstly, in my research it was the learner that transferred from home to university class and then to college,

not the learning. College placement may change the learner, but not just by adding more baggage to her brain. This conceptualisation helps in the comprehension of learning that is less situated, such as my using this keyboard. Secondly, how she changed related to her emotions and identity as well as to how she interacted with the culture on placement. She learnt how to participate, well or not. This simple formulation, avoiding notions of acquisition, explains how the same student could do less well in one setting on placement than another, even if the knowledge they 'carried' was identical in each.

As already emphasised, there is the further methodological tension that arises from all learning being normally equated with formal education or training, so finding data related to other types of 'informal' learning is difficult. The cultural vocabulary of learning is school-oriented and that shapes how people think about and express learning. Boud and Solomon (2003: 328) have written that "understanding the significance of work in learning terms can be a slippery task", and the same could be said about understanding the significance of learning in work terms. Eraut (2004: 249) identified the problems of researching WBL as follows.

- "[I]nformal learning is largely invisible" and research respondents may not be aware of what they have learnt and so cannot discuss it.
- Knowledge gained in the workplace "is either tacit or regarded as part of a person's general capability", not something that has been learned, because learning is something that takes place in institutions.
- "[D]iscourse about learning is dominated by codified, propositional knowledge, so respondents often find it difficult to describe more complex areas of their work and the nature of their expertise." It thus relates to particular tasks or activities that the worker has had to learn that can be readily recognised and explained.

These obstacles were heightened by the nature of FE colleges in which my own research was carried out.

> The structure of further education is so immediate and enveloping that, far from seeing any absurdities or contradictions, most staff and students who work within it undertake without any question what is expected of them.
>
> (Reeves 1995: 93)

This is overstated by Reeves, as shall be seen from the data, but nonetheless asking respondents about their everyday experience risked bland answers since what they were being asked about may be so obvious as to have been unnoticed. Similarly, Rainbird *et al* (2004: 2-3) expressed reservations about individual accounts of WBL:

> In the workplace, the nature and focus of strategic decisions, power relations and the employment relationship are central to understanding the opportunities and constraints on learning.

Therefore, they continued:

> Whilst the accounts of individuals can shed light on how people learn at work and can help make sense of diverse situations, they can also mask the ways in which opportunities are structured and unevenly distributed across organisations and groups.

This is also a problem tackled by Wallace (2002), discussed below. As my data indicated, two trainees in apparently very similar situations could perceive and describe very different access to the workplace culture. Neither was aware of the other. The situation of the individual is significant in what and how they perceive, as is what they carry with them biographically to that situation and this again reinforces the distinction between objective reality and subjective experience. Consequently the detail of data relating to present and past life was important. Also important was awareness of the particularity of their perspective, which may not have enabled them to have a view of power relations nor their own propensities.

Once again Eraut (2004: 248) identified how other writers managed such difficulties and sought to gain data about WBL by focusing on:

- Key lifetime events (McCall *et al.,* 1988)
- Learning projects (Tough, 1971; Gear *et al*., 1994);
- Recent changes in respondents' life or practice (Fox *et al.,* 1989)
- Situations where more knowledge or skill was needed (Slotnick, 1999)

Eraut conceded that these have produced interesting results, but by definition the events they investigated were exceptional. My interest, like his, was in the concealed mundane, Bourdieu's *doxa*, and part of this concealed mundane was an affinity with the discourse of a particular group of people with whom the trainees identified. Stolzenberg (1978: 224 in Shotter 1993: 27; original emphasis) recognised "methodological errors" leading from "those failures to take into account considerations of standpoint that have the effect of *maintaining* the system". This involves consideration of what makes the mundane, mundane. Asking my respondents to step outside their everyday experience in order to describe it was to ask too much, especially if a critique was sought. Yet, discussing disruptions to the everyday was methodologically useful as a means of exposing the everyday through contrast.

Eraut (2004) attempted to overcome the problems he identified in researching WBL through elaborate and lengthy methods of data collection. His interviewees, who were established in the workplace unlike those I worked with, were first asked to describe their job in detail, including everyday events, and to recall how things were in previous weeks and months, and how some weeks may be different. They were also asked what types of knowledge, skill or competence are involved in their practice. These interviews were followed by short periods of observation, though even these were not taken as "normal", but used to instigate "conversations" with the respondents, that were specific and concrete, rather than generic and evaluative. This process encourages participants to delve below what they take for granted because "the interviewer [is] a stranger to the work setting, to whom even simple acts need and circumstances may need to be explained" (Eraut: 2004: 249). This description of the role of the researcher as a kind of naive outsider with a freshness born of lack of exposure to what is being researched has echoes of Wallace's (2002) article on what trainee teachers learn while on placement in FE colleges, though her outsiders were the trainee teachers themselves. She evoked Swift's Gulliver and Rousseau's Candide as fictional antecedents to this approach (p80). Wallace's data was collected from diaries kept by the trainees, a technique I also employed as

discussed below. She concedes that her work can only be "illuminative" and is "necessarily impressionistic and interpretative" (p81), but for her (p 92):

> The… difficult, epistemological question is about the validity of using personal narratives and statements of value as a main source of data. I am taking the stance here that subjective truths can be taken as knowledge, but I am also stressing the consistency between these accounts.

Wallace seems to be making the contradictory suggestion here that while every individual's knowledge is valid, their knowledge becomes more valid if more than one person states it. Moreover, in attempting to generalise from the responses she received from her diary-keepers, Wallace attempted to clean up the messiness that I argue below is inherent in WBL, especially in placements in FE colleges: and to clean that messiness up is to misrepresent reality. However, perhaps the most important difference between Wallace's approach, which was essentially phenomenological, and that of Eraut was a lack of theorisation. Arguably, Eraut's framework constitutes his findings or at least part of them, but it does allow his work to be more generally applied. Wallace provides vivid description but little analysis of causation, which is where my concern lies.

Messiness

The "messy, ill-defined problems" just alluded to, which Doornbos *et al* (2004: 252) described as inherent in WBL became a recurring feature of this research, and awareness of this messiness shook my initial intention to follow Wallace (2002) and categorise, generalise and so simplify what took place on placement. This initial intention led me to conventional qualitative research approaches but later Bourdieu's *field/habitus* relationship shaped my conceptualisation of enculturation as contingent, highly complex and susceptible to existing power relations, which then influenced my choice of methods. Like Law (2003: 3) I became "interested in the process of knowing mess" and would agree that "dominant approaches to method work with some success to repress the very possibility of mess." In his own research Law (2003: 10-11) attempted to bring "together an out-there that is multiple, vague, shifting and non-coherent" and "to make manifest a real that is not definite or

singular." This aligns with my postpositivist viewpoint (not shared by Law), which in essence argues that to tidy up mess in the name of research is to misrepresent it. That is to say, reality is messy, not just that people have a messy perception of reality. Although, I recognise Hammersley's (2008: 50) argument that methods cannot fully capture complexity and that there is a need to be selective, as I have been, this does not deny the existence of complexity.

"Thick description" and data collection

Since I was considering the interplay of culture and the individual, ethnographic techniques associated with the qualitative research paradigm were appropriate and valid (Perakyla 2004), though I do draw on some quantitative data from questionnaires and timesheets. Pring (2000) points to the pitfalls of ethnographic research, but makes a distinction between phenomenology based upon the subjective understanding of the agent as revealed by the researcher and ethnography which "takes seriously the perspectives and the interactions of the social groups being studied… [but] [t]he social worlds being studied are as real and objective as the real world" (p104). This distinction is useful, though I was aware, as mentioned in the previous chapter, of my own subjectivities. Nonetheless, that I was an FE lecturer and now work with FE trainee teachers as a university lecturer permitted access to college cultures.

For Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3):

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible…. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self.

Though to be clear again, in this work these practices represent reality, they do not constitute it. Geertz (1993: 6) borrowed the term "thick description" from Gilbert Ryle and characterised it as what ethnographers seek through explaining the meaning of actions, rather than simply describing them, though Geertz was silent on how to pursue thick description (Hammersley 2008: 68). Nevertheless, I sought methods that would allow the respondents to apply their own meanings to the processes they

were experiencing; to create their own thick description. Silverman (2005) is sceptical of research using multiple methods, however in order to reveal cultures and their effect on individuals I have used a variety of techniques that I detail below but which include open-ended interviews; focus groups, and participant diaries. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 199 cited in Silverman 2005: 122) warn that:

> one should not adopt a naively 'optimistic' view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture.

This multi-directional approach was not, however, a form of triangulation to validate similar findings by checking against different references. Rather, because culture can be subtle and experienced differently by different people, especially at the micro-level of a college department or section, my particular task of research required various methods to reveal culture and its effects at a variety of levels. These methods were not used to produce a larger more detailed picture of a single view in the manner of the baroque, but to produce a picture that allowed a variety of perspectives, in the manner of cubism. Having interviewed existing teachers and trainees, the need for richer data led me to the approach described by the French word *bricolage,* which loosely translates as DIY or bodging and proposes an ability to creatively use or improvise what is at hand. For Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 4) *bricolage* within research involves "an aesthetics of representation that goes beyond the pragmatic or the practical." In this thesis it involved the use of a range of opportune techniques that permitted getting beneath the surface of trainees' experience on placement. This understanding of *bricolage* is much closer to the practical and pragmatic definition of the word itself, which has little association with aesthetics. For Kincheloe and Berry (2004: 2) "*bricolage* exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world. Indeed it is grounded on an epistemology of complexity." They continue that therefore, "*bricoleurs* struggle to specify the ways perspectives are shaped by social, cultural, political, ideological, discursive, and disciplinary forces." This search for a broad range of situational influences and the implicit recognition of power relations echoes Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus,* and in particular his advice on how to study a *field* (see previous chapter).

Significantly, this perspective on research also locates the researcher within "the web of reality and the social positions of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge" (Kincheloe & Berry 2004: 2).

Another motivation for using this range of techniques was to alter the balance between researcher and participant and so for the participants rather than me to prioritise and categorise data. This derived from my interpretation of Bourdieu's requirement for robust reflexivity about the position of the researcher. Even research into situated learning is itself situated and this reflexive and self-consciously complex approach overtly identifies the decisions made by researchers and the direct effect these have upon the data gathered and the interpretations made from them. What Kincheloe and Berry (2004) proposed was a hermeneutic study into the meaning of everyday life that did not attempt to tidy that everyday life up, which for this research later allowed a tentative shift away from spoken language to visual methods involving photographs and Lego (described more fully below).

As well as the close-up detail permitted by interviews and focus groups with a few people I was able to gain data from the whole cohort of trainees in the academic years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 from questionnaires. These both allowed a broad insight into aspirations of teaching in FE and the placement in particular, as well as how trainees were prepared by tutors. Similarly, I had access to all the documentation from the university that the trainees were given in relation to their placement which I analysed to expose hidden assumptions and expectations about teaching in FE and about the placement experience. I also observed one group of trainees in class as the placement procedures were introduced at the beginning of each these two academic years. Later I was to consciously observe and keep detailed field notes (Silverman 2005: 174) on what I observed from other participants before during and after interviews or group sessions. While observing the introduction of the placement procedures I was passive, though I was introduced to the group. At other times I was observing as a researcher while collecting data through interviews, discussion or watching the trainees interact with students and staff. In all these cases I was non-participant in so far as I made no attempt to be

part of the world I was observing, beyond demonstrating some knowledge of that world. I was not a naive outsider *à la* Candide. However, all of these observations were unstructured and I recorded what I considered important. They are, as a result, idiosyncratic despite the rigour of detail, though these observations only make up a small part of my data collection.

During the *College Experience* research project my colleagues and I moved towards the use of some visual methods. One such was the use of photographs, taken both by the respondents and me, to show where they worked and to highlight what they considered important. Carson *et al* (2004: 164) wrote about the value of photographs in qualitative research "as a tool to explore the multiple meanings which people can attach to words" and the images formed a talking point for further interviews allowing respondents to explain the meanings behind what they had photographed. They were also a straightforward source for interpretation in their own right. Gauntlett and Holzwarth (2006: 83) suggested that using visual methods offers "a positive challenge to the taken-for-granted idea that you can explore the social world just by asking people things in language." Linking photographs to descriptive language through their capacity to instigate and focus discussion was most useful. Carson *et al* (2004) were influenced by Barthes who identified that in any semiological system there are three parts; "the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms" (Barthes 1993: 113). Visual images created by the respondents allow them to describe all three by applying a personal metalanguage to explain their own contingent circumstances, which allowed exploration of the meanings they ascribed to their situation. Those meanings were made more explicit if the respondent explicitly discussed the signs and what they signified to them in a photograph. Nonetheless, there were considerable ethical and practical problems associated with photography. Lave (1996: 5) persuasively wrote that it "is not the case that the world consists of newcomers who drop unaccompanied into unpeopled problem spaces." But looking at the images taken during the study one would be forgiven for thinking that trainees did indeed inhabit "unpeopled" spaces; due to issues of consent both at the University and in college the trainees could not photograph colleagues or students, so staffrooms that were

normally crammed with people appeared empty in the pictures. Nonetheless, the spaces themselves; the posters and notes on the wall; the carved detailing on the shelves in, and produced by, the woodwork department; or the sheer amount of clutter were of interest. Moreover, having something visual during interviews enabled drilling down into responses and the success of this led to using Lego within a focus group session. This session run with my colleague Liz Dixon involved five trainees who had recently completed their placements in June 2007. The method merits description in some detail because the process is unorthodox and lengthy; what it sacrificed in scope it compensated for with the depth and detail of the engagement of the few trainees who were involved. Moreover, using Lego as described below gave the participants more opportunity than other methods to decide the relative significance of data they produced since they had more control over the process of its production and interpretation.

The volunteer trainees were first of all given activities to (re-)familiarise them with Lego and also with the general notion of metaphor by asking them to make figures or representations of characters and concepts. The intention was to relax them with the medium of Lego, how it felt and how it worked, and then to introduce notions of conscious representation and figurative and abstract symbolism. This initial process took around one hour. After a break they were asked to produce representations of their ideal placement and how their placement had actually been. This was to promote clarity through contrast, but more particularly to demonstrate what their expectations had been. They were then asked to present their constructions to the group and to describe what the elements represented and how they related together, while also taking questions about their Lego creation and its representational meanings. This second part of the day took around three hours, with breaks, and all the discussion was videoed.

The artifice of Lego encouraged vivid and profound description both because the trainees had an aide mémoire and because they had something concrete to talk about which nonetheless was a form of conceptualisation. They had a physical depiction of their meaning that they then interpreted. The process also allowed

discussion that delved deeper into the various elements of the Lego structure and what they symbolised. To return to Barthes, using Lego did not remove the semiotic space between researcher and respondent nor the unequal relationship, as Maclure (2003: 4) reminds us "[t]he world is 'always already' infected by language." But it did allow a more precise conceptual analysis on the part of the participants where they could consciously and purposefully ascribe meanings to the placement and their experience of it, and to categorise these meanings by making connections between them on the actual structure itself. Two examples might illustrate this: one trainee created a Union Jack flag above her symbolic college placement to represent "government interference". Here signifier (large British flag) and signified (government interference) became clear in her spoken analysis, though the sign of the flag could have suggested patriotism, or even national standards. But this trainee wanted to talk about the malign extent of the government's role in FE, as she saw it, and the medium of Lego helped carry her point, which interested me in regard to Bourdieu's *field* of power. Another trainee graphically represented the chaos of his placement, but in discussion it became clear that he thought the chaos had been a useful preparation. What I had considered at first an uncomplicated negative was for him a paradoxical benefit, albeit in hindsight. For him, chaos took on a different, unexpected meaning and that was to be significant in how I looked at placements from then on. Similarly, these models exposed the relationships formed on placement, or the lack of them and this helped test the existence of community which at the most basic level must involve communication. The idea that mental life exists in its expression was helpful in setting this method up and in gaining data from it. More generally though, the prolonged discussion exposed the culture and influences that the trainees had experienced in all their unpredictable diversity and it also exposed their individual responses to that culture and their ability to cope or thrive in it. Furthermore, this approach avoided the production of unsupported or unexplained emotional reactions to aspects of placements. There was certainly emotion, but this was examined and even rationalised. For the researcher interested in the interplay of individual and collective this method was a source of rich data, though constraints of time and resources restricted its repeated use. Paradoxically, though, these data and

those from photographs have had to be translated into text in order to be conventionally written up.

Although I have highlighted *bricolage*, in-depth unstructured interviews formed the largest part of the data used in this thesis because they were the most direct and practical means to get to the viewpoint of the participant. Although Hammersley (2008: 89) defended and justified the use of interviews in research, he listed their potential shortcomings, which are significant:

- o They cannot show stable attitudes or perspectives that govern behaviour beyond the interview.

- o They are not a sound source of witness information.

- o Interviews may only tell us about interviews.

Increased structure or proceduralisation does not necessarily alleviate these weaknesses nor provide more validity and therefore it is a strength of this study that it does not rely on this source of data. However, as Hammersley (p91) also recognised, interviews remain a source of self-analysis for the interviewees as they talk through experiences or situations, and indirectly interviews can also expose attitudes by revealing how the interviewees view reality. Spradley (1979) guided my approach to interviews and specifically the formation of questions, though he would advise returning more frequently to participants than I was able to. An explicit aim of the *College Experience* research project was to develop new researchers and I am certainly a more skilled interviewer now than I was three years ago, above all because I have learned to use more of what Spradley (p60) calls ethnographic questions. An example would be questions that ask for description of the structure or domains of an interviewee's situation such as *How do you prioritize your preparation?* and *How do you know which students have made most progress?*

Evaluating progress made on the placement is problematic. Elements of technical ability, including classroom management are observable, as to a lesser extent is the

developing rapport with a group. Self-confidence and "belonging" are less palpable, though at times in the data collection I was reminded of Bourdieu's concept of *hexis* when trainees held themselves more confidently; they literally *looked* more confident, as I recorded in field notes. From the main source of data, interviews, I was helped by Beckett and Hager's (2000) very practical notion that the ability to make judgements marked learning. This demystifies workplace learning by placing it within an everyday framework of informed decision-making, or judgements, and methodologically provides something perceptible to look for. From there, the basis for the judgements could be analysed to reveal influences such as community of practice, activity system or *field*. Beckett and Hager (p303) looked at "what people actually do" and argued that "judgement involves deciding what to believe or do taking into account a variety of relevant factors and then acting accordingly." They (p310) describe how development in capacity to make judgements develops in three ways:

1. An ability to separate the initial realisation of the need for a judgement from its actualisation, although these are contiguous.

2. Having made that separation, an ability to perceive (Beckett and Hager use the term "read") "conative, emotive and ethical considerations".

3. "The de-centring of the practitioner's sense of identity at one of these stages, but not in both of them." Therefore a decision is made from a collective not an individual sensibility, which implies cultural or group influences.

The ability to distinguish between and within these stages marks a growing sophistication of practice and helps to understand what is meant by having a 'feel' for something or even a professional intuition about when to change activities as a teacher, for instance. This precise consideration of a significant aspect of more 'informal' workplace learning in interviews helped to overcome the obstacle of such learning being described and so misrepresented by the language of formal pedagogy. Similarly the language used by the trainees in interviews revealed how they understood their placement and their role. Shotter (1993b: 2) wrote:

> For, although our surroundings may stay materially the same at any one
> moment in time, how we make sense of them, what we select for attention or

to act upon, how we connect those various events, dispersed in time and space, together and attribute significance to them, very much depends upon our use of language.

This postpositivist or neo-realist formulation recognises that even where environment remains unaltered there is modality in the perception of the environment, often apparent in the use of language. This recognition is informed by Vygotsky and Bourdieu and it focused my analysis of what interviewees told me; above all that their message was in the medium as well as the content of their communication.

Data collection

My research questions and the conceptual considerations described above directed my data collection, as did the practical opportunities available to me. The data I personally gathered that I discuss in chapters four and five derived from the following sources:

- o Questionnaires given to each of the cohort of trainees in September 2005 and September 2006 while they were still at University before their placement. These asked about their previous experience, including that of FE, as well as their expectations of the placement. See appendix 1 and 3.
- o Observations in September 2006 and September 2007 of the sessions during which students were informed about their placements and how they should go about applying to colleges to be placed.
- o Detailed semi-structured interviews carried out between September 2005 and February 2008 with nine trainees, most at the beginning and at the end of their placement. See appendix 1 and 2.
- o Participant diaries completed by trainees on placement.
- o Photographs and timesheets relating to these trainees. See appendix 6
- o Detailed semi-structured interviews carried out between September 2005 and June 2007 with eight existing college staff, including trainees' mentors. See appendix 1, 3 and 4.
- o A focus group of existing staff in June 2005.
- o A "Lego-based" focus group (carried out with my colleague Liz Dixon as detailed above) with five trainees in June 2007. See appendix 1.

- Field notes written in relation to the above sources of data, including observing trainees with students and staff.
- Written information and other documentation produced by the university.
- Written information and other documentation produced by the government and its quangos relating to ITT in FE.

For details of respondents please see appendix 1. In addition to the above sources I have drawn on some similar data collected by my colleagues working on the *College Experience* research project and noted in the text.

Data analysis and selection

The material from interviews and focus groups was transcribed for analysis alongside the other written data: questionnaires; trainees' timesheets; trainees' diaries; and my field notes. Primarily, this research sought to better understand the processes and influences through which ideas about teaching are produced and transmitted. Although these processes and influences may be expressed by and through individuals, individuals were not the primary focus of this thesis. The analysis contained in this thesis was based on a close reading of all the data in order to identify themes relating to the conceptualisations and definitions explained above, as well as the creation and dissemination of ideas about teaching more generally. Besides these elements, others emerged from the data, such as the high turnover and the rapid promotion of new teachers. Instances and quotations from the data relating to these themes, listed as codes below, were referenced and cross-referenced to prioritise their significance (Silverman 2005: 171-187). This sifting and coding then supported the interpretation of the data in relation to the four research questions.

Data analysis codes
- Control or lack of control
- Coping
- Day-to-day experience (sub-codes of trainees and serving teachers)

- Development of trainees' teaching practice (sub-code of judgements)
- Evolving notions of the FE teacher or teaching (sub-code of notions of the good teacher and good teaching)
- Expectations of the placement
- Experience of management
- Identities (sub-code of dual identities)
- Inequality
- Influence or impact of the taught element of the ITT course
- Mentoring
- Motivations for becoming a teacher in FE
- Networks (sub-code of isolation)
- Policy (sub-codes of national and institutional policy)
- Prior educational experience
- Prior notions or expectations of teachers or teaching in FE (sub-codes of notions and expectations re FE staff and students)
- Promotion of teachers
- Staff turnover
- Teachers' experience of settings in the college (sub-codes of artefacts and language)
- Trainees' experience of settings in the college (sub-codes of artefacts and language)

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has set out the ethical, theoretical and practical basis for the data collection carried out during this research. I emphasised the problematic but significant conceptualisations of culture and learning before describing how a neo-realist understanding of objective reality and subjective experience has informed my approach by looking at FE teaching and placements from a variety of viewpoints. I have also explained that the various methods used have explicitly had differing fields of vision to take in the individual or the culture or both. Therefore, the interplay of biography, society's structures, specific situation and a person's agency can be

analysed. Along the way issues of cultural morality and power (for example, the right and wrong way to teach), assessment of learning (for example, through a developing ability to make judgements) and a pre-existing shared societal notion of what FE teaching involves have all been incidentally raised, and these become more important in my findings in chapter four and five. The next chapter considers policy in FE, which has a significant impact both on the trainees' course and on the trainees themselves.

Chapter Three: The impact of policy

> Whatever else you could say about Labour's educational policies there is certainly no shortage of them.
>
> (Ball 2008: 86)

FE has been called "the neglected middle child" (Foster 2005: 5), "the engine room for skills and justice" (LSC 2005:1) and "the biggest train set in the world" (Keep 2006). It is, according to Coffield *et al* (2008: 4) "fascinating, turbulent, insecure but desperately important". Seemingly, FE can at once be all of these, and this miscellany is partly caused by the constantly changing policy context which not only shaped these trainee teachers' ITT course, but which significantly influenced the culture within the colleges where they were placed. Therefore, in analysing policy and its effects I am describing the culture and context within which all the others sit. As significant though, is that the ideology which compels government policy maintains the dilemma and ultimately the alienation that many of these trainees experience and which influences their own perceptions of teaching. This dilemma that exacerbates alienation derives from conjoining a dominant neo-liberal economic strand and a social-democratic social justice strand in policy. FE is required to create a bridge between these two strands despite the unsustainable tension between them.

This chapter will discuss the shifting policy landscape at the level of the government's general education policy and more specific initiatives relating to teacher training in FE. The transmission of policy and its effect on colleges or classroom practice are not straightforward, but the very politicisation of FE and of teacher training in particular are important to the analysis of what forms the practice and identity of a teacher. Analysis of policy is essential to understanding the context and culture of colleges, to assessing the agency that individuals have, and so what the trainees experience. I will argue that the trajectory of policy in this area has been towards much greater control over what FE teachers do and to the development or imposition of an impoverished notion of professionalism that impacted on the trainees in this study.

What is policy?

Finlay *et al* (2007: 138) describe policy as a "loose term" which for them includes "value commitments, strategic objectives and operational instruments and structures at national, regional, local and institutional levels." Such a catholic understanding of the mechanisms of policy is necessary within FE where there is a plethora of national and local agencies, bodies, and institutions. As part of their wide-ranging and detailed research into the impact of policy in the learning and skills sector in England Coffield *et al* (2008: 15-17) created an organigram of the sector which they describe as looking "more like the chart of the internal wiring of an advanced computer than the outline of a 'streamlined', coherent sector." This Byzantine complexity has arisen partly because of the diversity of the sector and its conflicting constituencies (Coffield *et al* 2007: 735), but also because policy has been laid upon policy, and for New Labour that has meant organisation laid upon organisation. So, to discuss teacher training in FE over the past decade even just at a national level I need to look at statements from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) which was replaced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which was split in two and replaced by the Department for Innovation, Skills and Universities (DIUS)[5] and the Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS). In addition, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which currently funds FE, have both been significant; as was FENTO replaced by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the body responsible for the professional development of staff in FE. There is also the nominally independent but presently government-financed professional body for teaching staff in FE, the Institute for Learning (IfL), whose website (IfL 2008) helpfully contains 250 acronyms used in the sector. Note, though, that IfL "do not expect [this list] to be comprehensive." This degree of complexity itself becomes an important factor in the implementation of any policy initiative, as discussed below. Beyond the statements produced by these organisations, policy also includes the reports on inspections written by agencies such as Ofsted and reports on investigations written by the likes

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[5] Almost incredibly, this department has now been renamed as the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

of Helena Kennedy on the role of the FE sector (1997), Andrew Foster on FE colleges (2005) and Sandy Leitch on the economy and skills (2006).

Policy entails more than tangible documents, agencies and reports, however, and the work of Ball is enlightening here. Ball (1993: 10-11) wrote, "The question 'what is policy?' should not mislead us into unexamined assumptions about policies as 'things'; policies are also processes and outcomes." In a similar tone Grace (1991: 26) warns against a narrow policy science approach to analysis, which ignores the "wider structuring and constraining effects of the social and economic relations within which policy making is taking place." Policy and its interpretation both express and reinforce social and economic relations. Ball (2008: 5) develops this in Foucauldian terms.

> Policies are very specific and practical regimes of truth and value and the ways in which policies are spoken and spoken about, their vocabularies, are part of their creation of their condition of acceptance and enactment.

So, the discourse of policy in FE is important in what it tells us about the government's and society's attitudes and ideas about the sector. But besides these conceptual considerations there remain troubling issues relating to the dissemination of policy and in particular how policy impacts on teacher educators and trainees. The trajectory of initiatives relating to teaching in FE goes some way to addressing those issues and I make a distinction between knowledge of policy and impact of policy. This distinction, which is more fully explored below, is helpful to explain how policy can have an impact, intended or otherwise, even though evidence from this research suggests that few have actually read policy documents.

The Learning Age: FE under New Labour

The Conservative government controversially brought FE out of the control of local authorities in 1993 when colleges became individually incorporated institutions. It was argued at the time that this would give their managers greater autonomy in developing their institutions but led to what Hillier (2006: 28) described as a "frenzy

of activity" and "cut-throat competition" as colleges attempted to maximise their revenue by recruiting as many students as possible. Hillier (2006: 30) recalls accurately that this "strategy [was] known throughout the sector as 'getting bums on seats'". Over the five years following incorporation the number of students rose by 33%, which coincided with around 20,000 full-time staff leaving the sector (Betts 1999 cited in Lucas 2004b: 80). Gleeson *et al* (2005: 447) argue that incorporation "radically altered democratic accountability in favour of government, business and corporate interests". This overstates the change, but the process was significant as indicated by Gleeson and Shain (1999). They mapped a divergence between the goals of the FE institutions and those of the staff working within them by describing the evolution of managerialism. Avis (2002: 75) refers to managerialism as "a central plank in the PCET [Post-Compulsory Education and Training] settlement in which there is an attempt to construct a social block around managerial interests." Student recruitment, retention and achievement figures became the new pole star, and the direction of FE colleges was inexorably moved towards these measurable outcomes at the expense of teachers' professional autonomy in, for example, the selection or assessment of students. Some writers consider this to have been a break from the past; for instance, Randle and Brady (1997: 232):

> Traditionally, staff and managers aspired to a common set of educational values, encompassing the notion of professional expertise and some discretion in design, delivery and assessment of provision …[which is] being replaced by a new type of manager primarily concerned with resource management, particularly financial resources.

A traditional common aspiration between staff and managers is, however, also overstated: Hyland and Merill (2003: 76-77) found that the old LEA-run FE colleges were considered by some as paternalistic and hierarchical. A staffroom in a large suburban FE college where I worked prior to incorporation was a den of misogyny so, to echo Simmons (2008) these were no "golden years" of FE colleges. Nonetheless, there was a marked change in priorities leading to a breakdown in common values, which was to then affect what new teachers were expected to learn and do.

The vocabulary used in official documents from the time well demonstrate the priorities of those who wrote them (Fairclough 2001: 93); the language of academia and collegiality was displaced by the language of business. Cripp (2002: 7) considered this to be consciously manipulative: "what better tools are there to use to convince a profession than the language it uses, and which is used, about its activities, in combination with financial control?" In colleges the people who were course leaders overnight became 'programme managers' and the word 'evidence' became gradually more frequently used as a verb than as a noun. Ainley and Bailey (1997) have vividly described the experience of this change and in particular how managers were valorised over teachers, senior management teams over academic boards. The numbers of managers grew, principals became self-styled chief executives, and the salaries of teachers and managers diverged. Managers had the solutions, while teachers were often considered the problem. At the time of these changes, Elliott (1996:16) wrote:

> Lecturers felt that, for the college managers, business methods had become an end in themselves, sustaining a 'control' ethos and a managerialist culture. A common complaint was that senior college managers seemed to have lost sight of the core business of student learning and achievement – they no longer saw students as students, but as units of funding.

Ironically, the core business of FE colleges became business. Hyland vividly explains this (1996 cited in Armitage *et al* 2003: 65):

> To manage a budget and to achieve the public service of profit has become the central concern of a whole stratum who previously thought of themselves as committed mainly to providing a public service. Seducing and cajoling the public sector middle class into the embrace of the market has been a key objective of public service reforms.

Reeves (1995: 39) who was a deputy principal in an FE college ridicules the approach identified by Hyland thus: "finding and leaving areas unmanaged is an unthinkable crime for managers who act to make organisational activities and requirements more and more explicit." This increase in scrutiny and attempt to micro-control practice undermined teachers' autonomy as systems were adopted to measure productivity such as performance management procedures and Total

Quality Management. This control over operational matters will be recalled when looking at what trainee teachers are required to fulfil for their qualifications.

Tomlinson (2001: 112) stresses the "continuities and similarities" between the approaches to post-16 education of the Conservative and the New Labour government who were elected in 1997. Nevertheless, New Labour described the problems in what they inherited in their White Paper, *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning* (DfEE 1999: 21):

> There is too much duplication, confusion, and bureaucracy in the current system. Too little money actually reaches learners and employers, too much is tied up in bureaucracy. There is an absence of effective co-ordination or strategic planning. The system has insufficient focus on skill and employer needs at national, regional and local levels.

FE, it would seem, was broken and needed fixing, which has led to the intense politicisation of the sector through New Labour spending more time, money and effort on it than any previous government. As Hillier (2006: 30) explains, "Anyone who was involved in managing further education in the late 1990s will be familiar with the sudden rush of reports, Green and White Papers that characterized the change of government in 1997." In 2004 Lucas (2004a: 35) wrote, "It is probably true that in the last five years or so there has been more regulation and government policy concerned with raising the standards of teaching in further education than ever before." The same statement could be made about the five years that followed. The reasons for this activity lie at the heart of New Labour ideology. This proposes that all social formations, and education in particular, must conform to the new economic stringencies of globalisation which require a highly skilled and flexible workforce to cope with constant technological development. Without this, Britain will fall behind its competitors. This neo-liberal agenda that underpinned Blair's educational policy in England was initiated under the Thatcher government and has been referred to as 'TINA', 'there is no alternative' to the market (see Hayes 2003 and Hutton 1996), even if New Labour's ideas were given the ideological banner of 'The Third Way'. This nebulous term describes a path between social democracy and the market, and Anthony Giddens, its foremost intellectual champion, argued that it was "not a

continuation of neo-liberalism but [is] an alternative political philosophy", (Giddens 2000: 32-33 cited in Callinicos 2001: 3). Ball (2008: 88-89) also suggests differences between the ideology of the former Conservative government and New Labour. However, the fixation on national economic competitiveness and the introduction of market mechanisms into education through, for example, the Private Finance Initiative make any such distinctions in policy of the two governments seem rather fine, as Tomlinson suggests above.

Economic competitiveness through high skills and alongside that social justice through educational opportunity are the government's policy priorities in this area, as described below. Hall (2003: 6) accused New Labour of speaking "with forked tongue" by rhetorically combining economic neo-liberalism with their more social-democratic strand in this way. But from an international perspective New Labour were not alone in pursuing these policies and the notion of "human capital" was promoted by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD (2001: 18) defined this as: *The knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation personal, social and economic well-being*. Making the connection between skills, economic growth and personal well-being was hegemonic and for New Labour these links remain fundamental. The symbiosis between improving the skills of the workforce, economic growth and social justice is common sense, unassailable and so broaches no argument nor requires any evidence. Or at least that was true until Britain went into recession in 2009 when the curdling hubris of the statements that follow became apparent. David Blunkett, the first new Labour Secretary of State for Education, wrote in the forward to the government Green Paper in 1998:

> Learning is the key to prosperity - for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century. This is why the Government has put learning at the heart of its ambition.
> (DfEE 1998:1)

Seven years later in 2005 Bill Rammell, then minister of state for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning claimed (LSC 2005: 1), "Further Education is the engine room

for skills and social justice in this country", and he was amongst ministers who welcomed the Leitch Review of Skills published in 2006 which asserted, "where skills were once **a** key driver of prosperity and fairness, they are now **the** key driver" (Leitch 2006: 46; original emphases). That same year Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in the forward to a Government White Paper:

> Our economic future depends on our productivity as a nation. That requires a labour force with skills to match the best in the world. […]
> The colleges and training providers that make up the Further Education sector are central to achieving that ambition. […] But at present, Further Education is not achieving its full potential as the powerhouse of a high skills economy.
> <div align="right">(DfES 2006)</div>

When this conjoining of economic competitiveness and social justice through widening participation in education is understood, the importance of FE to the government becomes clear. The quotation above from Blair illustrates three points: the political significance of FE to the government; that for the government the primary role of FE is economic (Hall 2003: 6); and thirdly that the government still considered FE not to be working properly. Even so, this combination of educational, economic and social policy has been subject to excoriating criticism from, amongst others, Coffield (1999), Rikowski (2001) and Avis (2007a), who have found that the orthodoxy has no foundation in evidence. Reporting on a recent major research project into education, globalisation and the knowledge economy, Brown *et al* (2008: 17) found that "while the skills of the workforce remain important, they are not a source of decisive competitive advantage." Moreover, they found that the expansion of access to higher education in the UK "has failed to narrow income inequalities even amongst university graduates". Therefore, the government has been subjecting the FE sector to ever-greater scrutiny and accountability for what cannot be accomplished through education and training alone. So there is a fundamental discrepancy between the government's intention for FE and what FE can achieve, no matter how efficient the sector is. Simply put, FE teachers can only fail to achieve the government's aims. What New Labour considers symbiosis is a paradox that FE teachers have been handed, which they are powerless to alter, but for which they are blamed for not overcoming.

This paradox inevitably increases the divide between Whitehall and FE colleges, though for New Labour the problem is the sector itself. As Hall (2003: 4) puts it, New Labour doxa is that, "The public sector is, by definition, 'inefficient' and out of date, partly because it has social objectives beyond economic efficiency and value-for-money." "[P]oliticians and policy-makers are now living in a parallel universe" is the belief of senior college managers according to Coffield *et al* (2008: 24) precisely because those politicians and policy-makers fail to understand the difficulties of running large, complex organisations that seek to serve their communities and learners. The desire to serve communities who are often marginalised is less important to the policy-makers than FE's role in economic competitiveness. Moreover, the processes that FE has been subject to are recognisable elsewhere in the public sector and FE, like the Health Service, has been increasingly regulated, removing power from those who work there (Stronach *et al* 2002). In 2006, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (PMSU) published a new model for the reform of public services, which proposed four themes for public service reform:

- o top down performance management (pressure from government);

- o the introduction of greater competition and contestability in the provision of public services;

- o the introduction of greater pressure from citizens including through choice and voice; and

- o measures to strengthen the capability and capacity of civil and public servants and of central and local government to deliver improved public services.

(PMSU 2006: 5)

The model of public service reform promoted here specifically and conspicuously excludes the experiences, concerns and innovations of public service professionals (Coffield *et al* 2008: 25). This omission is not an error. While education minister, Estelle Morris complained about "those who offer cynicism in the guise of experience" (2001: 9). She went on to say in the same major speech (p19), "Gone are the days when doctors and teachers could say, with a straight face, 'trust me, I'm

a professional'." Such professionals are obstacles to reform and in the place of this old-fashioned professionalism the government has introduced performance tables, inspections and performance management to make the public sector, including FE teachers, more accountable (Morris 2001: 26). Likewise, the PMSU (2006: 6) are explicit about the role of a "tougher top down performance management regime" for the public sector to provide "a shock to the system as well as playing an important on-going role". It seems that "a shock to the system" here implies something unequivocally good. Yet, while setting out what the government had learnt about achieving its policies since 1997 this same document (pp 6-7) makes interesting and cogent criticisms of top-down management which many in the public sector, including teacher educators and trainees, will recognise:

> Evidence suggests that top down approaches may sometimes:
>
> - o   increase bureaucracy, where it is possible that the work in achieving targets or undergoing inspection may make information (sic) and other demands on services that take up disproportionate amounts of time that might be used more productively;
>
> - o   stifle innovation and dis-empower staff, by restricting the ability of professionals to react to local and user needs and preference; and
>
> - o   create perverse incentives, distorting professionals' behaviour away from addressing user needs and preferences.

That such an apt critique comes from the instigators of top down approaches suggests they have run out of other ways to implement policy, which partly explains why they have needed so much policy. As one reform fails to deliver another one is required. Nevertheless, top-down management remains the first of their four elements in public service reform and in FE that has meant a deluge of reforms. These include the production of the *Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning in England and Wales* in 1999; *Curriculum 2000* which was a rapidly created and wide-reaching though ultimately unsuccessful effort to alter the balance between academic and vocational qualifications; the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 which brought in compulsory teacher training for all new FE teachers; the launch of *Success for All* in 2002, a three year strategy for enhancing learning and teaching in

FE; the publication of *Equipping our Teachers for the Future: Reforming Initial Teacher Training for the Learning and Skills Sector* in 2004; the Foster report of 2005 (*Realising the Potential: a review of the future role of Further Education colleges*) which initiated a new national workforce development strategy; the 14-19 and Skills White Paper in 2005; the publication of *New overarching standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector* in 2006; and the Further Education and Training Act of 2007 which further altered FE teacher training and brought in the compulsory recording of thirty hours of CPD each year for staff in FE colleges. This list, like that of the IfL above, is not intended to be comprehensive, but is indicative of the permanent policy flux in FE, especially throughout the period when the trainees in my sample were on their course and on placement.

It is also important to note that along with these policies went much greater funding than FE had ever enjoyed, which is palpable in the modern buildings many colleges have invested in. City College where most of my participants were placed is unrecognizable and vastly improved compared to the shoddy building I first entered in the 1980s. That was to be welcomed, unlike the uncertainty caused by the continual churn of policy change. Government-produced statements, initiatives and papers as mentioned above are but the "things" that Ball (1993: 10-11) described, the processes that they entailed each involved meetings, altered priorities and disconcerting insecurity for those expected to carry policy out. The continuous change has left many college staff with a sense that what they had done last year was wrong, and what they were doing this year would soon also be considered to have been so. This dislocation between practice, evaluation and agency is significant in the division between what has drawn many to becoming teachers, and what they find the role actually involves. For some of those involved in this research that role is often "contemplative" in the terms of Lukács (1974). This term explains the effect of alienation in attempting to apply as efficiently as possible procedures they cannot control.

Levers and drivers

Definitions developed by Steer *et al* (2007: 177) are useful here in clarifying how policy gains momentum. Policy drivers, in the form of policy documents, speeches, ministerial statements "may be taken as cues to action by those who manage and deliver public services," they "can direct responses 'on the ground'". Policy drivers relate to a vision of the big picture of politics and examples already mentioned might be the government's commitment to social justice (however that may be defined) and enhancing the skills of the workforce. The particular drivers energising ITT policy are discussed below. A policy lever has a much more precise purpose. For Coffield *et al* (2008: 39) there are five policy levers within the sector covering FE: planning; funding; inspection; initiatives; and, above all the others, targets. These levers are examples of "the wide array of functional mechanisms through which government and its agencies seek to implement policies" (Steers *et al* 2007: 177). Although, policy levers may appear objective and neutral, they are not merely administrative systems because the choice of lever involves political value judgements. Their political character can result in them becoming more important than the change they were meant to lever; "they can become an end in themselves" (Steers *et al* 2007: 177). In McLuhan's terms, the medium becomes the message when it comes to how policy is transmitted. The reasons for the policy are ignored or forgotten while the levers are constantly and carefully checked.

The levers forcing teacher training policy will be considered in a moment, but it is worth considering again why there have been such frequent interventions into the sector (Orr 2008b: 101), which indicate the failure of reform. The gap between what may be planned and intended by government policy-makers and what actually takes place in colleges has been partially explained by FE being given difficult or even impossible tasks. But, considering the metaphor of policy levers provides an insight into the mechanism of this failure of top down management, which was so pithily explained by its proponents above (PMSU 2006: 6-7). Silver (1999), cited in Peeke (2000: 4) complains that change in FE comes about by decree. Policies can reach college managers and teachers stripped of everything but their financial imperative (or the funding lever). Take this example: Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and

Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are popular and well-respected qualifications understood by students, colleges and industry. Since the government wishes to achieve its laudable aim of fifty percent of those under thirty to have access to higher education it has been promoting Foundation Degrees (FDs). Funding for HNCs and HNDs has been cut, so that colleges have had to start FDs, which are funded. Colleges are unlikely to have adopted FDs otherwise because they lacked the recognition or status of HNCs and HNDs. This may suggest inertia on the part of FE senior managers, but it certainly implies a lack of engagement by the government in persuading teachers and others of the benefits of what they are planning: the policy makers just change the funding. FDs may indeed be a rational response to the training needs of individuals and industry, but by the time an FE teacher is asked to teach on one, any rationality may well be lost and it has become a disembodied imposition: and disembodied impositions can be subject to expedient and limited compliance or altogether evaded.

Funding as a means of implementing policy is, though#, a blunt instrument and so it is not always a palatable political option. Arguably, Applied Diplomas for 14-19 year-olds are suffering from the familiar problems of poor status and low recognition of new vocational qualifications, but the government will not dare divert funding from GCSEs and A levels to promote the diplomas. GCSEs and A levels have more powerful backers in society than HNDs and HNCs. The effect of targets as a policy lever is similarly fraught because targets may be achieved, but not the change they were supposed to mark. For instance, I have argued elsewhere that the annual target of thirty hours of recorded CPD for each FE teacher is being met, but without any significant change either in the take up of courses or in attitudes to CPD. Colleges have created systems to record that the necessary figures have been reached, even where those figures represent little if any real change in practice. Consequently, any enhancement in the quality of teaching as a result of CPD seems unlikely (Orr in print; b). No matter: the target will have been met. Therefore, any measurement of impact that the government uses in relation to policy effectiveness in education should be greeted with scepticism, particularly when there are inadequate definitions of what policy makers mean by learning.

Finlay *et al* (2007: 140) astutely identify how the government assumes that all learning is necessarily positive and consequently never defines what it means by learning. This is symptomatic of its obsession with the economic and vocational ends of education; learning is related to personal or national economic advantage. Even the word *education* has gone missing from government departments to be replaced with others like families, children, innovation and skills (see also Biesta 2009). This ignores, as Finlay *et al* (p140) put it, that learning in a "deviant or gang culture", for example, "can weaken families or neighbourhoods". In other words, not all learning is good, which accords with Coffield (2008), as previously explained. Furthermore, overlooking education as existing in its own right marks a lack of engagement with pedagogy. Moreover, without definition, the impact of all the reforms to FE is difficult to judge in educational terms since there is no clear educational purpose. What is missing is a question such as that of Hillier (2006: 34): "How do we ensure that people today are knowledgeable, skilled, and socially included in ways that will not damage other people or the environment, in a society that has to compete globally?" Instead, there is in the use of targets as a lever and measure of policy, to further draw on Hillier (2006: 47), Handy's (1994: 219) "Macnamara Fallacy", named after the United States Secretary of Defense who was obsessed with quantifying developments during the Vietnam War while ignoring what was actually happening because it was less easily quantifiable.

> The first step is to measure what can easily be measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't easily be measured or give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that which can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really does not exist. This is suicide.

Although, thankfully, few FE practitioners or policy-makers have been brought to suicide. This fixation on quantification to meet targets sets up the culture of performativity and form-filling seen by so many of the participants in this research as the dispiriting priority in the organisation where they worked or were placed. For teacher educators and trainees alike the pressing need to fulfil and record the statutory number of hours of teaching practice can eclipse all else. So, this

obsession with measurable outcomes does indeed create "perverse incentives" (PMSU 2006: 6-7), but the use of targets was and remains an important government policy lever.

Another of the policy levers mentioned above, initiatives can have limited impact, which even the government themselves are aware of. What is meant by an initiative here is a coherent reform or set of reforms introduced under a title or heading. For example, the skills agenda can be thought of as a broad initiative and the introduction of compulsory CPD as a more specific one. They are often launched with some fanfare including press releases and a ministerial presentation. With this in mind page six of the *DIUS 2008-09 business plan at a glance: investing in our future* makes interesting reading. It includes the "top seven corporate risks" for the department, the fifth of which is:

> Sector instability and Reform Overload in FE – that the key delivery partners become distracted from delivering "business as usual" due to uncertainty over the future organisational shape of the sector, or as a result of the sheer scale of change.
>
> (DIUS 2008: 6)

The government is concerned that its own actions are a significant risk in achieving its own aims because the shear number of reforms may militate against those reforms having any effect. The very number and lack of coherence of initiatives militate against compliance by FE staff, and so paradoxically create "policy vacuums" (Clarke & Newman 1997 in Coffield *et al*: 2008: 37). If policy levers like targets and initiatives do not always pull the right cables, what impact does policy have? To answer leads again to addressing the concept of culture to analyse how policy shapes what happens in colleges, even if indirectly, and to revisiting the distinction between knowledge of policy and the impact of policy. Although few staff in colleges may be able to explain policy or have knowledge of its intent or detail, there is often a strong perception of policy. Moreover, they can very often describe the experience of its effects. This is an area considered again later in chapter five when looking at data from individual trainees, so what is outlined here is a more general approach which has a scope across City College and beyond.

Policy and culture

The new buildings at City College have already been mentioned and it could be argued that policy reforms have formed the architecture of City College through a well-funded construction programme closely tied to government priorities. The college now has a Skills Zone devoted to Skills for Life (SfL) and an impressive new HE centre to help achieve government participation targets; and the college broadly divides adult from 14-19 provision on different campuses following recent initiatives. More than this, locally implemented policy creates the conditions and atmosphere that staff work in (Coffield *et al* 2008: 37) and for many involved in this research that meant the perception of constant surveillance through audit and inspection, endless flux in work patterns, cuts in provision and increases in workload. This creates what might be called the corporate culture in FE, but this culture is not a web of significance spun by those within the college (Geertz 1993: 5). Rather, it has mainly been imposed from outside and so the significance is that of others, except in the need to comply with a dominant force (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 23). This kind of surveillance and flux could be considered as the consequences of reform rather than the reform itself. For instance, the policy levers themselves become processes without an apparent purpose. Hence the reforms have impact without having purpose or meaning for those who feel the impact. When the focus group were asked about what policies they were aware of, they could name SfL, the Skills Agenda and the introduction of the 14-19 phase including diplomas, but I noted in my field notes at the time that the participants appeared interested in these initiatives only in the way that people are casually interested in the weather forecast: not actively and not like anything they will do will make much difference. To quote one teacher from my sample who worked in the refrigeration section of the plumbing department, "*We pay lip service to key skills, but my aim is produce kids who know how to fix fridges.*"

Ironically, teacher educators who have been subject to so much recent reform are themselves a conduit for policy. Those involved with teacher training courses are most likely to be familiar with the detail of policies precisely because trainees must refer to them in their course assignments, which will be worth recalling when the data

from the trainees on placement is discussed in chapters four and five. Broadly, the experience of policy as constraint or imposition was described by the majority of existing staff in interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, even at a time when City College was better funded that in the whole of its history. Policy was not well understood and its justification and content were largely absent in responses. Policy is 'other' and these teachers defined themselves not with it, but in opposition to it: they felt its impact, even without knowledge of the detail of policy. Hence, the precise specifications of policy are less important than how it is implemented in describing the culture it helps to form. Local implementation of national policy is not a linear process because college managers interpret and mediate national policy, but at City College they made little effort to explain it as I demonstrate below.

Throughout 2005 I collected data on how policy was consciously transmitted across City College. As noted before, the college is very large and covers several major campuses throughout the city and most internal communication was through an email system which included a news section. This section was more likely to contain details of a leaving party or spare concert tickets to sell than to have information on policy. Therefore, when there was something of special significance to senior management hard copies in the form of a letter from the principal or a newsletter were printed off and centrally circulated. This occurred around eight times in the academic years 2003-2006. The rarity of these documents is indicated by a piece on the design of a Christmas tree appearing in the April 2005 edition, the first of the year. So, even this paucity of communication with staff suggests its low priority for senior managers. On SfL, however, the college made a consistent effort to explain through a series of four special newsletters. Elements of these newsletters were written by teachers in a form that is accessible and useful, for example in how SfL might be incorporated into lesson planning. Moreover, to explain the need for SfL these very focused newsletters stated the figures for literacy and numeracy rates in council wards covered by the college, which were amongst the lowest in the country. However, even within these bulletins much of that discourse of pedagogy related to social justice that is attractive to many teachers is lost in the language of

managerialism and unexplained targets. In the introduction to one the principal wrote:

> As we already know, Skills for Life (SfL) is the national strategy for improving adult literacy, language and numeracy. One of the Government's targets is for 1.5 million adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2007. The targets will be achieved through the key goals of quality and consistency of provision through raising standards and achievement. SfL covers all learners in post-16 provision on all courses at Level 2 and below, including GCSE English and Maths. […]
>
> We all need to continue to own and champion the SfL agenda, both in terms of the application of college standards and quality improvement.
>
> (Skills for Life Newsletter: p2)

The targets are their own justification. Later (p5), under the puzzling heading "Reflection" is this objective of a local basic skills consortium:

> o To co-ordinate market intelligence to ensure that the delivery meets the identified needs of the learners and to advise on its sufficiency.

These newsletters show how appealing to teachers' ability and desire to improve the lives of the communities with whom they work could meaningfully transmit policy. Yet instead they often demonstrate the colonisation of education with business language ("own and champion the SfL agenda"; "market intelligence") associated with managerialism. They also demonstrate the importance attached to targets over explanation. This is indicative of what Schön (1991: 21) referred to disparagingly as technical rationality, or how "professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique." This is apparent in the detailed standards for FE teachers discussed below and in the tight control of practice they entail. Paradoxically, the work of Schön on reflective practice, which he posits as the antidote to the limitations of technical rationalism, has become orthodoxy within FE (Harkin 2005). Some would argue that reflective practice has itself become subsumed into technical rationalism (Suter 2006). However, the imposition of business discourse and unexplained targets can also be seen as further evidence of alienation and the teacher's *contemplative* role. Mather and Seifert (2004: 7) found in their work with FE staff:

As the logic of reform unfolds so it becomes apparent what it means for service delivery staff: they are required to work longer and harder, their work is more closely monitored and controlled, and they are increasingly subject to the carrot of performance pay and the stick of job loss. Government ministers control FE college managers through legislation, audit and performance targets; and in turn the managers control staff through familiar techniques of oppressive appraisal and performance measures, bullying, work intensification, and redefining a 'good' lecturer in terms of delivering a quality service to 'customers' without recourse to the contested nature of the professional definition of education itself.

This describes technical rationality, though perhaps without much rationality. In City College, this situation shaped by policy constitutes a significant part of what trainees experienced. Policy is the dominant *field* to which all others relate, and even though objectively it has largely been imposed from outside FE, it has been internalised by some in the sector as will be explored in later chapters.

Policy in Initial Teacher Training

Within the dense thicket of FE policy there are several initiatives and measures that have significantly increased centralised control over ITT and which have directly shaped the course and placement of the sample trainees. As already explained in the previous chapter, the majority of data for this thesis were collected in the period 2005 to 2007 which was the period of transition between two sets of standards and two sets of regulations for ITT in English FE. The place of FE within the New Labour project has already been stressed, which explains why the quality of teaching there has mattered to the government and why it has received so much attention from the policy makers. Like trainee school teachers, FE trainee teachers on HE courses have had their ITT course fees paid and all the trainees in my sample also received bursaries as they were on a full-time course[6]. However, in most other respects, FE ITT was treated quite differently to the schools sector. Before New Labour was elected in 1997 ITT in FE was "voluntarist, haphazard and uneven" (Lucas 2007: 18) as there was no obligation for teachers to hold teaching qualifications. In 1991, for example, only 55.62% of staff were qualified (Lucas 2004b: 75) and after

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[6] This is to end for all sectors in 2010.

incorporation that proportion fell as qualified staff left the sector. In 1999 following concerns expressed by the FEFC about the lack of investment in staff development, FENTO, the government appointed employer-led sector training organisation, produced its *Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning in England and Wales*. From 2001 all teaching qualifications had a statutory obligation to incorporate these standards to receive necessary validation and all new staff in FE had to gain one of these qualifications within a set period of taking up a post. Work had begun on the FENTO standards, as they were universally referred to, well before the 1997 election, and they remained the basis for ITT until September 2007, throughout most of the period considered in this thesis. For that reason I concentrate on these standards rather than the LLUK standards introduced in 2007. In any case, there is arguably very little difference between the two sets. Both are long, prescriptive and read like statements of competence.

The Times Educational Supplement (cited in Ball 2008: 113) listed its most commonly used educational buzzwords in 1998, and 'standards' was used 2271 times, twice as often as the nearest rival. Standards have become more explicitly important to government than curriculum, as the publication of the FENTO standards demonstrated. The volume of the FENTO standards was "staggering" (Nasta 2007:5). Their three hundred separate descriptors of knowledge and ability contrast to the single page of broad statements that cover staff in HE (HEA 2007) or the much simpler statement of values for school teachers (GTC 2006). Even the shorter LLUK standards that replaced them in 2007 are very much longer than equivalents in other sectors. FE lecturers are kept on a very short leash as this brief extract from the section on *Assessing learners' needs* in the FENTO standards (FENTO 1999:11) suggests:

> Teachers and teaching teams need to be effective in identifying the needs of potential learners and in making an initial assessment of learners. This involves matching learners' experiences and attainments to the requirements of programmes within one's own area of expertise.
>
> This requires teachers and teaching teams to have a generic knowledge of:
> - o   the broad range of learning needs including the needs of those with

- learning difficulties and/or disabilities
  - sources of information about learners' previous experiences and attainments
  - the requirements of individual learning programmes
  - ways of evaluating different information about learners against the requirements of specific learning programmes, including the accreditation of prior learning and experience

This goes well beyond any declaration of professional values and attempts to provide a taxonomy of professional knowledge, skills and activities. Implicit is the assumption that, "It is possible to capture in written statements—codifed knowledge—the richness and complexities involved in the process of teaching" (Nasta: 2007:3). In making this assumption, teaching in FE is understood as primarily technical and so can be technically measured and regulated. This ignores tacit learning or that "*we can know more than we can tell*" (Polanyi 1983: 4). This is because, as previously argued, a situated approach to understanding learning is the norm for researchers of WBL, but not for policymakers who focus on acquiring discrete items of knowledge or skills, such as those described in both the FENTO and LLUK standards (Hager 2004a: 3; Hager 2005). More significantly, this assumption that teaching is primarily technical has led to increased control over teachers' practice, which tends to promote performativity.

The FENTO standards expressed a coherent aim to improve teaching and learning and may be considered as a driver of policy, but they also straddle several policy levers. They were seen as central to the more general *Success for All* initiative and around the FENTO standards was formed a set of targets on the achievement of teaching qualifications. Moreover, only those ITT courses validated by FENTO in relation to these standards were to be funded and the standards were both explicit and implicit within inspections. All of this entailed their becoming a significant part of the scrutiny, micro-management and measured performance central to understanding the context and culture experienced by trainee teachers in FE. Some awarding bodies, including universities, created new qualifications around these standards, while others adapted existing courses to FENTO. For this research, the introduction of the FENTO standards and allied compulsory teaching qualifications

are notable as the exercise of central statutory control over ITT. Furthermore, that central control was confused. The case of the FENTO standards once again reveals how initiatives can have an impact without bringing about their intended change. It is perhaps curious that the government expended so much time and effort on the production of the FENTO standards, and so little on how they would be meaningfully implemented, though it does suggest policy makers employ a simplistic, linear model of policy transmission.

The standards were so lengthy and complex because they were a hybrid of different interests. Lucas (2004a: 49) vividly refers to this as the "FENTO fandango" which, "represents the lack of clear strategic thinking and the different dances done for different regulatory bodies. All of these bodies work in different ways and to different criteria." The government wished to improve training and education in the FE sector and consequently sought to raise the quality of teaching by regulating and standardising initial training. That was broadly welcomed (Lucas 2004a: 49), and few could complain about the content of the standards, which were written in the language of progress and reform as with so much of New Labour policy. Nevertheless, from their inception the FENTO standards were problematic. For example the academic level at which to set these standards "caused considerable consternation" (Lucas 2004a: 44) as they could be "covered" at level 3 (HE) or at masters level. Moreover, there was concern about over-regulation and bureaucracy, though this may have been a consequence of how the standards were interpreted and implemented. Trainees at one university in the north west of England were given a list containing each of the one hundred and twenty main statements from the standards prior to placement. Beside each statement was a box to be ticked and a space for "evidence" that the competence had been achieved, an activity that screamed out for compliance of the most expedient variety. Likewise, the validation of courses against the FENTO standards became a ritual and technical mapping exercise which little altered existing programmes. The standards were 'embedded' in courses and when educationalists want to evade something, they say it has been 'embedded'. A little over two years after their statutory adoption within ITT, Ofsted (2003: 4) would roundly state the failure of the FENTO standards as "not an

appropriate tool for judging the final attainment of trainees… [and] too wide-ranging to define the curricula for ITT".

As a consequence of this document from Ofsted a new merry-go-round of papers and consultations started and eventually in 2007 a new set of standards was given statutory backing. Nevertheless, the FENTO standards remained crucial to ITT courses up to four years after Ofsted had passed judgement. Consequently, the sample trainees needed to tot up a statutory minimum of 120 hours of contact time on their placements (now 150) and were exercised by the performative need to show how they had met the standards. Ball (2008: 49) is explicit about what performativity means: "Performativity is a culture or a system of 'terror'. It is a regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change." Performativity demands compliance, not criticality or agency. Policy makers may not be aware of tacit learning, but tacitly many of my sample learned to conform to this regime, which is crucial to understanding the sort of teachers they aspire to be and become.

Teacher educators also take part in this performative dance. To maintain funding ITT courses must meet centrally controlled criteria (now scrutinised by Standards Verification UK) and so they are under the constant gaze of government. Moving from a job in an FE college to a university in 2006 I was struck by how the government still mediated so much of my role as a teacher educator even in the more independent HE sector. Teacher educators may consider themselves independent gatekeepers to the profession, but any autonomy is circumscribed. What Bourdieu (1996: 39) wrote about academics in France illuminates the position of teacher educators in England:

> Agents entrusted with acts of classification can fulfil their social function as social classifiers only because it is carried out in the guise of acts of academic classification. They do well what they have to do (objectively) because they think they are doing something other than what they are doing, because they are doing something other than what they think they are doing, and because they believe in what they think they are doing. As fools fooled, they are the primary victims of their own actions.

My own role as teacher educator implicates me, though I would argue that some discretion remains. Nevertheless, in considering myself professionally independent and judging my trainees against a model of good teaching I may be a fool fooled, because I remain an agent entrusted with classifying trainees. During the period the trainees participating in this research were on placement that meant being seen to apply the FENTO standards.

Mentoring

The Ofsted (2003: 5 & 18) report quoted above specifically helped to introduce mentoring as an integral part of teacher training (DfES 2004: 8). New Labour has been enthusiastic about mentoring, most usually to promote social inclusion (Colley 2003: 12), but in FE ITT mentoring was needed for other purposes. The enormous range of subjects offered in any FE college precludes the subject-based ITT that school teachers expect. So the mentor's role is to fulfil the task of imparting subject specialist pedagogy to trainee teachers in FE. Therefore, each trainee involved in this research had to have a named mentor. This emphasis on subject specialism forms part of a pattern of ITT for school teachers influencing the level and content of ITT for FE. Another is the requirement for a 'minimum core' of knowledge of literacy and numeracy to raise the general academic level of teachers in FE (Thompson & Robinson 2008: 164). This pattern suggests that policy makers know more about schools than colleges, but to anticipate findings discussed later, it also echoes the dominant vernacular discourse of what it is to be a teacher in any sector, FE included.

Nevertheless, the notion of subject specialist pedagogy with which mentoring is associated in ITT is somewhat spurious (Fisher & Webb 2006). While the content and level of subjects will impact on what techniques are appropriate to teach them, that does not constitute a separate coherent pedagogy. Even within an area like English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which has had its own teaching qualifications for decades, there is argument about what the most effective pedagogy is. Looking more widely, what occurs in ESOL classrooms is characterised by interaction, while traditional language teaching in Britain has been based on

grammar and translation. The teaching of French does not necessitate a different pedagogy to the teaching of ESOL. The differing approaches merely reflect differing conventions. In the previous chapter a link between pedagogy and culture was mooted and these conventions may derive from local cultures. More significant, though, is that the dominant political culture in this country does not define or even question what pedagogy is, specialist or otherwise. Moreover, Ofsted does not explain how teachers trained prior to the new requirement are best able as mentors to induct new trainees into today's subject specialist pedagogy (Thompson & Robinson 2008: 166). Of particular concern, though, is the means by which mentors are selected, trained and recognised by the institutions within which they work and evidence discussed later suggests that all of these processes are random. Hence despite the warm rhetoric and obvious benefits of proper mentorship, it remains a shaky foundation upon which to build teacher training.

Professionalism

National standards, Ofsted reports and alterations to ITT all take place within a disputed discourse of professionalism. "Few professionals talk as much about being professional as those whose professional stature is in doubt" (Katz 1969: 71). Katz was referring to nurses, but the same could be said of FE teachers. In 2001 Clow (p417) concluded that "as it stands at the moment FE teachers are unlikely to agree a definition of their professionalism without external support." The FENTO standards may be considered as "external support", but what professionalism they imply is, at best, limited. Gleeson *et al* (2005*:* 446) describe how the FE teacher is considered "as either the recipient of external policy reform or as an empowered agent of professional change" and they cite Bathmaker (2001) who has described how FE practitioners are discussed as both "devils" whose poor practice needs to be closely controlled and as "dupes" who have carelessly submitted to a new managerialist regime. Professionalism in general "is a construct born of methodological reduction, rhetorical inflation and universalist excess" (Stronach *et al* 2004: 109). These binaries illustrate in particular, however, how fraught discussions of professionalism

have become in FE (Orr 2008b). Robson (1998) is amongst those to have discussed what has been termed the "dual professionalism" of FE teachers (IfL 2006). Otherwise expressed, this means that most teachers have entered FE having been established professionals in previous careers, as was the case of several of my sample, and many therefore maintain and prioritise that professional allegiance. This is because, as Robson *et al* (2004: 187) argue, their previous experience gives them the credibility required for their new teaching role. However, this continuing identity with their former profession may prevent some from considering themselves as professional *teachers*. Indeed, reluctance to identify themselves as teachers partly explains the government's imposition of standards that state precisely not just the values that are expected of teachers in FE, but also their practice.

The notion of dual professionalism may tacitly reveal a significant aspect of the tradition of FE. English FE colleges very often find their origins in the mechanics institutes and technical colleges of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where skilled craftsmen or artisans would be expected to pass on their knowledge (Simmons 2008: 367; Orr & Simmons 2009: 5). The quality of their teaching was judged by their subject or vocational expertise, not by their pedagogical proficiency. This emphasis was carried into the post-Second World War FE sector (Bailey 2007) and the priorities associated with it are suggested by FE teachers not requiring any teaching qualification until 2001, in stark contrast to schools. Therefore, there has not been a history of professional development relating to teaching skills or knowledge in FE; nor has there been a history of systematically developing new entrants to FE teaching as there is in the schools sector or legal profession. If, as Robson *et al* (2004) argue, FE teachers are traditionally thought to gain credibility and be qualified to practise by their specialism, alone, there is little need to develop their pedagogy. Many of the trainees in my sample encountered these pervasive conventions while on placement.

Søreide (2007) describes how the language of policy documents in her native Norway constructs a teacher identity, and applying her approach to those in England, reveals a restricted and impoverished view of the professional teacher in

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FE. The official discourse demonstrated in both the FENTO and the newer LLUK standards documents equates professionalism with adhering to a centrally controlled list of practices, not to autonomy or judgment based on specialist knowledge which definitions of professionalism usually involve (Eraut 1994). For the trainees this may imply that both to pass the course and to be professional, they need to comply with the standards and so with government decree. However, explicit within FENTO and with what has followed is the rhetorical association between social justice ("helping people return to learning"), skills ("liaison with employers") and education. These can be conjoined in a politician's speech but FE teachers and trainee teachers can only fail to overcome the contradictions between them, which is crucial to understanding the alienation many of them experience and express.

Chapter conclusion

Ball (2008: 30) writes that much government policy is "not infrequently a flailing around for anything at all that looks like it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit-and-miss affairs." This well describes the situation in FE and ITT in FE. Certainly, the government can be forgiven for having difficulties influencing what happens in this huge and varied area. Yet, far from recognising that FE's size and diversity require local solutions and trust in the professionals who work there, policy-makers have continued to devise more and more initiatives in an attempt to centrally control the sector. That in turn means more targets and more agencies to assess those targets. However, those targets can be met without meaningful change taking place and, as seen, the very complexity that the government has created produces its own inertia. But, that is not to say that policy is irrelevant, even where few read policy documents and few are knowledgeable of policy. Unexplained targets, shifting priorities and the lack of autonomy that are the progeny of government reform create a culture of performativity where expedience is prioritised, where professionals are not trusted and where transgression often takes the form of cynicism. As a result, FE staff have experienced increases in workload with concomitant stress; they are more isolated within departments which compete with one another for resources; they are

diverted from teaching by the need to complete paperwork and maintain management information systems; and they are subject to increasing surveillance (Ball 2008: 52). Writing ten years ago Avis (1999: 251) describes five themes in FE: loss of control; intensification of labour; increase in administration; perceived marginalisation of teaching and stress on measurable performance indicators. Even then, Avis (1999: 261) indicated that these themes had already been found in "any number of other studies" from the same period and they are deep seated within the culture of FE. My data will demonstrate that trainees still experience these conditions created or exacerbated by policy, which shape the teachers that they become.

Chapter Four: Coping with the mess

The extensive data set available from my own research and from the *College Experience* research project provides a vivid, colourful and confusing picture of teacher training placements and teaching in FE colleges[*]. This confusion is a significant and formative element in the placement and, as discussed, I have sought to avoid misrepresentation by sanitising it through generalisation. Therefore, in this chapter data have been grouped under broad headings; some of which are structural and derive from the university ITT course (for example *University preparation and expectations of teaching*); some derive incidentally from the data (for example, *Day-to-day experience of placements*); and some derive from the theorisations that I am applying (for example on *Cultures and groups*). The primary purpose of this chapter is to present the data with their scope and diversity while the next chapter analyses these data in relation to the research questions and to the three theories under consideration. However, the process of grouping necessarily involves some analysis and the thematic approach adopted here has allowed some limited application of the conceptualisations. The processes of collection and collation of data demanded decisions relating to relevance and significance and so the methodological filter is already evident in the presentation of the data. This filter reflects the principal concern in comprehending the relationship between the individual and their social environment and how that affects ideas about teaching. Where appropriate, general notions of transformation and continuity have also been applied to the data, both in how the trainees have been changed by their experience of placement and how the placement has altered or reinforced vernacular and dominant conceptions about being a teacher in FE. Throughout this chapter I refer to data from existing college teachers as well as trainees in order to consider cultures and enculturation as well as to illustrate the analogy between the experience of placement and the experience of work in FE.

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[*] I personally gathered most of the data quoted here. Where I have used extracts from the interview transcripts of colleagues on the *College Experience* project I have initialled them to indicate their provenance: LD (Liz Dixon) and JT (Jonathan Tummons). All direct quotations from respondents are in italics.

Chapter two described the variety of collection methods employed in this research and stressed the differing scopes of vision each had. I start this chapter with the trainees' own initial expectations of FE and how the trainees were prepared for placement on their university course in order to expose the assumptions that exist on the part of university staff and the trainees as well as the assumptions prevalent in society more broadly. These remarks initially form an overview (from 30,000 feet, to repeat the metaphor of perspective from chapter two) before looking at more detailed data relating to individuals. I then move on to the diverse experiences of placement and the circumstances and culture in FE.

University preparation and expectations of teaching

Until recent changes in legislation many FE ITT courses stipulated a minimum age before entry (usually 24) but since this requirement was dropped, Noel (2008: 10) has noted how the average age of trainees on one very large FE ITT course in England has significantly reduced. This is reflected in the cohorts of trainees researched for this thesis who were on a course leading to the Certificate in Education or PGCE. Of the 205 trainees who gave their age in the academic years 2005 to 2006 and 2006 to 2007 44% were aged 18 to 29 and 23% were over 40. Many of the two cohorts came straight from degrees onto the ITT course, often at the same university, and so the placement was their first experience of any workplace. What they learnt there did not just relate to teaching or education but to the experience of work more generally. In the first lecture of the ITT course, which explained the placement process, many trainees looked like undergraduate students in their age, dress and disposition. This lecture, which took place in a large, modern and rather impersonal lecture theatre, was very briefly opened by the course leader, before a lengthy presentation from a Students' Union official. Inappropriately, this lengthy presentation was aimed at young students who had just left home, reinforcing the earlier impression of these trainees. In contrast, the tutor in charge of placements, who wore a suit, marked a jarring change by emphasising the importance of their work-based experience (*"about half the course"*):

You are only students when you are here. On placement you are in the teacher's role.

[…]

I will refer to you as trainees, because that is what you are [that is, not students.]

A peel of laughter at the mention of placements in prison education units suggested a lack of awareness of the diversity of the FE sector that was later underlined in data from questionnaires.

Following Engeström's work within a CHAT conceptualisation, Lambert's (2007: 236) research on vocational teacher training in Finland defined the site of vocational teacher training (that is the university) and the site of placement (that is the FE college) as different activity systems. Lambert's work is characteristic of some activity theory analyses because it ignores the relative status of the 'activity systems' within broader society, which in this case reveals an irony. Staff at universities, including teacher trainers, enjoy better conditions, better pay and higher status than staff at FE colleges, but staff at colleges have a dominant position in the placement of trainees. Those working in colleges do not have to take trainees and many resist what they consider an additional pressure in often already fraught circumstances. Placing trainees is therefore problematic for the university, which is reliant on the goodwill of FE teachers. This paradoxical imbalance in power is obvious in how university tutors discuss the process. After less than five minutes the tutor in charge of placements had with prominence stated how the trainees would "*have to be flexible*"; that they should "*consider [their placement form] as an application*"; and that the whole process was about "*negotiation*" since they should not expect only to teach their subject specialism. The tutor was positive and sympathetic in his approach but the trainees' position as sellers in a buyers' market was clear and this was reiterated during the smaller, more personal sessions when students gathered in their subject sub-groups. Hence, the trainees were expected to adapt even to find a placement because their relative position was weak; and their contradictory dual identity, as students and proto-professionals was apparent. One trainee later spoke of being "*in a certain role Monday and Tuesday* [while attending classes at university] *and then the other days… assuming a different role*" whilst on placement.

Another commented that they were "*having to wear two hats*". The university tutor also emphasised the government standards relating to ITT mentioned in chapter three of this thesis, which had to be met and which would later pervade trainees' perceptions of the placement.

The sub-group of trainees observed later was mainly made up of social and health care, sports science and leisure specialists, twenty-two trainees in total. Four already knew each other well because they had come straight from the same course at that university but with an easy confidence, their tutor, Ann got the whole group to mix and cooperate. In an exercise to express their feelings in three words in anticipation of the course only five chose '*anxious*' and nine '*optimistic*' or '*happy*'. Ann drew out commonality between their subject areas and therefore that the trainees could justifiably teach on a variety of courses; moreover the process of arranging placements was complicated so they had "*to get [the placement application form] right*" and they had to "*sell [them]selves*"; *"Don't expect a close match between your degree and what you are going to teach."* This need for "*flexibility and patience*" was explained with sensitivity, but while never negative, Ann's tone in relation to the placement was carefully measured so as to limit anticipation. However, the trainees had to comply with an opaque procedure that they could little influence in order to be placed in a sector few of them understood well. Consequently, some trainees would later experience anxiety prior to the finalising of arrangements for their own individual placement because successful completion of the course rests in part on the successful completion of the placement. How long those arrangements would take was indeterminate with some trainees starting sooner than others, although the trainees are assured that everyone would eventually be placed, as indeed they were. Therefore, the disconcerting uncertainty that was a common perception of the placement experience was already apparent. So too was the dissonance between the dominant discourse of placement employed by the tutors, which stressed flexibility in professional practice, pragmatism and which attempted to restrict expectations. In contrast, the vernacular discourse of placement often employed by the trainees focused on their subject specialist areas, anticipated working with FE students who had chosen to be there and had unrestricted expectations (Dixon *et al.*

2008). The course handbook that the university supplies to trainees elliptically alluded to the discordance between these discourses:

> You should keep the usual class tutors informed of what you are planning to teach, and ask their advice if appropriate. However, it is important to remember that your colleagues are under pressure and your needs may not be their first priority. Some tutors are very keen to know what you have planned – others are prepared to give you a relatively free hand. Try to ascertain this during early discussions with them.

These divergent discourses may be understood as representing conflicting activity systems with university tutors and trainees having not just differing expectations but differing objects, in the sense used by CHAT, as well. The object of an activity system is what gives meaning to all the actions contained by the system. Within that CHAT understanding the tutors sought a placement that was developmental but also pragmatically related to performative standards; the trainees sought to become 'good' teachers in an ill-defined but moral sense. These subtly different aims help to reveal the cause of later tensions.

In whatever way the trainees' unrestricted and even unlikely expectations of their placement are understood, they existed despite the two cohorts' very widespread experience of FE as a student and even as a teacher. Of 106 trainees who completed questionnaires before their placement in September 2005, 86 had attended FE colleges as a student and 26 had worked in FE within some teaching capacity. These global figures mask the details that, for example, all 17 of the students within the arts specialism had experience of FE as a student and 8 as a teacher. The following year of 139 returned questionnaires, 105 indicated experience of FE as a student and again 26 as a teacher. That so many, indeed the great majority of trainees, had had experience of FE and yet held such a widespread misunderstanding of the role of the FE tutor is highly significant in comprehending the teachers that trainees become. The contradiction may be explained in two ways. Firstly, that FE is so diverse that exposure to one part of it does not prepare for exposure to other parts. Avila de Lima (2003) discussed the Balkanisation of departments within a school and the same term could describe the divisions between

sections and departments in the colleges where trainees were placed. Indeed, the experience of any large organisation can be highly localised, but in FE this may be heightened by the rapid changes FE has been through. For instance, Charlotte who was shocked by the transformation in practice and policy she discovered in her placement college, which initially unsettled her.

> *I'd been to a college myself but that was in like 1996 and that's when I did philosophy, I did Women's Studies you know so that sort of political curriculum that was available then I had no idea it had been so heavily amputated in that period so it's been quite a revelation really to me just how much has been changed . What it seems teachers were doing when I was at college, how active they could be, not political in a sort of biased sense but just how far they could push students and obviously that's just not the case now.* [LD]

Likewise, another trainee, Ivana who had initially trained as a hairdresser before switching to photography, which she wished to teach, had had considerable experience of FE and yet in an interview she expressed her surprise about the students she encountered at City College. *"That's one of the reasons I wanted to do Further Education, 'cause I didn't want to do schools, I wanted to teach people who wanted to be there."* Another wrote how he expected *"self-motivated…not disruptive"* students and this notion that FE students are willing volunteers, which was widely held amongst the trainees who participated in the research, is indicative of the pre-existing and broad cultural conceptions of what FE and being a teacher involves, discussed below. This finding echoes those of many others working in this area (see for example Wallace 2002 and Avis & Bathmaker 2006), which indicates the persistence of this largely unfounded belief about the volition of FE students. This is the second explanation for the discrepancy between previous exposure to FE and present unrestricted expectations about FE. The data shows these conceptions of FE and teaching, which are explored later, retained a powerful influence in spite of countervailing experiences.

Nevertheless, there was also some concern expressed in many of the questionnaires about the potential behaviour of students; one trainee was *"bracing"* himself, another considered the students *"likely to be testing and challenging"* and others wrote about anticipated difficulties in *"control"* or *"controlling"* the students. In

a later interview Constance, on placement teaching business studies in City College, recalled how when she was at school trainee-teachers had been teased and provoked, so she had expected similar treatment on her own placement. Happily, her fears were unfounded. More generally prior to placement, though, there was a balanced or broadly positive outlook on the students and their "*aspiration/ willingness to learn*". The questionnaires were similarly mixed in answer to the question *What are your first thoughts about the college staff you might come into contact with at your placement?* The responses showed some correlation between subject grouping and the level of anxiety, which may indicate how their particular university tutor enthused or warned about their reception from college staff. Remember, this is still prior to the placement.

> *They will feel I'm a hindrance*
>
> *I won't live up to their expectations*
>
> *Apathy towards another trainee (potentially)*
>
> *Hopefully they will be friendly, and not treat me differently because I am a trainee.*
>
> *I imagine they would be quite helpful in terms of advise* [sic] *and support.*
>
> *Helpful and friendly, but busy.*
>
> *Excited about working with other professionals that are like-minded and want to develop students.*

A hesitant generalisation would be that there was an expectation of engagement with existing staff, even if a few felt that might be limited or even grudging. The responses to the question *How do you think you will spend your time when you are on your placement?* indicated that most expected to be teaching or preparing to teach most of the time. This was despite the relatively small number of hours they had to complete compared to the total time they would be on placement, which suggests that this expectation was unexamined. Significantly, it derived not from consideration of the process of placement but from pre-conceptions.

I will spend my time doing lesson plans, teaching, working with fellow members of staff.

Observing; planning; delivering; marking

Hopefully in the classroom teaching

Teaching; assisting; counselling

Some responses indicated more general expectations:

Learning new things, becoming more organised

Between 3-5 hours in the classroom
In the office being mentored
planning/reflecting & admin work

…motivating and encouraging students
learning from qualified professionals, taking on board their advise [sic] *+ their experiences*

Others specifically expected a progression in their involvement:

Preparing a lesson, shadowing a teacher, then progressing to teaching myself, one to ones, mentoring.
I will also be doing some learning of my own.

Once again generalisations are to be made with caution, but there was a widespread expectation of time spent actively teaching and a slightly less widespread expectation of structure within the placement. Significantly again, these expectations were formed despite the contribution of university tutors. However, the details of individuals' anticipations of the placement indicate how contingent they may be as suggested by the extract from Charlotte's interview relating to Women's Studies. This already indicates that a narrow focus on what happens in the college during the placement will only reveal part of what has been learnt about teaching. Therefore the next section highlights the need to look beyond the placement to explain becoming a teacher in FE.

Biographies and experience

In accordance with other researchers the broad influence of biography on perceptions of education and FE in particular were clear throughout the research (see for example Avis & Bathmaker 2009). For instance, the pre-service ITT course had a high proportion of students from Black or other minority backgrounds (in the years examined this was around 19%, well above the proportion for the area where the university is located and well above average figures for the national population) and four of the trainees with whom I carried out in-depth interviews were Black Africans who had migrated to England. Three of these trainees expressed concern that they would encounter racism from the students on the placement though this had not been the case. The experience of one of these trainees, Precious is particularly interesting in what it reveals about how expectations are formed through living a life. She had been educated by Irish nuns in Southern Africa. These nuns may never have themselves experienced English society because, according to Precious, they had extolled and apparently grossly exaggerated England's ordered administration and its smooth, efficient management procedures. These Irish nuns had explained that everyone would know their role within this nation's institutions. Hence, not just her anticipation of a college, but her *habitus* was formed by ill-informed conceptions shaped by Britain's imperial past, in Ireland and Africa. Though Precious had been resident in the city for several years City College fell a long way short of her expectation not just of FE, but of England. Her intense disappointment bordering on outrage at the initial inefficiency of the process of placement was palpable. In a similar vein Constance explained how her former life in West Africa had shaped what she anticipated:

> *I come from a third world country whereby you find the experience of learning comes into practice. … In my country it is self-motivated, self actualisation, you want to do it because you have set yourself goals to attain, achievements to do. But when I look at some of [the students at City College], it's like they are being forced to. Their actions are different to what I have experienced back home.*

Though, in a candid admission during a later interview Constance wryly confessed that she was guilty at university of some of the behaviour that she complained about

from her own students, such as being easily distracted or forgetting what had been covered in the previous session. For others, their experience of parenthood was significant; Andrea, a newly qualified teacher in her forties who worked with students with special needs at City College said:

> *I feel quite maternal towards some of these young people, to be honest. Now I wouldn't have done that, I don't think, in my twenties because I didn't have kids till I was thirty odd but I do feel quite maternal and that brings out the best in you. It brings out the extra kind of care factor in a way and you can really empathise with the difficulties that these young people face. And you can only think: 'my god what if that were my son or daughter in that situation?'*

This is not a purely gendered response, except in the form of its expression, because male and female teachers and trainees made similar comments in relation to their own family and students. Nonetheless, the fact that of the 205 trainees who noted their gender on questionnaires (23 did not respond to that question) 135 were female strongly suggests that gender is an important factor to be considered in this analysis, as discussed later. More generally as explored below, the experience of school, college and university as a student was often a stronger template for practice as a teacher than any provided by the ITT course of study. These individual descriptions suggest that the lived experience of trainees is intensely important in shaping their attitudes to placements and to teaching more generally, well before they have enrolled onto an ITT course.

The trainees' initial responses to placement

The immediate perception of placement quickly exposed the wide differences in circumstances and perception amongst trainees as expressed in interviews (Dixon *et al* 2008) and exposes the complexity of the interplay of individual and environment. One trainee remembered her welcome:

> *Immediately after I arrived in the department, the first greeting was tea: would you like tea or coffee?...Very friendly.*

Martin, placed in the fashion department at City College, said of his placement:

the first day I was grabbed right away and everyone wanted me to teach and be part of this.

I've been having a great time. My own degree is in painting. I started off as an illustrator. And as soon as I got here I was put into the fashion department, which was something that I wasn't expecting. But it's worked out really well. I took the viewpoint that I'm teaching the same things to students who need to learn them... I found that they respond really well and that they are interested in what I've got to say.

He was invited to the college Christmas dinner at a local restaurant, an event which other trainees in the same large department had not even heard about. Ivana described how she "*did feel bit of a burden to start with*" because her appointed mentor was unable or unwilling to collaborate. Asaf, a trainee working on an Early Years course at Shire College situated in a large town in the north of England, said of his placement early on:

It's really good. You've got like space to breathe …and everybody's friendly ...and very cooperative. I've been sort of given a desk and a computer…. I mean everybody has access to the computer but they are quite good because if I'm working at that desk they tend not to disturb [me], they go and use other computers which is brilliant [because] I am a student...but they have really valued me and I don't feel like a student sometimes. Sometimes I forget…that I'm here from… university. I actually feel as if I work here. [LD]

By contrast, Helen a trainee teaching Health and Social Care said:

Well, first of all we went into the department, the manager wasn't there so it was a case of oh, you know, everyone looking up and staring at you and the first greeting was 'Bring your own tea, you bring your own coffee. You don't touch anyone else's. You can't sit anywhere that's anyone else's seat, you won't have a seat of your own'. [LD]

Asaf and Helen were on placement at the same time, in the same department and in the same staffroom, demonstrating the Bourdieuian duality of objective reality and subjective experience of reality. Ostensibly, they had had a very similar reception but yet had reacted utterly differently, so the primary cause for these contradictory reactions may have been what they each brought to the placement in outlook or wherewithal. In other words, the factors that most influenced the perception of the placement and by extension the perception of teaching in FE lay in the trainees'

biography beyond or rather before the placement or the ITT course. Therefore, to understand or conceptualise how ideas about teaching are formed and disseminated even during placement requires more than just a consideration of the process of placement.

Day-to-day experience of placements

The subject of this section overlaps with the much wider discussion of groups and cultures below but here the main focus is on the daily activities of the trainees and existing teachers as well. Culture, as Geertz (1993: 11) argued, is more than a belief system but is discernible in action, literally how people spend their time. Once again the findings, especially from the completed timesheets, indicates great diversity between trainees. Paula's placement days in the fashion department at City College began at 6.30am catching two buses for the two and a half hour journey to the college where she remained until around 4.30pm before catching two buses for the return journey. She then went to work in a hotel until around midnight when she would regularly go directly to study in the university library before finally catching a few hours' sleep before once again travelling to City College. Paula was very committed to the ITT course and was exceptionally positive about the placement and her reception by the staff there who presented her with many cards and enough gifts to fill two large bags when she eventually left. However, she described how tired she was by the long days. Similarly, Constance had found her placement positive but when asked what single thing she would remember from her placement she replied, "*The long day. Very long days*". Although she spent much less time in the college than Paula, Constance had evening classes. Placed in the sports and leisure department of Town College, near the university Danny was quickly given great responsibility for several difficult groups; though he thrived others might have felt abandoned. By contrast Sean in the sport studies department at City College explained his frustration at doing so little. His days were considerably shorter and when asked about the progress of his placement early on he said, *"It's been…well, as good as observing can be. It's been pretty, well…pretty boring really."* He had only been doing: "*bits and pieces and other than that I have just been observing, sat*

at the side, really. And when they need me to participate, I participate in the lessons."

Although Sean's description is particularly stark, to varying degrees, the trainees were all marginal to the college sections in which they were placed. All the trainees were there for relatively short, finite periods and they all lacked status. However, the experience of Martin and Paula, two trainees placed in consecutive years in the fashion section, was exceptional due to how they spent their time when not teaching or observing other teachers. Martin and Paula spent almost all of their time with the college staff, in the staffroom, in the canteen, in the classrooms after sessions. They were hardly ever alone and were quickly enculturated. But this integration was still restricted; Martin and Paula were invited to join in as guests more than colleagues and they did not instigate activities. They cannot be said to have become full members of their host group by the end of their placement, which was always going to be temporary.

By contrast to Martin and Paula, many trainees spent long periods alone when not teaching, whether in the college library or the staffroom, or even at home only coming into college for their timetabled sessions. A common experience was that of Sean, who spent much of the first part of his placement waiting, often alone: isolation rather than participation. This lack of opportunity for social contact and participation is significant in any conceptualisation of learning on placement. After two months Sean was still frustrated at not having independently taken more lessons rather than just helping other teachers, though he conceded that he had not discussed this with tutors at the college or university. This frustration was shared by many of the trainees who were fixated by achieving the required 120 hours of contact time and therefore worried about how little teaching they were doing. Precious said that she "*had been doing nothing, actually*" after three weeks of her placement. As discussed briefly in chapter two she felt her neglect was motivated by racism, though her experience was very similar to other trainees. However, once moved to a different section in the college Precious soon had sufficient teaching and felt fairly treated. Once the trainees had started regular teaching perceptions changed and the majority

reported that they were very occupied, mainly with planning, often spending hours on preparation each night at home. Again, though, this was a solitary activity for many. Nonetheless, some trainees did regularly meet and talk with teachers in their department, including their mentor, and so isolation was common but not universal.

The frequently reported concern to meet the required number of contact hours reflects what might be termed the proceduralisation of placements, evident in much of the data. There was a perceived need to meet the university's requirements, so preparation was referred to as "*writing lesson plans*"; any thoughts or "*reflections*" were to be recorded in their personal development folder and their assignments were often mentioned in interviews. Constance stated baldly, "*in terms of lesson plans, I hate them",* though by the end of her placement she had been convinced and stressed her commitment to formalised planning for every aspect of her life "*even with my children".* Above all, assessed teaching observations carried out by university tutors loomed large for many trainees. Fulfilling these procedures represents the strong performative aspect of placements, much of which related to the government's standards as explained previously. This relates to what Lyotard (1984: 4) referred to as "a thorough exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the 'knower' at whatever point he or she may occupy in the knowledge process." So even though we know more than we can tell, markers of knowledge, however spurious, take precedence over knowing. Lesson plans and the tally of hours taught gained their own significance which became separated from what they were meant to represent or measure; being seen to have completed a record of the experience appeared more important than the experience itself.

It is important, however, to state that this emphasis on procedures and routine was not just a feature of the placement. The experience of trainees on placement was little different to that of the existing staff at the college. Pat, one of the woodwork teachers at City College, described the start to a typical day: "*I come up here. I switch the computer on and do my emails first. I grab hold of my course file with everything in – the schemes of work and lesson plans etc.*" This file determined his

day's work. Mark, a plumbing teacher at a different site at the college, described his typical morning:

> *I'd come in at twenty to nine or something like that and if it was a theory session I would have done some preparation the night before… If it was a practical session it would be a case of getting out there ten minutes before the lesson starts just to get my stuff out and looking at the tracking document that we use so that I know who is doing what.*

After teaching until late afternoon he would be: "*doing paperwork or sorting out a few schemes of work or lesson plans for certain individuals that are being observed in the next few days. That's about it.*"

Course files, tracking documents and schemes of work are all representative of the processes to be followed by trainees and teachers alike but which neither fully controlled. It is worth recalling the words of Lukács (1974: 89) quoted in chapter two:

> Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of this process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not.

What Mark and Pat do, and evidently they do it well, is to consider the most effective way for them to work within the process but without challenging the process. It is taken for granted. Again, this is what Lukács meant by the 'contemplative' role of humans in capitalist society because systems appear independent from humanity and immutable. People become subordinate to them. This extract from John, a divisional leader in the art department at City College with some middle management responsibility alongside his teaching is indicative. He explained his job:

> *Looking at the tutors' role, [observation] grades and stuff; doing the quality assurance systems and generally, the day to day role, is responding to the ground level with tutors being off; cover; meetings etc. etc. But, behind that, the long run is just basically moving with the trends of provision and sorting out really what direction you want to go.*

The only direction that John wanted to travel was the direction that the college was already moving in, "*because it's like a business and you've got to run really efficiently*

and effectively". There was no rancour, just an internalisation of the college's priorities.

Where some trainees felt unsure of their role at college, limits of responsibility and accountability are ill-defined even for many existing staff. Mark was unsure of the boundaries of his own position:

> *I'm showing uncertainty because it's just in the process of changing and I've become a zone leader with Phil because there is just too much work for him to handle by himself. So my role at the moment is currently being redefined. I'm still doing all my teaching hours and everything but, at the same time, I'm running round answering phones and sorting out problems that occur on a daily basis. And I'm trying to figure out between us and the divisional leader what it is that we're actually responsible for.*

His pay and conditions were "*hopefully*" going to be changed:

> *That's to be negotiated but we don't know what is going to happen and my hours are about to be reduced so I can take on some of the responsibility and we've had a lad who has handed his notice in yesterday so that might be on the back burner a bit and I might have to carry on… I'll still have to do the zone leader responsibility but I'll probably not get my teaching hours reduced just yet.*

Mark is largely passive within these putative changes as indicated by his own use of the passive voice. Pat had also just had his job title changed:

> *Before I was just purely teaching but now it would seem that the management wants me to pass on my knowledge and what I've gained so far to new teachers coming in. I mean, we've just got a new brickwork tutor, Terry, who has just started and it's just a case of how to set up things such as files for students and just basic things like that just to give him a little step up.*

Pat's use of the linguistic formulation "*it would seem that*" is again strongly indicative of a lack of power over his role. Both Mark and Pat are describing alienation as a result of division of labour. It is not their job to set their own work patterns or set their responsibilities and consequently they have little control over what they do. Moreover, like other teachers who participated in this research, both were teaching long hours while also being expected to fulfil many management and administrative duties over which they had little influence.

Likewise, trainees often identified their own lack of control in the circumstances of their placement: Ivana remarked that teaching her own students rather than those of existing teachers would be more enjoyable because she would direct how they were taught. No doubt placement trainees do have less control, but that of employed staff can be exaggerated, as indicated above. So, arguably, the experience of placement with its procedures, pressures and messiness is comparable to the experience of college staff. It is the ability to cope with the experience that may develop and such development is what marked experienced staff like Pat and Mark out from most of the trainees: they had learnt to handle the demands and the lack of autonomy. This limited space for individual autonomy is also suggested by John, the manager from the art department at City College quoted above. John, like other participants, did not mention lack of control as such but stressed the need for flexibility, which was tacit recognition. His attitude also undermines traditional notions of subject, despite the government's recent stipulation for more subject specialist ITT in FE:

> I think a successful placement…has to be quite dynamic… You've got to be exposed to all levels and you've got to just throw away the thought that you're a specialist in a certain area and be a general practitioner…

The comments from Pat, Mark and John raise the question considered later about whether a placement is primarily about learning to cope, or learning to teach.

Groups and cultures

The existence or otherwise of cultures within the FE college is central to this thesis and in answering my first research question (*How distinct are the college cultures that trainees experience in colleges?*) I address the issue finally and fully in the next chapter. Here, I present the evidence that that answer is based on and so I also use the term *group* to describe people who work or exist together without necessarily constituting their own separate culture by the precise definition used in chapter two. Initially these data relating to cultures and groups are from existing teachers before I look at what the trainees encounter on placement and so by what they may be enculturated.

Staffrooms are indicative of the diversity of experience and perception of parts of the college and the various staffrooms visited during this research were each subtly different from others. Nonetheless, they were more alike than dissimilar. On the whole they were cramped and cluttered; some were filled with chatter; some were quiet, impersonal spaces with people staring at computer screens; and others were vibrant and congenial. Occasionally desks contained photographs of family or cards from former students. One Skills for Life (SfL) teacher at City College with long experience described the staffroom as where she considered herself most comfortable and safe, a sentiment echoed by other teachers. Some, though, found their staffroom distracting ("*I can never do any work there.*") Therefore, what permitted feelings of safety and comfort, or induced irritation and discomfort appeared to differ at an individual level. Perhaps the most striking theme to emerge is the highly curtailed individual experience of the college beyond a teacher's own small part of it and even how little regular communication there is. Andrea, working with special needs students at City College "*never*" speaks to colleagues outside of her small section despite having been employed by the college for many years. She described this detachment from the wider organisation:

> *I know we're a massive institution but it boils right down to the people you are with and I just care about the students and the colleagues I work with. The rest is that it's almost like we are working within a little bubble within a massive bubble.*

Mark the plumbing teacher who worked in a centre away from the main site simply stated that he had "*no real line of reference on what other areas are like [in the college]*". He went on to say:

> *We hear stories but I wouldn't like to say too much about that and I do tend to ignore those kind of stories actually. We know certain things and there is a kind of north and south divide, if you like, between us and [the main college site].*

Mark's centre and the main college site are 300 metres apart on the same road. He worked in a cramped and typically cluttered staffroom where a total of fourteen staff are based. His four years at City College was his longest unbroken period of

employment apart from his apprenticeship and he, like many, alluded to turnover of staff in his department; one new teacher had started at nine in the morning, went off for a coffee at eleven and never returned. "*That was a record!*" If this was an atypical extreme, short-term work was part of the life of a construction worker:

> *In the building trade you never think a job's for life or a job's even for a year. I mean, a lad just started this week and we've been saying: 'you really should get Christmas out of this'. And that's our attitude. When you get on the site the first thing you think of is: 'am I going to get Christmas out of this?'.*

Although staff had previously remained in the plumbing department for decades before retiring, at the time the data was gathered there was a marked lack of teaching experience amongst the staff who predominantly were very new to teaching. Once again, discontinuity was apparent but these new staff were cohering around approaches that were quite different from former practice in the department.

> *[W]e all pretty much started around the same time so we've never been worried about things like [Ofsted]. We'd rather that happened because we want to do it right. I know there are older teachers here and people in power and things who do it in a certain way and cut corners and are frightened to death by things like Ofsted or EV [External Verifier] visits whereas we've always actively wanted EV to come in so we can say: 'right you tell us how it should be done because we've never done it before'. So we're more bothered with management really – cutting corners or undermining us or things in that area.*

This represented a new approach and new practices but for Mark and his colleagues, much more than others in the sample like Pat, there remained strong vocational influence. Pat, the woodwork teacher, worked in a centre three miles from the main site and it was "*very, very rare*" for him to meet teachers from other college centres, even his own line manager: "*You might get a visit from management once every four weeks on average but it's not a meeting as such; it's just something that they want to speak to you about.*" Pat complained about the tendency only to communicate by email and at the end of that week he would only have spoken to four or five people outside his own very small section about registers, key skills support for his students and so on. Rick, at the same centre as Mark described feeling "*uncomfortable*" if he had to visit other parts of the college, while Dave, a

sports teacher, travelled regularly between two centres for classes but even in passing still only spoke to a total of around eight teachers in a normal week. John, in arts, had no knowledge of other departments in the same building. He even seemed unaware of practice in sections within his own department. None of these people considered this separation to be especially problematic: when asked if he knew about teaching elsewhere Mark replied, "*But why would I know?*". These teachers in different parts of the one college share a common isolation, which is another of Marx's features of alienation. Yet, to anticipate a point developed later, that isolation does not imply distinctive or self-sustaining cultures.

Even within discrete college sections individuals were isolated. Inside Andrea's department there was "*minimal*" communication or resource sharing, because they were all "*working in little pockets*". She kept her own materials at home, which was partly a consequence of lack of space. Though she was an established and respected member of staff Andrea felt isolated even inside her own department:

> *In terms that I can't share my lesson plans; I can't share my scheme of work with people; I can't get feedback from other people even just to talk about daily problems because [her manager] is just so busy really. She's got a list as long as her arm and it's only by chance really that you might bump into someone in the canteen and then you just don't want to talk about work all the time.*

There was a "*core*" of staff in the department who knew each other well and who were very close because they had been there longest, though their size was diminishing. New staff found it hard to join this core "*[u]nless they go the distance*". How long was the distance? "*About five years! No, to be honest the distance now is if they can do a year then they are doing well. Because people just go; they just leave; they just resign.*" This recurring theme of high staff turnover is essential to understanding the existence and influence of college cultures because so many groups of teachers were then very new. This break from the past could be considered positive, though. Rick identified how the many newer staff in his section who had recently completed teaching courses were combining "*in a little buzz group*" and "*progressing*" by coexisting but not cooperating with the group of older and more

inflexible teachers, including the manager, who Rick considered individualistic. The two groups were not antagonistic but did things differently. Rick said of the older staff, "*They don't really interfere that much, as long as they can see results.*" Discontinuity of practice, not cultural stability within this department is apparent here. To highlight this, shortly after the final interview Rick, just like Pat had been, was moved to manage provision at a different centre as a result of the high turnover of staff as well as their own commitment and capacity. In a period of months Rick's coalescing buzz group lost two members.

Writers including Clow (2001) and Lucas (2004b) identified teachers' former vocational areas as having formed their professional identity which they then carried into their teaching role in FE. Robson *et al* (2004) argue that this former identity took precedence over any identity deriving from teaching, in part because it gave them the credibility necessary to work as vocational teachers. This is certainly an element within some notions of good teaching found during this research but it is not clear-cut. Where Mark stressed craft expertise, Rick and Pat had absorbed and comfortably used the register of education. Edwards (2005b: 61) wrote that "learning can be seen as a process that starts with immersion in a language community" which ends with being "able to use the concepts and engage in and contribute to the processes of public meaning making." Arguably, Pat demonstrated that process over the three or four years he had been at the college and the conceptual signs and tools of education had come to mediate his understanding of education. In contrast to Mark, Pat and Rick would explain how far they had moved away from their former profession and their new identity apparently derived more from their new role in education, as suggested by Pat's use of educational discourse. However, the small groups that many teachers such as Mark, Pat and Rick were working in lacked any history and so the groups could not yet be said to be stable in their own right. Elsewhere, evidence of history and stability did exist amongst the staff in the business department in the city centre campus, where some teachers had been at the college for more than twenty years and where most were at least well established. This group of around ten business teachers purposefully took joint

responsibility for Constance, the trainee who was placed with them, as explained by her mentor Ian:

> *I think that in terms of the dynamics of the team and how it fits together I think our team is very supportive and the whole team understands the nature of the area of concern because I've discussed it with the team leader as well and I've discussed it with my line manager and with [the other course tutor] as well.*

These teachers, who were mainly based in one extraordinarily cramped staffroom, shared the teaching on their courses and had a common approach to students. They gossiped together, went out socially and every day they had drinks and lunch together in the college's coffee bar where Constance would join them while on placement. Most of the existing staff were male, but despite this she felt "*relaxed…in the presence of the other teachers*". The teachers shared resources together and although she did not have her access password to a computer for many weeks, the other staff would log her on. Constance soon "*felt part of the group*", as later did a newly-qualified teacher who had recently been employed on a permanent basis*.* Interestingly, her mentor Ian was less definite about Constance's integration after six weeks of her placement. When asked if Constance had become like a City College teacher he replied:

> *she has a way to go yet, partly because there is a non-teaching element to being in the team which is about being around and having a natter and going for coffee. I think part of being a team is that recognition that you're part of the team … and the nature of the student tutor's role is that she's here for the day when she teaches and then she's here for the morning when we're talking and preparing for the afternoon so she's not around as much as you would want her to be. It's a bit like if you were a part time tutor who came in, say, one afternoon or one evening or two evenings a week. They would be part of the team, obviously, but they would be an associate member type of thing.*

This recalls Andrea's use of the term "*core*" to describe the small group of older teachers in her section. Ian's reference to "*recognition that you're part of the team*" is also significant because it implies a self-conscious sense of belonging which is lacking elsewhere in the college. Moreover, Constance elliptically described how this very close-knit team, who had welcomed her and the other newly-qualified teacher, had ostracised another newly-employed but experienced teacher. This teacher had

openly raised concerns about the professionalism of some other members of the group, in particular what he had considered their unfair treatment of students. Unable to alter the situation and finding himself quickly cut out of the group, he had felt compelled to resign after only two weeks in post. This is stark evidence of a closed and self-sustaining group with set attitudes and procedures, which are not necessarily ethical. Returning to the definition of culture adopted in chapter two, arguably this new teacher had not adhered to "the correct way for new members to perceive, think, and feel" within the culture of the existing business teachers. Ian and his colleagues had the coherence and collective capacity to protect their way of doing things and eject a newcomer who would not comply. Their historical practice and their shared values constitute the material form of a self-sustaining culture, an argument taken up in the next chapter.

In a somewhat similar manner John explicitly only employs those who fit with the ethos of his department from amongst the trainees placed within his section, "*you have to be a team player. I don't like individuals who don't want to be part of the team.*" He explained "*a certain mentality*" necessary in similar terms to those quoted previously:

> *You've got to become more business like; you've got to become a manager rather than a teacher; you've got to be a salesman and sell courses. ... A tutor's role isn't just teaching anymore… and I think City College are really keen to have that kind of culture where tutors don't just look within the classroom but they look outside the classroom to see what is going on. Like at the moment it's employability; links with industry etc. etc. Tutors wouldn't normally think that way but now they are having to think that way.*

Echoing points made above, there is no evidence in John's explanations of a particular emphasis on expertise in creative arts, let alone subject specialist pedagogy. John was a relatively new member of staff who had been rapidly promoted and, as seen, he was fluent in the discourse of managerialism favoured at City College. His role is an important one, not least as gatekeeper to his department, but his prominence may obscure subtle contradictions in the attitudes of his fellow staff. Though the dynamicism and the links with employers that John identified were apparent from other participants in this department, what was more striking was their

commitment to the students and their emphasis on creative talent, which John did not prioritise or even mention. This is important, because a culture of business values appears pervasive in the marketing material and internal newsletters produced by the college and in the words of those in authority. However, while these values are influential, their apparent pervasion in official language may exaggerate the extent to which they actually determine teachers' practice. Though this discourse of business is dominant, it did not define everything teachers said or did. Moreover, even within the arts department itself there were distinctions between approaches and systems, which the fashion section exemplifies well.

The fashion staffroom, quite the most cramped and cluttered that I experienced, was like a three-dimensional decorator's mood-board with tailor's dummies, boxes full of textiles and tassels, as well as the ubiquitous files and papers. The walls were filled with cuttings, photos, posters, timetables and messages. There was one computer between the nine staff who used this space. Close by there were two classrooms and one room with rows of sewing machines. The smaller classroom, which was normally used for what were referred to as 'theory lessons' (for example on the history of fashion), contained around twenty desks. The main classroom, which was shabby and still small for the number of students, contained dummies with work in progress pinned on them, scraps of materials and drawers and boxes of threads and accessories; the walls displayed student-made posters. Though formal classes were timetabled in this room, other students and staff entered and left at ease throughout the day whether or not there was a scheduled class present and there was a constant hum of sewing machines and chatter. The staff, who were all female, and students, who were mainly female, talked about texture, colour and fit with obvious enthusiasm and the staff would illustrate techniques by showing garments that they had themselves made. It would be too trite to say that the staff had their own sartorial look, but several wore subtly unusual clothes and during her time placed there Paula altered what she wore from being very formal, even staid, to being informal and well accessorised. Though run-down and shabby compared to much of the college, the fashion section appeared to be an inspirational and creative space where teachers and students chose to spend time. By the account of the trainees

placed there as well as existing staff, that was partly due to the influence of Lynne who had been the manager for many years. This was more than just a group of people sharing a space. The members of the group had stability, a collective capacity to absorb new members and above all they shared values and approaches to teaching which were evident in the literally open classroom and fluid timetable. Like the business teachers described above, this small group can be considered as a culture, in contrast to groups elsewhere in the college.

Some trainees, like Linda, Danny and Sally were called upon to fill in for absent colleagues, which exposed the duality of how they were perceived while on placement; as members of staff and of the group when they were useful, but like any other student when they were seeking help. Hence their membership of the group was contingent not just upon general conformance with procedures or processes but compliance with demands beyond what should be expected of a trainee. Whilst these perceptions were not common across the sample, neither were they unique or unusual. In these circumstances it seems hard to perceive a community of practice involving movement towards full membership.

Respondents who reported a positive introduction to the placement also tended to report positive relations with other teachers including their mentor (Dixon *et al*: 2008: 6).

> *I have had lots of help and support. All of the staff have listened to any ideas I have put forward and supported it if they felt it was a good idea. In fact they have even stolen some of my activities!* [LD]

For one trainee, Linda positive relationships could, however, be brittle:

> *[The staff] are all positive as well. They are always approachable and they are willing to like assist me. I have never found anyone wanting. They talk to me they listen to me so that's quite important to respond to my needs so I don't see a problem with them at the moment.*
>
> *I am really beginning to know my own worth. … I am really happy.*

This trainee dropped out of her placement teaching Skills for Life at City College a month later, citing severe problems relating to staff in her department. Other trainees found relationships with other staff to be difficult from the start:

> *The teachers did not tell me that they had come to the end of their units…very, very frustrating and upsetting is an understatement.*

Sean had only briefly spoken to three members of staff out of the large sports department after four weeks of his placement. Though Sean could not name him, these three included his mentor, who is supposedly the most important source of support and guidance for trainees while on placement.

Mentors

Each of the three conceptualisations discussed, CoP, CHAT and *field/habitus,* highlights the significance of social contact and relationships. Allied issues of power, conformity and expedience within these relationships are critical and the mentoring of trainees while on placement in college starkly reveals these issues. Nothing is more illustrative of the general messiness of the placement experience than the diversity of experience of mentoring. The previous chapter described the government's commitment to subject specialist training as an integral element of FE ITT based upon a pattern of education shaped by schools, which seemed ill-fitted to FE. This integral specialist element was to be delivered primarily through mentoring by a subject specialist teacher during placement. As it is obliged to do, the university had closely followed the government's line on the use of mentors and each trainee had to meet their placement mentor regularly and keep a record of these meetings in their Personal Development Plan. Moreover, to pass one of their modules each trainee had to complete a satisfactory teaching observation performed by their mentor who would assess the trainee's session using a university-produced form. Like any teaching observation form, this leaves a great deal to subjective judgement. The literature produced by the university stressed the mentor's importance and mentors were offered their own training by the university, though none interviewed had taken this up. The university also produced a handbook for mentors to help them fulfil their role, which is summarised as follows.

> As a mentor to a trainee on the course, you are likely to be an experienced colleague and critical friend in the trainee's own workplace and understand the requirements of teaching/training in the trainee's subject area. You should have the opportunity to meet the trainee regularly and for the trainee and yourself to observe each other's teaching/training.

Mentors were to offer general "support and guidance" and "a supportive and confidential initial counselling facility for the trainee." Mentors were also to provide "guidance on subject specialist pedagogy". The handbook then advised on "ground rules in mentorship" and "the making of a good mentor" stressing current knowledge, enthusiasm, commitment and giving time, although the university had little if any sway over how mentors were chosen. Nonetheless, mentors featured strongly in trainees' responses and especially their notions of the ideal placement. During such an ideal placement the hypothetical mentor would have enthusiasm, commitment and, above all, time to work with the trainee intensively at first before incrementally allowing the trainee her own independence. The reality of college placement was usually quite different; while on placement the onus was explicitly on the trainee to seek help and instigate meetings. More generally this research suggests that the mentoring relationship is unpredictable and therefore, to reiterate a point from the previous chapter, it is an unstable foundation on which to form any version of professionalism.

Nevertheless, the mentoring relationship could be formative and significant for trainees. One said "*[My mentor is] great, she's really good. I feel I've got the best mentor from the whole group"* [LD]. Paula described her mentor as being of "*very great assistance*" and "*very friendly*". When Paula first arrived at the college her mentor, Lynne, also the manager of the fashion department as already mentioned, had spent time taking her around the college, introducing her to people, explaining how to get copies made, where to find resources and how to log on to the only computer. She had also shown Paula the library and where the staff all had lunch together. Lynne was instrumental in making Paula feel part of the group of teachers, who Paula described as "*a family*" and despite the pressures of her own job, Lynne prioritised her relationship with Paula. Similarly, Constance regularly met Ian, her

mentor at City College: "*It has been a very positive relationship. I wouldn't think of anybody who could have been a better mentor than him. He was very good with me.*" Constance was able to explain particular techniques that Ian had shown her in their regular meetings, for example what she referred to in her research diary as "*threads and echoes*" to connect themes between lessons over a long period. Though beneficial, these techniques were hardly subject specialist. Ian was both positive about being a mentor (*"I do like the role"),* and he was also specific and considered in what help and advice he gave Constance. He judged her subject knowledge and her materials to be strong so:

> *Where [Constance and I] have had conversations it's been mostly about delivery and making the lessons appropriate to the experiences of the students and that is where I will say that it's not about what material is actually included; it's about the presentation of it ultimately. And there have been one or two points where we've had a concern and that is about how we make it more real. And that's been the thing that I've been trying to get her to work on.*

Once again, this is general not specific pedagogy. Ian described how they initially planned lessons together:

> *My role has been to assist and occasionally I've jumped in and said: 'What about this as an example or what about that as an example? Can you think of an example?' So it's kind of like trying to put a bit more flesh on the bones because that's just the way I do stuff.*

Though Ian and Constance had a productive collaboration that seemed to fulfil many trainees' desires for a structured increase in autonomy, how Ian came about being a mentor is instructive. The member of staff initially identified as mentor went off on long-term sick leave and Ian felt it unfair for Constance to be left alone. Moreover, he had formerly been a trainee at City College and had had a very poor experience with his own mentor. "*Basically I always said that if I was going to be in that role then the experience would not be a poor one."* For Ian the role of mentor was personally important and one on which he had reflected, but he only took on the role by chance. This instance indicates the haphazard process of linking mentor with mentee that Ofsted (2003: 18) had identified many years previously. Jocelyn, a mentor working in Early Years at Shire College talked about meeting her mentee, Asaf and arranging to

have him based close to her and to more formally meet him for an hour once a week to discuss his progress. According to Asaf this was a very productive and developmental relationship. However, Jocelyn described becoming his mentor because no one else would, though she was not reluctant. By contrast, Sally who took *"classes for a tutor who was off sick without any support whatsoever"* echoed several trainees who simply did not have a mentor or were unaware of who their mentor was. When asked about his mentor, Sean replied, "*I haven't been given one. No one has basically said I've got one. I should have one according to [the University]… No one has said anything.*" There was, nonetheless, a tutor who he felt closest to and who I subsequently discovered had been identified to the university as his mentor by the manager of the sports department. This tutor, Dave, was in his own first year of full-time teaching and was unqualified; indeed he was taking an in-service ITT course similar to Sean's. Dave had not volunteered for the role of mentor, but had been asked by his line-manager in such a way that he felt that he had little choice. Even so, he regarded being a mentor as being "*kind of good for [him] as well*" with regard to his own teaching and career. Sean was later to identify Dave's approach to structuring a class as influential; but Dave was only beginning to find his way about the college and the courses, although he was considerably more confident and capable than Sean.

Some trainees reported stark discrepancies between the university's expectations of mentors and how the mentors behaved. Lizzie said:

> *My mentor was of the 'old school' and [said] "I don't do lesson plans. You'll find out. I don't do all this.'…I just thought they don't want me here, this person doesn't do what the uni[versity] says they're supposed to do, but I've got to try and fit it in and I can't fight with them because they're my mentor.* [LD]

Others could not even get to see their mentors. Gareth, an ESOL specialist wrote in his diary:

> *My mentor is actually Lord Lucan. I'm lucky to find him and when I do he's always so busy that I get the impression that he forgot he was supposed to meet me until I'm there….I bet I could probably be here for the rest of the year*

and he wouldn't chase up my progress because he won't remember who I am. I can understand from his point of view that I'm probably just an unwanted inconvenience. [Work diary entry]

*Ohhh, I was so close! I thought it was so close I could taste it. In I went on Wednesday morning to the faculty office, hoping to find my mentor, hoping he'd sorted out my timetable. Alas, he wasn't there, and hasn't been all week. He's on sick now. I mean I know I can be a nuisance at times but I didn't think I had **that** effect on people.* [Work diary entry, subsequent week; original emphasis]

Nevertheless, Gareth felt well supported by other teachers as did Danny, who was largely ignored by his mentor at Town College. As mentioned above, Ivana reiterated how she "*felt like a burden*" to her mentor. Linda, who was to drop out of the placement due to poor relations with staff, had initially described her mentor as "*helpful*", and their rapport as "*cordial*". However, it would appear in hindsight that the mentor had simply allowed Linda to take classes with little guidance or support as a matter of convenience, which Linda had been prepared to do at the outset.

For those trainees such as Asaf, Paula and Constance having a mentor who was interested and committed helped them to settle early in the placement. However, trainees such as Danny and Precious developed their practice despite relatively poor relations with mentors and so a question remains about what trainees learn from the relationship with their mentors. Constance, Paula and even Sean were all able to describe aspects of practice that they had taken from their mentors, yet what they learnt cannot be described as elements of subject specialist pedagogy as these were inherently generic and involved general principles of, for instance, topic sequencing, structuring sessions and behaviour management. There is no evidence from this research nor that of the wider *College Experience* project that distinct subject specialist pedagogy was imparted or encouraged in trainees, nor indeed that such distinct subject specialist pedagogy exists at all in FE where the content of programmes is wide and fluid (Fisher & Webb 2006).

Even within positive mentoring relationships there was a clear hierarchy because the trainees needed to comply with the mentors, as expressed most plainly by Lizzie above. For Asaf, Paula and Constance such compliance may be considered as

benign but even they had little room for their own agency. For other trainees, the poor mentoring relationship simply heightened their position of relative weakness, reliant upon the goodwill or tolerance of teachers at the college. In these cases the trainees' dysfunctional relationship with their mentor could be said to reflect the broader dysfunctional group in which they were placed. For some trainees, the mentoring relationship meant learning about isolation, but even when the rapport was positive its dynamic exposed how trainees were learning to cope with a general lack of control over the content and direction of teaching. This may be considered as learning to cope with alienation not as angst but in the strict sense of diminished control over the process and product of labour and it is key to understanding the development of teachers. Arguably, coping with alienation both collectively and by applying what individual agency trainees had is a very useful thing to learn from a mentor because in the circumstances of FE colleges the pressure to conform and surrender all agency is powerful; to *"roll with the punches"* as John the divisional leader put it. Nonetheless and regardless of their mentor, each of the trainees in the sample was able to discuss or demonstrate how they had developed as teachers despite the huge range of their own biographies and their experiences on placement. Each was clear that they had progressed in some way and that they felt differently about themselves.

Learning and becoming

Trainees almost invariably talked about how they had progressed and changed on their placement, even if they were unable to identify precisely how. I start this section by connecting the placement with the university-based element of the ITT course and how in hindsight the trainees felt they had been prepared. Constance described how she had been given a technical preparation for the placement, but not for its emotional impact. Linda, who was to drop out, was content with the grounding given at the university:

> *apart from the teaching it was explained to us what we are expected to be doing. We were told what we were expected to get back. We were really given enough information on what to do, and possibly we would have some problem*

and what to do if we had this problem and all the time to report back to the tutor.

Sean felt poorly prepared, though this was not a common view, and some trainees valued the advice given, though occasionally this was only in retrospect. For example, some stressed at the end that they were glad that their tutor had limited their expectations of placement before they had set out. For many, however, there was a disjuncture between the university classes and the placement illustrated by this extract:

> *We learned about the theory behind teaching and learned how to plan a lesson. We had to plan a lesson and teach the first twenty minutes of the lesson you'd be teaching to the rest of the group. I think with that it's one of those tricky areas because you're doing it to your group, you're doing it to your peers, you're doing it to other people who are training to be teachers so it's not realistic to some extent. You know you haven't got the pupils there and everyone's well behaved and we know that isn't the case in a classroom environment, that doesn't happen.* [JT]

Harkin's (2005: 165) research into the professional development of experienced and trained FE staff found that they:

> held positive views about reflective practice, but mixed views about theory, which is perceived by many solely as codified, propositional theory, associated with canonical names.

The data from trainees suggest that these mixed views about theory form early. Maslow's hierarchy was occasionally mentioned by trainees, as was Bloom's taxonomy and there were more frequent references to students' learning styles. These allusions were characteristically vague and applied to a commonsense comprehension of the world that the trainee had apparently already held prior to the course. As opposed to challenging or altering pre-existing attitudes the course's theoretical element appeared to reinforce these attitudes by allowing them to be mediated or justified through the use of educational terms. So, their pre-existing understandings or prejudices were lent a name by the ITT course. For example, some respondents alluded to a Rogerian approach to learners but as Hyland (2009: 122, original emphasis) argued of post school education more generally, "Rogers has never had any *practical* influence." Reference to Rogers expressed a moral

attitude to education and its perceived liberational potential, not to pedagogy as such. More generally, however, the substantial theoretical element of the university course rarely featured except in passing. Theory apparently lacked relevance and trainees tended to stress technical issues that had been covered on the course, especially those relating to lesson planning. Even these references tended to be general and uncritical and there was often an indifference expressed towards theory. Some trainees counter-posed elements of theory with what they considered the more pressing and significant concerns of classroom management and dealing with students more generally. They wanted more of the latter and none was calling for a critical pedagogy.

Yet, trainees frequently referred to the transformative impact of the experience of placement. This could be specific; Constance identified how she had learnt about public speaking; or it could be general. Even Sean conceded that he had learnt a lot. Paula, from West Africa, had found out about "*the culture of British people*" on placement; happily her impressions were more benign than those of Precious and her experience was entirely positive ("*My placement was very wonderful"*). Yet even when the experience had been troubled, the placement had been beneficial; Danny epitomised this contradictory response to his experience in college. Explaining the elements of his Lego model representing his placement he said, *"I've had a fantastic placement in quite a few ways even though at times I felt I'd been eaten alive."* He complained about how *"in the sports department, the students have all the power…The teachers have to succumb to their needs and wants."* Examples he gave were of shifting assignment deadlines and signing students off for their Educational Maintenance Allowance despite their absence from college because it is "*all about money and retention*". Yet, his placement had been "*fantastic"* and during an interview ten months later, by then employed at a college, he reiterated how useful it had been for him.

Gareth, the ESOL specialist, had been sent to an outreach centre in the community to teach foundation stage literacy, which he had not anticipated, but from this he had become more adaptive and independent. He had learnt to take the initiative and to

make the most of the opportunities presented by the placement. Karen, placed in the leisure and tourism department at Town College, created an allegorical Lego model of her placement that contained a large section of grey to represent the college ("*it's the most depressing of buildings.*") where separate departments never cooperated, though there were "*flashes of colour*". She described the constant anger of support staff and teachers, many of whom were still very committed to their students, who she also described as being constantly angry. It was a "*very inhuman environment*" and "*a factory system*" where students were frustrated "*because they are constantly being pushed to do things that they don't have the tools to do.*" Yet, she stated that her placement had been successful. "*I'm saying all this and my placement was good…I've learnt loads.*" As already indicated, such evidence questions what constitutes a good placement. It also questions what trainees learn on placement and how that affects what kind of teachers they become. When directly asked what they had learnt, trainees tended to mention the same technical skills such as the use of media projectors, writing lesson plans, using a whiteboard and particular teaching activities such as quizzes or ice-breakers. Such responses again illustrate the methodological limitations of bluntly asking what someone has learnt, and so the need for more searching methods. From other more oblique data, including the commentary on the Lego models, it is clear that the placements could be more broadly and profoundly formative, particularly when considered as an aspect in the process of becoming. One part of this process was the challenge to unrestricted expectations that many of the trainees had held prior to the course. Karen's model was the one with the Union Flag to represent government interference. Alluding to this model she considered the college's problems as being societal. The college was merely a "*small cog in a much bigger system where people don't have a lot of control.*"

Karen's was one of few allusions made by trainees to the influence of policy on colleges. However when they were mentioned, policy and government agencies, Ofsted in particular, were generally condemned as malign. The trainees' opinions of policy also had an inverse correlation to their perception of teaching as universally benevolent and therefore above society. Teaching represented a kind of moral

absolute so anything government did could be seen as tarnish. These condemnations were sweeping rather than specific and were formed on the basis of their experience as well as what they had been told on placement. Apart from terms relating to the National Qualifications Framework (for example, "*these were entry level students*") and allusions to initiatives such as Widening Participation and Skills for Life, there were very few mentions of policy. Where policy was mentioned, it was poorly understood. Nevertheless, policy has shaped the trainees' ITT course and I will argue in the next chapter that it therefore influences what enculturates the trainees. Furthermore, Government reforms have determined many of the mechanisms of compliance that exist in colleges and which promote performativity. Therefore, there is a dichotomy between phenomena and the perception of those phenomena by the trainees. The general absence of policy in trainees' accounts may be explained by its being part of the unnoticed *doxa* of FE or as Jenkins (1992: 71) wrote, the "subjective expectation of objective probability". More prosaically, the intense and overwhelming day-to-day pressure of the placement itself may explain the absence of a coherent understanding of reforms in trainees' accounts. For instance, Alex, a sports specialist placed in a small college, described the "*hard work*" of teaching as "*the biggest shock*", the need to "*keep [the students] entertained*", but also "*the importance of getting to know your students*". Those raw concerns may have obscured what the trainees did know about policy, which was simply less urgent.

On the whole, trainees reported positive responses from the students they taught while in college. Asaf expressed this enthusiastically:

> *The lovely thing is, they've been actually saying thank you and stuff like that and I've been thinking, "wow", because I don't expect that from students, them actually valuing you, your teaching methods and your style and the way you are and that time you're in the class with them. It means a lot, and, you know, the way they talk to you. […] I didn't expect this.* [LD]

Responses like this were general across departments and institutions. Whilst some respondents recognised their diminished status as trainee teachers had affected some aspects of classroom behaviour, this was rarely problematic and they were able to draw on their own experiences of being students to overcome difficulties.

Many students were very challenging but, for instance, Constance learnt tolerance and to cope with not being able to control the late arrival of her students in class. Danny used his Lego model to portray how he had learned to restrict what he referred to as his "*creativity*" in teaching and he graphically demonstrated his transition from a horse ("*trustworthy and friendly, perhaps too friendly*"), to a hippo ("*cute but dangerous*"), then to a pig ("*selfish*") and finally to a cross between a tyrannosaurus rex and a security guard ("*ferocious*"). This transition was, explicitly, due to the students for whom he still retained fondness and commitment. This attitude was even more apparent in the later interview when he was in post. Other trainees echoed aspects of Danny's reflexive awareness of his own change in the process of becoming a teacher. Arguably, the contradictory experience of students on placement seemed to affect trainees' practice by persuading them away from interaction and towards more traditional didacticism. However, those contradictions little dented the expressions of altruistic commitment to education. As Danny put it in hackneyed terms, *"Let's face it. You don't go into teaching to get rich. You go into teaching because you love it."*

Perhaps paradoxically, the experience of placement or even the experience of being a teacher usually seemed to reinforce this benevolent and worthy image of the teacher. This ethical image is compelling but it is contradictory, which may explain why the transition to describing oneself as a teacher was rarely smooth. Sally, quoted above felt unable to "*ascribe*" herself the title of teacher despite all but completing her course. This may be explained in a crude dialectic; she had not attained enough to make the qualitative change to becoming a teacher. But, more convincingly her reticence seems to have derived from a sentiment of not yet achieving worthiness; teaching as a state of grace, almost. This shows the strong cultural connotations attached to education in society, which makes the notion of education so ideologically powerful. More striking still is Mark's reluctance. Mark, who had been in post for four years and was fully teacher-qualified, was reluctant to call himself a teacher due to "*a problem with self esteem",* again indicating relative social status. He was happier calling himself a trainer and he recognised that he had changed as a person*,* but would still introduce himself as a plumber, partly because

he still works in the evenings and at weekends as a plumber. Pat was further along the route of transition from joiner to teacher after a similar time in post:

> *I think the percentage between the two has changed more in the way of a teacher. I feel more of a teacher now than I do as a joiner. If you'd asked me that at the start then, obviously, I would have said that I feel like a joiner.*

Pat described the main factor in this change as being the organisation required as a teacher:

> *The biggest difference from me being a joiner to being a teacher is the organisation part of it because you've got to be probably ten times more organised… and that's probably, for me, the main thing.*

This resonates with a perception of teaching as at least partly a technical and even bureaucratic role involving the completion of what many respondents referred to as "*paperwork*". When asked about his expertise, Pat implicitly understood that term referred to his teaching which he felt had developed enormously: "*I've had a chance to sit down and the dust has settled and my teaching – I can't tell you how much it's changed! It's unbelievable!*" He recognised that it would be "*hard*" to return to his former career where he would "*waste*" his new skills:

> *I feel further away now than I ever have done from carpentry and joinery because you were always working on the sites in the cold or in the blazing heat. I feel a million miles away from that sometimes and I don't know whether that's come from just being in teaching in general or from the fact that I've developed, like I say, and learnt new skills. I think it's probably a combination of both really.*

It may be significant that Pat was more remote from colleagues than Mark and so was not surrounded by other joiners. His isolation may have allowed a particular evolution of identity to take place and Pat had gone through "*vast change*" to beyond the point of no return. Yet, once more, he avoided the title teacher; if he were to introduce himself to someone he would say he was a trainer. Like Mark above, this was explained in part by his terms and conditions. The college paid him as a trainer; "*although money shouldn't come into it, the monetary aspect does.*" The link between status and financial reward could scarcely be clearer. Although his job is ostensibly identical to those on teaching salaries with similar responsibilities, he is

paid as a trainer and so he considers himself a trainer. This chimes with Andrea, who had been a teacher for longer than Mark or Pat and who in conversation talked about her role *"as a teacher".* She had previously worked at City College in a variety of support roles, but was now employed on a teaching contract. Like Pat, she would find it hard to return to her former roles because as a teacher she felt "*valued an awful lot more [by her] peer group*". Moreover there was an explicit financial aspect to how she felt about herself.

> *I know it might sound a little bit crude but also by the salary that I'm receiving as well. I mean as a support worker and as a work experience coordinator the money was not great but now I feel as though I'm earning my money now and that I'm giving it the best shot I can really. And that makes a difference really – to be valued in that way.*

This aspect of identity, recognised as important by Pat and Andrea, was not directly related to a group or college culture but in this instance to status related to economic situation and so to the values of wider society. The status of craft vocations is also salient here. Furthermore, the explanation for the enormous imbalance between men and women on the ITT course needs to be sought in wider society. This imbalance, almost two women to every one man, reflects the most recent statistics for FE teachers which cover the year 2007-2008. These indicate that just under 60% of teachers in FE are now female (LLUK 2008). FE teaching is now, arguably, perceived as a female occupation. Of course, there are exceptions. For example, all the construction teachers I met were male, though Mark proudly informed me that his wife, who he had met on his own college plumbing course, was a better plumber than he was. Notwithstanding this individual and the few women taking construction courses at City College, trades such as plumbing and woodwork remain conventionally male. That men and not women choose these trades and consequently become teachers of those trades cannot be explained by looking at the placement or the ITT course. To repeat the phrase used by Colley *et al* (2003b: 488) "a sense of what makes 'the right person for the job'" derives from society's structures and attitudes and that applies to FE teaching, too. The gender imbalance on the ITT course and in colleges is partly a result of colleges teaching more courses leading to careers considered 'female' such as childcare (though again, beware of

sweeping generalisations since a man, Asaf was a childcare teacher trainee) and the concurrent decline of courses in 'male' vocations like engineering. Another pertinent structural change is that FE teachers used to be paid more highly than school teachers and maybe even held higher status. They were, after all, lecturers. The loss of relative status is debatable, but the discrepancy between salaries certainly now greatly favours school teachers. So FE teaching may have become more female because in an unequal society it is a less attractive career choice for men, who generally have more choice than women. It has not become more female so much as it has become less male. The imbalance may also reflect the large number of part-time staff in FE who, according to the same statistics cited above, are disproportionately female. In any case, a study that just looks at the individual men and women on placement would ignore many of the important reasons those men and women were there in the first place.

These notions of gender constitute a specific example of the wider cultural influences on teachers and teaching, but there were many others evident in the data collected. Norms or cultural constructions mediate understanding of education and form the position of reverence that education holds in society, at least while unexamined. These are apparent in the altruistic and moral terms used by participants to rationalise what they do or their reason for being a teacher; "*giving something back*" was an expression used, for example. Andrea's attitude was typical: "*I can feel the reward and the satisfaction that I'm getting and they outweigh anything that I've ever done before, to be honest.*" In chapter two the Gramscian notion of hegemony was briefly discussed and education plays an important ideological role in maintaining the prevailing values of society precisely because of its own apparently intrinsic value. When Tony Blair promoted education he was positioning himself with what is considered a universal good in British society. Education is a potent symbol in society, which is why Blair appealed to it, and its potency is evident in its influence over what the participants in this research considered their role to be. However, that is not to say that the feelings towards education expressed by participants were ersatz. Many participants talked about education in relation to tender hopes for their own families and some had made financial sacrifices to become teachers. Mark, Pat

and Rick, all formerly construction workers each independently described how they had taken a wage cut to go into education and how consequently they continued to 'do foreigners' in the evenings and at the weekends to earn extra cash. They had taken the wage cut and chosen to work in education precisely because of its perceived cultural value, thereby altering how people thought of them and consequently improving their social status (each of them now wore a tie in college every day whether they were in a classroom or a workshop). Rick joked how people at his rugby club treated him differently now when he told them he was a teacher (rather than a joiner) and Mark, in his early thirties, had recently enrolled on a degree course. Their conception of the cultural status of teaching as higher than that of construction workers was formed before even deciding to work in education as a result of their lived biography and the *fields* they had been exposed to. This perception of relative cultural status, which simmers throughout the findings, can only be well understood in the context of society's inequalities as explored in the next chapter. What is clear, though, is that the trainees had absorbed a great deal about teaching and education before placement, which remained very influential.

Judgement and classroom practice

Many of the trainees explained how their confidence had grown over the period of the placement, though whether this constitutes learning is moot[7]. More specifically and observably, learning through the experience of placement and teaching was apparent in judgement making. Constance exemplified a growing capacity to make judgements as a teacher. After introducing an unsuccessful discussion in class relating to a relevant current issue that she expected the students to have known about, she wrote in her diary:

> *I have therefore resolved that I will introduce in my teaching a section where I refer to articles from newspapers as marketing* [her specialism] *is a practical subject which affects people from all walks of life.*

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[7] This is taken up in the next chapter.

Constance later wrote about the judgement she made about how long to run a video before the students disengaged and how this related to the time of day. In her final interview after the course Constance described how she had learnt when and when not to "*open up*" to students, by which she meant what behaviour to allow and what to prevent. "*If [the students] are bored, you should change tack; maybe employ another method.*" Such learning can seem banal but there was a sense that the trainees had found their own meaning within these ostensibly trite descriptions of practice. This was more than a rote-learnt logarithm, it had been internalised by Constance just as a balance between sternness and joviality had been by Danny. If mental life is apparent in its expression, then the placement allowed the trainees to become like teachers by thinking like teachers. Arguably this growing adoption or normalisation of the process of teaching can equate with raising confidence. Once again, this may be reduced to a notion of coping but more significantly it represents part of the dialectical relationship between learning and identity: teachers are as teachers do. Moreover, these judgements are a marker of progress on the placement and of learning through experience more generally.

This was also true for experienced teachers in post. Rick noted from teaching the same topic in different ways that, "i*f [the students] don't know they're doing key skills I get 90% of the work done that I want. If they know it's key skills, I'm lucky to get 30/40%.*" His judgement was thus to employ a certain subterfuge and to maintain the students' engagement through activity based on woodwork at all times. Likewise, Andrea has to follow a set national curriculum with her special needs students but she has learnt to modify it based upon her judgement of their personal record files before entering the course:

> Like this drugs stuff, because you can hit all the targets on the adult curriculum by doing other topics too. So that's what I tend to do otherwise it's a bit dry, looking at telephone directories and things like that.

Judgements like these related not just to practice but also to predictions of student success or failure. Although Mark conceded to exceptions:

> We know who will [succeed]…. generally speaking we are mostly right with our first impression of these people and the first impression is not just based on the person. We have their exam results and their reports from school and

*things like that and we tend to make our decisions at that time because we
have to put them into groups.*

He pointed to the previous year's results to demonstrate that these predictions had
been correct. In other words, his ability to make judgements was well founded,
though this may of course be self-fulfilling. Pat came to subtly different conclusions
about achievement. He was more sceptical of examination results judging them as
inadequate on their own as indicators of student progress or knowledge. Moreover,
Pat believed that good achievement figures did not necessarily demonstrate that a
course is running properly. This considered opinion had led him to use
questionnaires with the students:

> *I think they give me a truer feeling of how the students are feeling and I think
> that is more important sometimes than actual achievement – how they feel on
> the course. Do they feel comfortable and do they think they are learning
> subject specific things? Are they learning as they should be and do they feel
> comfortable with the resources and the methods that I'm using?*

This extract demonstrates Pat's commitment to emotional or therapeutic aspects of
teaching, but it also demonstrates his judgement based on experience. Indeed it is
evidence of learning through experience.

The good teacher and cultural constructions

Despite their preparation by the university, trainees' practice on placement often
reverted to that of their own educational experience at school, college or university,
and this was especially the case where their prior experience matched the practice
of teachers they encountered while on placement. This strongly echoes the findings
of Bathmaker and Avis (2007). Lack of confidence or knowledge about alternative
approaches may explain this reversion to what they had previously seen.
Furthermore, the likelihood of reverting to a previous embedded understanding of
teaching was raised by the desire to be considered competent by teachers at the
placement college. Once again these pre-existing constructions of teaching practice
derive from the biography of trainees. Moreover, these constructions very often
related to the vernacular discourse of traditional school or college teaching. Asaf,

placed in Shire College, explained how he approached his teaching early on in his placement and the influence of his own experience, which was typical of others':

> *I modelled [my teaching] on past experience from what my A level teachers did and what happened at university…five years ago and there it was just lectures. At college it was a lot easier but even then it was just lectures. The teacher just stood up and like nearly the whole two hours just writing on the board and then maybe half way through just giving you some questions to do...so I modelled it exactly on how I was taught, … the way I was taught so it was just natural that I picked that up.* [LD]

Later in his placement Asaf once again described this reversion to embedded notions of teaching, though there was some movement away from it as well:

> *Initially when I started it was just me standing up there giving them all the info but I don't know, as time goes on they get used to you. You just need that time… once that time has passed then eventually they open up and you open up 'cause the first few weeks it was like hell 'cause there was that big barrier there, like you have your stuff… but then as time went on I could just move around freely, get talking to some of them and even have a laugh with them and they enjoyed it.* [LD]

Stepping back to familiar practice was in response to the pressure of coping with the placement. In interviews with several trainees the form of teaching described was often essentially traditional and related to conventional school relationships; some used the word "*pupils*", others talked of "*skills transfer*". Danny was similarly candid about the influence of his own education on his teaching. He had attended grammar school in Northern Ireland (which still maintains the 'eleven-plus' qualification) and consequently "*didn't know about colleges.*" Danny expressed how what he found in England was "*completely different*" but that his Northern Irish background had helped him "*in dealing with certain situations*" with the very challenging students he encountered on placement through his being "*streetwise*". From that grammar school, two teachers had particularly influenced the way that he now taught albeit in partially conflicting ways; one was an English teacher who would get the students to act out Shakespeare:

> *It's the idea of being more hands on, you know, and not just sitting behind the desk. He made it so that you almost lived through the book. And that's what I*

try to bring into the classroom. Everything that we do in the college I apply it to the real world and I try to get as active in the classroom as I can.

The other was a sports teacher who:

was one of the most stern people in the world and he would push students' faces in mud, you know, in order to get results and winning is everything and losing is nothing. But he was a lovely man with it and even as hard as he was on the training field he would always take you aside to give you good advice on how to develop. So it was about not being continually hard on them. If I have an awful class and they are as annoying as hell and they're not doing what I'd like them to do I don't go off on one. I will give them a talking to and when they've toned down a little bit I'll go round and help them…. And that's what I learnt from my sports teacher.

Anyone who has been through a Northern Irish grammar school may well recall this latter approach, perhaps more bitterly than Danny, but though apparently successful for him it was not one promoted on the university ITT course. Initially, Danny had planned games and interactive activities for his teaching sessions more in the manner of his English teacher, but was unable to implement these due to the students' disruption and so he resorted to the more didactic teaching, transmission style teaching of his own past with the hard sports teacher.

In a different manner Mark also alluded to pre-existing notions because he was adamant that what made a good plumbing teacher was someone who knew their trade well. This is the traditional view of vocational teachers emphasising their trade skills as described by Clow (2001) and Robson *et al* (2004). By contrast Pat emphasised college procedures and certain technical aspects of teaching and he taught in a way that was very different to older colleagues. Moreover, his approach was consciously quite removed to how he himself was taught:

Some of my tutors, going back to my college days, were very rough; very no-nonsense sort of individuals. But I like to think that I am a bit more open in that respect and I try and give students options although not to the point where they will abuse the trust that I put in them or whatever. But we have to try and be a little bit more sympathetic, certainly to some of the learners we have. I mean, with the first years that I have in my class this year I would say that about a third of them have learning difficulties of some description…

He referred to being a "*social worker*" but what I have referred to as his emotional or therapeutic approach was not enculturated from established members of staff who had a sole emphasis on craft skill:

> *All right, you're there to teach a vocational subject but there are other issues outside of that and some of the lads have some serious problems family-wise and some financially and they find it difficult sometimes to find the money to get here.*

So, Pat's holistic concern for the student derived from outside the department, but also from outside his vocational background where:

> *I suppose sometimes you have that mentality and you have to be hard to a certain degree or harder than you would be in any other situation. I might be wrong about that but you have a different kind of mentality and it can be a little bit selfish sometimes and I think that some of the tutors that are here still have that kind of mentality.*

Arguably, this more sympathetic approach derives from a much wider cultural conception of what teaching is now about emphasising caring and holistic concern for learners rather than knowledge or skill (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009 and Atkins 2008). Pat, however, still stressed the development of his students' skills, and he was proud of his own. On looking closely at photographs of Pat's tiny, neat and well-organised staffroom I noticed that the shelving was unusual. Pat, ever the carpenter, had apparently added mouldings to the standard college-issue shelves. Nevertheless, Pat was now in a position to disseminate this notion of the good teacher as caring about the well-being of his students to new staff, along with his own custom-made resources. This demonstrates how individuals and not just cultures can be influential. Similarly influential in that he recruited staff was John in the arts department who stressed adaptability in his description of a good teacher: "*a good teacher can teach anyone and not just who they choose to teach.*" Importantly, John considered the placements as a means of selecting part-time staff, who do not have to go through a formal recruitment process and he had himself worked unpaid for a year before being offered a post at the college. John characterised a team of highly specialised craft teachers which had recently come into his division as "*insular*" and "*elitist*" unlike the people he wanted in his division. This is in stark

contrast to the vocationalism of Mark described above and reflects managerialist and corporate college values, which, as seen, John had internalised. This business-oriented influence is arguably more current, but it lacks the potency of morality that traditional attitudes to teaching have.

Returning to Danny reveals another significant aspect of social context in relation to capacity and attitudes. Danny described his background as "*privileged*" and one where education was revered:

> *my parents were always encouraging me to get an education. My dad left school at fifteen to work and he worked all the time until so many years ago so he had about forty-five or fifty years of work but he didn't say, at fifteen, that he wanted me to work in the family business. He said I needed my education and that if I wanted to come into the family business later on that was fine.*

This grammar school education and middle-class background constituted a *field* that enjoys status, even across the water on the mainland, and so provided cultural and social capital that transfers more easily between situations than formal learning. His *habitus,* palpable in his straight-shouldered stance, his easy self-deprecation and confident articulacy, permitted him the wherewithal to cope on a very challenging placement. Similarly, Martin, who came from a middle-class background and had been partly educated abroad, had complained to his course tutors about his initial placement in a university arts department and was moved to City College. This personal confidence to speak out contrasted with Sean, from a very different background in a northern mill town, who suffered the inadequacy of his placement in silence. The *field* that shaped his *habitus* made him unlikely to drop out, but able only to tolerate rather than actively change his situation.

So, what education entails and what constitutes good teaching are problematic as they subjectively relate to a particular personal biography, as well as to the values of society more generally. A teacher needs to respond to different circumstances by stepping between teacher and student-centred activities or varying their approach, for example. However, there will be core values and beliefs which stabilise the trainees' identity and these might in turn prompt them to resist or challenge existing

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norms. Winograd (cited in Dixon *et al* 2008: 10) used a tightrope walker as a metaphor to describe a teacher's identity. The tightrope walker uses the rope as a base structure to keep from falling into the abyss, so that while there is continuous movement from side to side and even much wobbling, the body always tilts back towards the middle. For many of the sample, tilting back to the middle meant reverting to a powerful, traditional perception of the teacher. In doing so, trainees are reverting to the norms of society more broadly and therefore once again the trainee must be placed in the context of society as a whole, not just the workplace where she is placed.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has set out the findings upon which to build a conceptualisation of how ideas about teaching are formed and spread. Already these data show a situation characterised by constant change and diversity where the interplay between individual and environment is complex and highly contingent on multiple factors relating to biography, setting and the wider social order. The evidence for the existence of cultures has been set out and the transformative effects of the placement have been considered. The most significant element to be revealed is the need to view teaching and the placement within an analysis of society as a whole, which understands inequality, control and how cultural constructions of professional morality, status and gender mediate attitudes to being a teacher.

Chapter Five: Some Conclusions

The previous chapter set out the data that were gathered during the study under broad headings and this chapter refines the discussion of that data to expressly address the four research questions.

1. How distinct are the college cultures that trainees experience in colleges?
2. To what extent are trainee teachers inculcated by what is around them?
3. How does their participation in the specific culture form their approach to students and to teaching?
4. How do they move from being trainees to becoming teachers?

I then attempt to conceptualise how trainees develop on placement and to enhance the understanding of how ideas about teaching are created and transmitted. This conceptualisation is informed and sharpened by the three theorisations that I have previously described (CoP, CHAT and *field/habitus*) and in applying these theorisations I am also seeking to evaluate their capacity to explain the formation and dissemination of ideas relating to teaching. What becomes apparent in this chapter is the importance of scope of vision. When the experiences of teachers and trainees are investigated closely they can appear very diverse and subject to local contingencies, but stepping back to look at the whole college or the whole sector reveals that this local messiness is consistent throughout. The messiness constitutes a paradoxical homogeneity. Therefore the local influences that looked so powerful when viewed close up appear relatively weaker when considered alongside wider societal influences.

This term *influence* is used frequently in the analysis and it is worthwhile considering what the expression implies. Its most basic definition is the capacity to have an impact on a situation, to alter or shape a set of circumstances, though the form influence takes is more problematic and so too is how the relative effects of various influences can be assessed. One way to comprehend influence is to relate it to Bourdieu's notion of arbitrary cultural legitimacy (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 23). In

chapter two I argued that cultural legitimacy can come about through open domination (such as the imposition of Napoleon's norms by his army) or through 'symbolic violence' where the domination of arbitrary cultural legitimacy is unseen because it has been internalised. In the latter, the norms of culture determine people's aspirations, but in either case the domination can be understood as influence. Many complain about the interference of government-funded agencies in FE (for example Simmons & Thompson 2007), though few would compare them to Napoleonic armies. Nonetheless, Standards Verification UK have the power to effectively close teacher training courses that it does not endorse, just as IfL can effectively sack a teacher by removing her licence to practise. Structural influences such as these are important within the teacher training experience and it is relatively straightforward to assess their impact because these influences are obvious. Less straightforward to assess is the influence of what is unnoticed or considered normal. Marx's understanding that ideas originate in people's experience of the world explains how the group with most power over how society is organised will have most influence over what is considered normal. As Marx (1970: 64; original emphasis) wrote, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force." This resonates with Bourdieu's concept of capital discussed below, and can be applied to ideas about education and teaching that are held in wider society. This wider view of ideology is crucial in this account of ideas relating to teaching. The much narrower influence of the specific experience of placement on an individual's practice or identity is certainly more problematic, but even here the notion of normalisation affecting expectations of behaviour or outcomes remains useful. Moreover, there is significant overlap between what was defined as learning in chapter two and the nature of influence as described here.

I start the discussion of conclusions with the first question on the existence of cultures within a college.

1. How distinct are the college cultures that trainee teachers experience in colleges?

Smith (2000: 20) wrote that, "the concept of culture is an open window through which we can identify the assumptions, values and classification systems in a particular location." However, even discovering the existence of a culture is problematic. In chapter two I defined a culture as:

> A dominant pattern of shared basic assumptions held by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has had stability and so can withstand tension and conflict. It, therefore, arbitrarily exists as the correct way for new members to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems and is apparent in the language, behaviour and artefacts used by members.

This very specific, even restrictive definition was adopted to necessitate a careful analysis of the practices and relationships in the range of settings I observed and investigated within City College, which is where this aspect of analysis mainly centres. This requirement for precision and evidence relating to the existence of distinct cultures was greatly informed by Bourdieu. By placing his discussion of culture within defined economic and social formations he demystifies some humanist notions about the inherent, a-temporal, and occasionally almost metaphysical value of culture found in some work (for example Smith 2000). The scope of this thesis is much narrower but the need remains for accuracy because of the range and hierarchy of influences on teachers and teaching that it is considering. Moreover, I have sought to avoid assumptions that superficial differences between sections in the college necessarily constituted diverse cultures. The cultures that influence teachers and trainees may exist at various levels, which demanded the various perspectives adopted in this thesis, focusing on national policy and wider societal attitudes, on college departments and on the lives of individuals.

The findings presented in the previous chapter strongly indicate the isolation of groups of teachers in college and even of individual teachers. In chapter three I also noted the paucity of college-wide communication at City College, which came in the form of occasional general emails and rarer printed newsletters if something was considered to be more important. Responses from existing staff at the college

frequently alluded to how rarely they met senior managers. Most strikingly, even well established staff communicated with very few colleagues outside their own group and these groups were cut off from other centres or schools (remember Mark's "*north and south divide*" between his and the close-by main campus). As Andrea graphically put it, "*we are working within a little bubble within a massive bubble.*" However, that isolation does not imply distinctiveness and the experiences described in the sports, construction, business, arts or special needs departments were more similar than different: heavy workload; coping with disaffected students; the burden of bureaucracy; the moral or cultural value of teaching. This certainly suggests "a pattern of shared basic assumptions" but shared beyond the college section or even beyond the college. Similarly, "the language, behaviour and artefacts" were common across all parts of the sample: lesson plans; interactive whiteboards; external verifiers; managers. Nevertheless, there were differences between the groups of teachers. The language heard in some staffrooms was coarser than in others and the technical terms used by plumbing teachers were obviously different from those used by key skills teachers. Their dress was different too, though not as might have been predicted. Each of the construction staff involved in this research wore a shirt and tie every day, while none of those in the business section did. In the latter, open-neck shirts, chinos and jeans were more *de rigueur* among the male staff. Some of these differences may be described as conventions related to a group or even to influential individuals but they do not meaningfully represent cultural differences. For example, some families regularly eat a meal at six o'clock, some at seven o'clock. That may be down to their conventional routine; but referring to that meal as tea, dinner or supper may reveal more significant cultural differences.

In all but a few situations within the college, to argue that small differences of dress or staffroom practices existed as 'the correct way for new members to perceive, think and feel in relation to [problems of external and internal integration]' except in a rather superficial way would be misleading. Certainly, dress, language and behaviour are evidence of different socialisation, but this is related to class, gender and race beyond the direct influence of the workplace (Colley *et al* 2003a: 49). On their own these conventions are not evidence of a sustainable local culture that affects ideas

about teaching. Moreover, focusing on these minor differences risks missing much more significant cultural factors in how people become teachers.

Applying the same rigour of definition to the stability or longevity of these groups of college teachers points to similar conclusions. The age and experience of trainees and existing teachers alike are important because culture requires some historicity. The rapid turnover of staff and the similarly rapid promotion of new staff to positions of responsibility away from their original sections meant that there were limited history and stability within the majority of the parts of the college investigated. Consequently, in the terms of the adopted definition, distinctive cultures relating to specific parts of the college seemed to barely exist. Arguably, distinctive cultures may evolve if staffing remains constant but that is moot, especially given the power of other broader cultural structures that are discussed below. The significant exceptions to this generalisation were the fashion and business departments at City College, both of which had long-term staff and cultural longevity. Furthermore, as described in the previous chapter, these sections had a record of integrating new members into a distinctive and apparently sustainable set of practices related to teaching and to patterns of social-interaction. Though both of these departments contained individuals who were central to the evolution of the culture, each had maintained this set of distinctive characteristics over a period of years even as staff had come and gone. It is important to stress, though, that the culture of these departments was not necessarily the dominant one in determining what kind of teachers the trainees placed there became.

This study involved teachers and trainees who came from a wide range of subject and vocational areas and previous analyses have emphasised the continuing influence on FE teachers' practice of the previous vocational area from where they came (for example Lucas 2004a and Robson *et al* 2004). Viskovic and Robson (2001: 234) argued that, "Most vocational teachers do not become fully participating members of a wider teaching community." However, the evidence from my data suggests that the influence of previous professions can vary widely. Mike considered himself still a plumber and he highlighted the need for vocational expertise while the

fashion teachers also retained close links with former employers. By contrast Andrea no longer considered herself a youth worker and Pat stressed how he taught woodwork was quite different to how he had himself been taught and he emphasised his developing teaching skills over his former craft. Ian was very definitely now a teacher of business, not the businessman he had once been. Significantly, how these people identified themselves does not automatically or directly relate to their former careers and nor do their former careers sustain current cultures. I will argue later that often these people's sense of identity relates to the complexity of their position in society as a whole more than to a professional community, but none of this implies that previous vocational practice is unimportant. Applying Bourdieu's concepts, their individual *habitus* was formed by the *field* or *fields* to which they had previously been exposed, including their former vocational setting. This conceptualisation of *fields* is particularly helpful because Bourdieu was clear about the inequality of status between *fields* and hence individuals' *habitus*. Hence, there is a hierarchy of influence because there is a hierarchy of *fields*. That vocational education and training has less status than academic education is pertinent here. Moreover, becoming a teacher may involve not only a change in identity, but also a change in status within society; to understand that change requires knowledge of both individual biography and the structures of society. Within this scope the mores of vocational areas have their place, but other wider influences very often appear stronger from the data gathered for this thesis.

Moving towards evidence from the trainees on placement, there is a noteworthy point to be made about the particular cohorts of trainee teachers investigated who have now gone on to work in colleges. Their relative youth and inexperience implies that any vocational influence will be weak simply because they had spent so little time, if indeed any, in a previous vocational setting. Some had come straight from college themselves or only spent a couple of years working in a hairdressers or gym. For these trainees, commonality of experience between their various placements was more immediate than former experience of distinctive work cultures. The messy experiences of finding a mentor; coping with a range of students; keeping up with course work; isolation or integration were general. Moreover, if attention is carefully

paid to what the various teachers and trainees actually do in class with their students rather than the topic they covered, the evidence for distinct approaches to teaching is thin. In the fashion and business sections there were approaches shared by the staff (the open classroom in fashion; case-studies and discussion in business), which indicate how these teachers have been socialised towards a norm of practice. However, even in these distinctive departments what the trainees experienced was coherence of practice, not a set of practices that were distinct in and of themselves from those found elsewhere. Those norms were observable amongst individuals elsewhere and they had not specifically derived from the groups of teachers who had adopted them.

So far the discussion has been restricted to the concept of culture. Turning to the identifying features for a community of practice, Wenger (1998) states these are mutual engagement; joint enterprise; and shared "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions and concepts" (p82). Once again these features are discernable amongst the business and fashion teachers. There is mutuality in how they share teaching of the same classes and create resources when they are self-consciously involved in joint enterprise. Furthermore, they have a shared daily routine and shared reference points relating to expectations of the behaviour of colleagues and students. These factors do not all co-exist elsewhere in the sections of the college that were investigated. However, as explored in relation to the second and third research questions below, the recognisable existence of a CoP does not imply an adequate explanation of how trainees become teachers. In the same book Wenger (1998: 126) describes what he terms "constellations of practice" to explain broad, diverse or diffuse organisations which cannot be analysed as a single CoP but which can be "understood in terms of interactions of practices" (p129). This conceptualisation acknowledges complexity without adequately explaining it. The metaphor of "constellations of practice" does not help to analyse a situation as messy as City College where individuals and groups of teachers have little contact with each other and work within a capricious hierarchy. From a different theoretical perspective, the notion of activity systems

takes the analysis of distinctiveness further by illuminating the homogeneity of college departments.

Activity systems are simply a unit of analysis and so could be ascribed to a whole college or a smaller department as a means to better understand a social situation. Whatever the scope, Engeström's (2001: 136-137) five principles as explained in chapter one provide a guide to the application of an activity system conceptualisation. Once again the freshness of teachers within certain departments is significant because the cultural and historical aspects of Cultural Historical Activity Theory are critical; Engeström's third principle was "historicity" which, as stated above, many college departments lack. Moreover, within the data from City College, it is difficult to distinguish objects (in the CHAT sense of the conscious purpose or aim of a system) that give activity its direction and meaning except that each section of the college is involved in teaching different subjects. Learning as such cannot readily constitute an object because it is vague and people can be intending to learn (or even teach) quite different things in the same situation. Yet, if the object is seen as student achievement of qualifications, then the meaning of the activities of the various departments appear once again very similar and any differences only superficial. Similarly, a detailed look at specific groups in the college showed different uses of language, but drawing back to include other groups and the whole college within my view reveals that the artefacts and tools used are very largely shared: lesson plans; student achievement; challenging students; 'paperwork'. This finding is in contrast to Lucas (2007: 99) who described "a whole number of activity systems" in a college based on subject area and how that subject should be taught. In my study, the concept of "a collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system" from Engeström's (2001: 136) first principle serves to demonstrate the similarity, not the distinctiveness of the college departments.

The answer, then, to the first question on the distinctiveness of college cultures is that the trainees' experiences differ greatly depending upon with whom and where they are placed. Distinctive cultures by the limited definition above exist in only few places, however, and even these cultures are distinguishable mainly by their

coherence and consistency rather than markedly diverse patterns of behaviour or attitudes. Even these distinctive cultures are not as significant in the mediation of ideas about teaching as other broader factors. Moreover, although vocational backgrounds have had an influence, this is limited in comparison to the influences of society more widely and the *field* of power above all. Furthermore, applying the concepts of activity systems and CoPs has helped to reinforce the impression of homogeneity between rather than within departments because of the lack of stability and lack of longevity inside the groups of staff working in those departments. Paradoxically, though, that homogeneity is characterised by disorder and impermanence so a trainee may be welcomed in one part of a department and shunned by another. This general absence of distinctive cultures may be symptomatic of a haemorrhaging of older staff and so may be temporary, though a definitive answer would require more and longer research. I would hesitantly contend that the experience college teachers share across a college has been more significant than what they experience differently in their own sections since incorporation in 1992, which brought about the rise of managerialism with its attendant performativity. However, as shall be explored below, the perception of the teacher in FE has its own independent existence in society.

2. To what extent are trainee teachers inculcated by what is around them?

This question may be considered in two parts; *what inculcates trainees before the ITT course and placement* and *what inculcates trainees during the ITT course and placement?* This division will not preclude discussion of the interaction of the two parts, but I commence with the first, because in the words of Durkheim (1970: 250 cited in Bourdieu 1989b: 15); "social life must be explained, not by the conception of those who participate in it, but by deep causes which lie outside of consciousness." Though trainees were quick to describe the transformative nature of the placement in vigorous but often vague terms, other less apparent influences on their attitudes and practice may be more significant. Nonetheless, Wrong (1961) has an important warning in this regard. He describes some sociologists' overemphasis of "the

importance of 'social factors' [which] easily leads them to stress the priority of such socialized or socializing motives in human behaviour" (p188). Internalisation, for Wrong, does not mean people are "completely moulded by the particular norms and values of their culture" (p192). Things are more complicated than that, so human order must be explained in other more subtle ways, above all by looking at the particularities of historical situations. This underlines the significance of range of vision. There is a need for a wide view of society as well as a narrow view of the placement and the trainee, both of which are employed here.

What inculcates trainees before the ITT course and placement?

Despite the contemporary rhetoric, knowledge is not transferred, people are and so perceptions carried to the placement are significant. Many of these perceptions are influenced by cultural constructions widely held across society. Fisher *et al* (2008: 169) in their analysis of how education is depicted in popular culture found little evidence of teaching being considered as a high status profession, except in the case of university 'dons'. Nevertheless, teachers in popular culture sometimes can be:

> people who can solve desperate and intransigent emotional and behavioural problems, cope with emergencies and behave calmly and with excellent judgement under intense pressure.

Yet, Fisher *et al* identified the paradox that these paragons of courage and virtue as depicted in movies and novels do not gain their talents or attributes through training or by meeting any set of standards. Indeed, their success is often as a result of opposing orthodoxy or institutional structures. Popular culture is both constitutive and reflective of wider culture, so what Fisher *et al* describe is indicative of the contradictory perceptions of teachers and teaching that pervade society as a whole and which played a role in the formation of the trainees' attitudes long before their entry onto the ITT course. Such perceptions are evident in the common assumption of the absolute moral value of education, at least in abstract terms, which rendered Blair's 1997 election appeal based on "education, education, education" so powerful. Education is a cure-all for both the left (for example, anti-racist teaching) as well as the right (for example, teaching entrepreneurship), but it is when the unexamined

notion of education is applied to the actual process of teaching in schools, colleges and universities that the contradictions and inconsistencies are revealed. In the data for this thesis these societal contradictions and inconsistencies are apparent in individuals' motivation for becoming FE teachers; in the descriptions of themselves and in their practice as teachers; as well as in the more direct impact of policy. These contradictions are also apparent in how the individuals relate to society as a whole and define their place within it. All of these factors affected the trainees' perceptions of teaching.

There are some strands of society's perceptions of teachers in FE that appear especially dominant amongst the group that I have researched and which are important to a discussion of the creation and transmission of ideas about teaching. I start with what has already been alluded to: the intrinsic value of education and the related status of teaching. Lave and Wenger (1991: 53) wrote:

> Social communities are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations.

For respondents like Pat, Andrea and Rick, however, their altered identity was less about their relation to a social community at work than being identified by society as being in a certain social position. To summarise my argument, what they learnt from becoming teachers and the concomitant raised esteem, sense of fulfilment and self-change that made them different people can best be explained at the level of broader society, not the culture of the workplace. So, I reiterate Daniels and Warmington's (2007: 389) call for the "general working hypothesis of learning" to be expanded:

> to include notions of experiencing and identity formation within an account that includes a systematic and coherent analysis of the wider structuring of society as an inseparable part of the analysis.

The desire to become a teacher and what that means for identity is related to society's arbitrary perception of teachers and that usually means school teachers. If

as Holland *et al* (1998:4) stated, "identities are improvised—in the flow of activity within specific social situations—from the cultural resources at hand" those cultural resources also exist at the level of society. Therefore, for some respondents at least, belonging to the wide community of teachers was more influential than the particularities of participation in their narrower workplace community because being a teacher gave them raised status. Related closely to this raised esteem is the altruism of some respondents explaining why they had become teachers in FE. Their explanations express the 'cultural value' of teaching: "*to share the knowledge and experience that I have gained over the years*"; "*to provide positive input for the society*"; "*to help others help themselves.*" These may be considered as expected responses of self-justification and the significance of these responses should not be overstated because enjoyment and accident are also commonly identified as reasons for entering the profession. However, they are only persuasive (or expected) because of the wider attitudes to education in society. They are evidence of the wider rather than local influence on what it is to be a teacher and the notion of individual self-improvement amongst some respondents may be seen as related to this perception of the wider cultural value of the teacher. It was noted in the previous chapter that some construction teachers had chosen to take a reduction in income in order to become teachers in FE because of the increased status that teaching held for them. Understanding this leads to analysis of the inequality of society, which features throughout this thesis.

Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus* were introduced in chapter two, and related to these are his conceptualisation of capital which for Bourdieu exists in three principal forms; economic (material or financial assets); cultural (skills, mores and titles) and social (resources accrued from membership of a group or network) (Wacquant 2007: 268). These forms do not exist independently from each other and they derive from the culture or *field* in which they exist and importantly social and cultural capital can be comprehended as masked forms of economic capital. That is to say their forms are arbitrary and not intrinsic to humanity, but that the highest levels of social and cultural capital reflect the values and relationships of the most powerful in society who control the means of producing wealth. The networks of

friends made at an ordinary comprehensive school may be as durable as those made at Winchester College, but those of Winchester may lead to a job in the City of London; similarly Received Pronunciation (RP) may have no more objective value than a Mancunian drawl, but RP may gain more respect from those in authority. The position of any individual or group (including FE teachers) within society or within portions of society can be plotted against how much capital they have and the composition of that capital in relation to others and in relation to the dominant group. This understanding of power and position is complex: for instance Bourdieu (1979: 3) divided cultural capital into three forms: that found within one's physical dispositions ("dispositions durables de l'organisme") such as the stiff-upper lip or clipped accent; cultural objects such as dictionaries, plays or books; and in an institutionalised form such as qualifications including, of course, a doctorate. Moreover, the struggle over capital takes place at every level of society and within various *fields* which are the "battlefield wherein the bases of identity and hierarchy are endlessly disputed" (Wacquant 2007: 268). Bourdieu (1980: 2) argued that the relationships that form social capital are a result of both conscious and unconscious investment. An instance of this conscious investment is the former construction workers entering FE to seek the higher status held by teachers, a motive they described quite explicitly. This is evidence of the inculcation of society's inequality and alongside this the inculcation of society's related attitudes to teaching. Certainly these inculcated ideas may be vague or even contradictory, but they are pervasive.

Inculcation of this kind cannot adequately be explained through activity theory, nor communities of practice without a convoluted extrapolation that drags the conceptualisation some way from the data. The focus of these theories is generally narrower than is required to explain the role of education at a national level and wider societal perceptions about teaching. So, the trainees are being enculturated by these broad values relating to teaching at this wide level prior to any ITT course. Below the evidence of more specific influences on the day-to-day practice of teaching is considered relating to the trainees' understanding prior to placement of what FE teachers actually do.

That learning in the workplace is so often described and distorted by the language of formal education was discussed in chapter two and in a similar way it is the image of the school teacher that is often most influential, even amongst would-be FE teachers. Danny and Asaf were frank about their reversion to the experience of school and its traditional pupil-teacher relationship, which reflects a shared cultural notion of what teaching involves. This notion pertains partly to the ideal teacher of popular culture, but more substantially it pertains to the mundane experience of schooling and expectations of essentially didactic pedagogic practice with the teacher at the front of a class of students who are relatively passive. Although these expectations are mitigated by more interactive approaches promoted by the university course, they persist nonetheless. It would be a mistake, though, to argue that the image of the FE teacher is identical to that of the school teacher. Other writers (see for example Wallace 2002 and Bathmaker & Avis 2005a: 56) have mentioned the ill-founded belief among FE trainee teachers, such as Irena placed in City College art department, that their students will all have chosen to be there in contrast to those at school. This image of motivated volunteers in class segues into a picture of the uninhibited FE teacher devoted to her subject without concern for the poor behaviour of students or classroom management, such as that implied by Charlotte who had previously studied Women's Studies. These perceptions are not without foundation; even young students are generally treated differently at college than they might be at school. Teachers in colleges are usually called by their first name and students have more freedom to come and go, for instance. FE's difference to school, however insignificant or exaggerated, is what distinguishes the sector in popular perception and Irena and Charlotte represent people who had appreciated that difference in their own educational experience and sought it out as teachers in FE. Nevertheless, this perception is vulnerable compared to that formed by the long and formative experience of school and school teachers. Of course, there are differences between and within schools but traditionally the relationship between teacher and pupil involves pedagogy based on the transmission of knowledge and control that often correlates with antagonism. This paradigm became the safe fallback, the model reverted to by many trainees in the sample, despite their differing circumstances.

So, whether it is the image of a laid-back FE lecturer, an inspirational school teacher or some other variation of a teaching professional, anticipation of what an FE practitioner is like appears in many cases to be well formed before any ITT course or placement. So too are expectations of classroom practice and what trainees learn from their placement is mediated by powerful prior biographical and related cultural influences. A narrow focus on college cultures or communities would risk ignoring these prevailing influences.

What inculcates trainees during the placement?

Humans perceive the world both through what they have directly experienced and through what they have heard about it (Cole & Engeström 1993: 6). How these two perceptions are synthesised affects how people comprehend and act upon the world. The cultural influences described above may be categorised broadly as what has been heard, which interact with the direct experience of teaching on placement. Palpably, each of the trainees, whatever their background, was altered by the experience of the placement. To begin to explain what shapes this alteration requires consideration of various factors at play and following Bourdieu's model for analysing *fields,* I start with the *field* of power and policy. The impact of government policy on the trainees is both very direct because the reforms detailed in chapter three dictate precisely what must be done to become qualified, but the impact is also oblique because policy sets the priorities of the college where they were placed. Therefore, policy has a role in shaping broader perceptions of teaching. Trainees had to follow a centrally validated ITT course that had to include a set number of hours of teaching practice and they also had to show coverage of the national standards as well as subject specialist training[8]. As suggested in the previous chapter, the need to 'evidence' these elements became a priority for many of the trainees, even where the elements themselves lacked meaning for them. The distinction has been made between knowledge of policy and the impact of policy to argue that policy can have an impact even when it is poorly understood or recognised. The situation of the

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[8] Since the end of this research the strictures have become even tighter as there are now centrally defined units of assessment for ITT which all trainees have to achieve.

trainees illustrates this well: what was demanded of them was compliance, not criticality or agency, so they ticked the boxes, literally and metaphorically. Even though the ITT reforms were not well understood, they demanded conformity and so restricted trainees' autonomy and consequently shaped the trainees' notions of professionalism. To succeed on the course they had to cope with the bureaucracy related to assignments and personal development plans, which melded with a perception of the bureaucracy of teaching more widely, which trainees and teachers habitually referred to as "paperwork". Hence, being a teacher in FE partly meant coping efficiently with the bureaucracy; policy shaped a notion of professional practice among trainees that was characterised by expedience and technicality. It is also worth recalling Ball's (2008: 5) description of performativity as "a regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change." Some of the trainees became inured to performativity and to compliance without meaning. This is inherent in this study's conception of alienation, which is what they were learning to cope with.

Beyond the regulations for ITT, policy shaped the priorities within the colleges where the trainees were placed. As demonstrated, some trainees explicitly identified the impact of policy on FE, like Karen with her Union Flag as metaphor for state interference in the college. While the general perception of policy was strong, policy initiatives were only ever poorly recognised, even by the trainees who had to write about reforms in assignments. Exceptions to this generalisation were vague knowledge of the so-called *Skills Agenda* and *SfL*. More significant than the detail was the broad understanding that policy sets targets for attendance, retention and achievement and generally prescribes practice. All of this reinforces a perception of teaching as primarily technical, which sits easily beside coping and expedience as described above. That perception may be held by people who have never read a policy document because the persistent dull monotone of policy shapes practice through targets and the systems to achieve those targets much more than the precise measures announced in government papers or ministers' speeches. Furthermore, in the words already quoted from the Prime Minister Strategy Unit

(PMSU 2006: 6-7), the kind of top down management promoted by the government may:

- o increase bureaucracy…that take[s] up disproportionate amounts of time that might be used more productively;
- o stifle innovation and dis-empower staff…; and
- o [distort] professionals' behaviour away from addressing user needs and preferences.

Within a CHAT conceptualisation, one way to understand these effects that are so candidly categorised by the government is to consider the achievement of targets as an object or goal, distinct from the object or goal of creating circumstances where students can learn. Since it is the object that gives meaning to actions and to the entire activity system these two distinct activity systems may conflict. Achieving targets may mean rejecting students likely to fail or ignoring those who are certain to pass. These actions have nothing to do with the circumstances of learning, but they make sense, they have meaning if the object is achieving targets. This conceptualisation is useful in understanding the backwash effect of target-setting on practice in colleges because it explains why targets can be met even when they apparently mark little change in practice. It is the achievement of targets that gives actions their meaning, not improvements in student learning *per se*. Therefore, do what is necessary to achieve targets even at the expense of learning. A writer like Engeström might continue that the conflict between the systems can lead to a new understanding and better practice through expansive learning, but that ignores society's inequality and the huge disparity of power between the systems. For colleges to gain funding and for trainees to gain qualifications they have to meet targets, even if doing so has dysfunctional effects. This disparity of power leads to a corporate culture in an organisation like City College which did not arise organically, or through a constellation of communities of practice, because the "webs of significance" (Geertz 1993: 5) were spun elsewhere and imposed by policy makers. Significantly, however, this is a stable culture apparent in behaviour, artefacts and language with a dominant pattern of shared basic assumptions which "arbitrarily

exists as the correct way for new members to perceive, think, and feel" to return to the definition adopted. For most trainees this was the most coherent culture they encountered; certainly more coherent than any set of values or practices that existed locally inside colleges.

This sort of institutionalised activity system can be resistant to change. It can also rigidly constrain the practice of participants (Cole and Engeström 1993: 8). Within this corporate culture, imposed nationally and within institutions, teachers are permitted little autonomy because they are not trusted. In City College the language of business (see the newsletters and the discourse used by John the middle manager in the arts department) had even largely usurped the language of pedagogy at an institutional level. How this dominant culture in FE is perceived is intriguing, because even senior managers in FE complain of policy makers living in a "parallel universe" (Coffield *et al* 2008: 24), as if senior managers see themselves in it, but not of it. Moreover, it is apparent that for many of the trainees the value of teaching exists separately to recent reform. This opposition may also be comprehended within their altruistic motivations for becoming teachers mentioned above. The trainees are introduced to a culture where they enculturate or learn that teaching professionalism is, at least partially, seen as an exercise in performative bureaucracy and that they must be seen to conform. Yet, for many of the sample, both trainees and existing teachers, policy was seen as a malign other and their identity as teachers was partly defined by their opposition to this other. Such antipathy may reflect the inherent contradictions between the cultural worth ascribed to education in its hypothetical purity and the pressure to meet tawdry performance indicators. For a few, it was as if teaching that involved commitment to students and subject was a kind of underground activity expressed through an improvised identity of dissent. For others dissent was expressed in cynicism. More generally, how trainees managed and developed within the policy-driven institutional culture depended upon their own wherewithal and their situation on placement, which also mediated their perceptions of teaching.

The particular local settings where the trainees were placed within colleges need to be viewed within the broader context of this institutional culture and what trainees absorbed from these local settings is complex. Within the sample at City College self-sustaining local cultures that partially integrated the trainees who were placed there only existed in two places. However, even in these places, fashion and the city centre business section, the trainees were never equal members of the group nor had they any prospect of so being. They were only there for a limited time so their membership was provisional in every sense. Elsewhere marginalisation not participation was characteristic of the trainees' placement and many were paradoxically socialised into isolation where teaching was a highly individualised activity. More often than not trainees prepared lessons and created resources while alone, as did several of the existing teachers. Therefore, in both these sets of circumstances a CoP conceptualisation based on legitimate peripheral practice and movement towards full membership of a community is inappropriate.

Furthermore, both in the case of fashion and business as well as in the less cohesive parts of the college what the trainees learnt about teaching was little different, as explained in the next section. That is to say that other factors such as previous experience of education or the wider impact of policy appeared more influential. Most of the sample of trainees described the practice of teaching in quite limited technical terms: for example, the use of PowerPoint; interactive whiteboards; and sweeping allusions to "learning styles". Once again, this may reflect the difficulty of expressing what has been learnt, but the lengthy focus group session using Lego, which covered development during the placement in several oblique ways, exposed similar concerns. Nevertheless, relating identity to acquisition of knowledge and skills suggests that becoming a teacher is in part a product of that acquisition. What is acquired is considered to be professional knowledge that forms part of the identity of being a teacher, especially where performativity is perceived to be an aspect of teacher professionalism. Besides, with some exceptions, this was what their mentors and other staff at the college also understood by teaching since they had also been trained in similar circumstances. Remember too, that the national standards that the

trainees had to adhere to divided practice into a very large number of discrete items, many of which could be described as technical.

3. How does their participation in the specific culture form their approach to students and to teaching?

So far the influences of national and institutional cultures have been emphasised, because those influences were generally the most powerful and pervasive for all the trainees. That overview is important because it allows a perception of the hierarchy of factors to which trainees are subject while on placement. The question of how participation in a specific culture forms attitudes presupposes distinctive sets of behaviour and beliefs, which existed only to a limited degree. The facts of very small groups of teachers which lack stability due to turnover of staff are significant here, too. Nevertheless, the specific cases of business and fashion with their particular self-sustaining cultures allow a comparison of what trainees learn where there is no such self-sustaining local culture. The local setting for placements is formative as are relationships with individuals in those settings partly because the wider more powerful cultures are mediated through these settings and relationships, and partly because of their own independent influence. I will start with the exceptions of fashion and business before considering relationships with individuals more specifically.

The teachers' attitude to students in the fashion department was characterised by engagement, warmth and respect. The main classroom was always open and though classes were timetabled to take place there the boundaries of space and schedule were flexible. Other staff and students came and went to work on their own pieces, to find resources or to chat. The term workshop is widely used in FE, often to refer to large groups working individually with little input from teachers. By contrast, the main fashion department classroom was a genuine workshop because items were collaboratively produced there and thus it had an ambiance of industry rather than training. The achievement statistics for fashion students were good in the years that I visited the department, but I rarely heard assessment criteria mentioned. Instead, the focus was on the "show" when students would dress friends to model

their designs on a catwalk. This was a means of formally evaluating the students' abilities, but the show rather than the assessment was what teachers and students stressed. The stress on creativity rather than simply passing tests is demonstrated by the case of Martin, the trainee placed there in my second year of data gathering. The staff wanted to improve the drawing ability of their students to help them illustrate their designs on paper, even though this is not explicitly assessed. Once they heard that Martin was a specialist in life drawing they arranged for him to run extra classes with their students. This kind of refreshing spontaneity was not apparent elsewhere in this study.

The significant impact this attitude had on Martin and Paula, the trainee placed there the previous year, was seen in their openness towards and engagement with the students who, to use the vernacular, could be challenging. Many of these students had been low achievers at school and by the account of other teachers had previously had reputations for disruptive behaviour. Moreover, Paula in particular was palpably relaxed when other staff came into her teaching sessions because teaching was itself a shared activity. This shaped their ideas about teaching practice. By contrast other trainees described how they only felt relaxed when they had the opportunity to teach alone.

The attitudes to teaching and students experienced by Constance in the business section were quite different. Constance was well integrated within the culture of the group during her time there, but that culture had a restricted perception of teaching and an often dismissive opinion of students. Though Ian, her mentor, was actively interested in developing her pedagogy, all of the team talked about students in disparaging terms, as did Constance. One well-established member of staff was frequently late for her sessions and there was little evidence of innovative practice by the team. Nevertheless, Constance described what she learnt from Ian in very precise terms; sequencing topics, question techniques during discussions and lower expectations of students' general knowledge, for example. Arguably, Ian got as much out of being able to discuss teaching with Constance as she did because he was given licence to reflect on his own practice while helping Constance to develop

hers. Even so, Constance, Paula and Martin were enculturated by relatively consistent sets of values and approaches, which they themselves then exhibited. Whether this impact on the trainees will be lasting as they move on to teaching in other circumstances is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, there was evidence of lasting if not permanent learning, which modified how they interpreted and acted in their situation (Edwards 2005b: 50). Yet, it is important to recall that each had to cope with their placement, which they were largely powerless to control. That meant they had to fit in, at least to some extent, which was superficially indicated in the case of Paula and Constance by what they wore. A similar pressure derived from the need to be observed by their mentor from within the team they were placed with. Nevertheless, as I have argued before, the behaviour and practices within fashion and business were more coherent, although they were not markedly different to those found elsewhere in the same college. Likewise, what the trainees learnt from these cultures was not dissimilar to what other trainees learnt in other less coherent settings because attitudes to students varied even within sections of the college. Antipathy to paperwork and a perception of the malevolent impact of policy were more consistent than attitudes to students. Similarly consistent, as described, was a perception of the cultural value of teaching. Yet in many of the settings that were researched, however diverse, coping was what counted for the trainees and that partly meant being seen to behave in a similar way to others in the section of the college despite what the trainees themselves thought. This may not have constituted lasting change.

The examples of Ian in business and Lynne, the charismatic manager in fashion raise a topic studies of WBL can too easily eschew, which is the influence of individuals. The influence of individuals may be structural: the principal of City College had a reputation for ruthlessness and had summarily sacked whole sections of staff that he perceived to be recalcitrant, including most of the leadership of the trade union. It could be said that his personal attitude pervaded the mores of other managers throughout the whole college. Beyond these hierarchical structures, the influence of individuals can also be more organic and both may overlap. Two specific examples of individual influence in this study were John in arts and Pat in woodwork.

The arts department took more placement trainees than any other department and John, one of the managers, was candid about using the process to select part-time staff: *"my belief is if you've got eight placement students you might get four really decent tutors from the eight. There is a fifty percent chance of getting some decent staff."* He explicitly chose people who conformed to his values and expectations, which emphasised the business-like nature of the college. He therefore sought to employ those who could cope and comply with change: *"you do have to persevere and you have to be flexible and able to adapt. Those are the key things that you need."* Whatever the ethical or pedagogical merits of his opinion, it was John who chose staff. If the trainees wished to be picked, they knew what they had to do and so the trainees were exposed to the unequal power relationships in the college. Nevertheless, his individual influence should not be exaggerated because these values were not characteristic of the department as a whole. Elsewhere in the college, Pat's understanding of being a vocational teacher involved a caring attitude to his students in contrast to his own experience of training. He had been promoted to running a small woodwork section in one of the college's peripheral campuses and part of that role was to induct and support new staff. Pat, therefore, had gained influence as an individual. He was conscientious about this aspect of his role and it had enabled him to advance his unorthodox understanding of vocational teaching while sharing his computer-based interactive resources.

Mentors are the individuals who should have most impact on the trainee on placement, but as argued in the previous chapter the experience of mentoring relationships is symptomatic of the general disarray of the whole placement experience. Even the support that sympathetic mentors gave could paradoxically reinforce conservative practice. Asaf regularly saw his mentor whose attitude was entirely positive about his practice, even when he reverted to a transmission model of teaching based on his experience as a student at college. This suggests that he was praised for merely coping. While some trainees benefited from engaging with an interested mentor, others like Danny prospered despite being ignored by their mentor. To reiterate a related point, there was no evidence of subject specialist pedagogy anywhere within this study, regardless of the mentor. The specific setting

for the placement affected opportunities for participation and the general level of support available and consequently trainees experienced the messiness of FE in their specific placement. Who they taught, who their mentor was and where they were based were contingent upon local, random factors such as where there was a space to sit or which teacher had agreed to take them on. The isolation of existing staff in FE colleges was highlighted in this study's findings, which showed that even well established teachers spoke to only a handful of people each week. Likewise, isolation not participation was the characteristic of many trainees on placement, which usually meant that the confines of the setting for their placement defined the boundary for their experience of the FE college. The detail of trainees' opportunities and what they were exposed to differed widely, but from a distance what is more striking is how many of these experiences were similar across settings. However, these included similar separation, uncertainty and lack of control and just as striking is how well most trainees cope, which paradoxically suggests that messiness may be the preparation that trainees need. It certainly mediates their comprehension of the sector. Moreover, the absence of consistent local influences on ideas about teaching served to strengthen the wider cultural ones that derive from society's perceptions and government policy.

4. How do they move from being trainees to becoming teachers?

This question can be considered both subjectively and objectively. Trainees such as Karen were reluctant to call themselves teachers at the end of their course and participants like Mark and Pat who had been in a teaching role for years were similarly chary. Therefore, subjectively these people had not become teachers despite their objective circumstances and behaviour. How this is related to status, esteem and salary has been considered but this reticence demonstrates how identity and 'becoming' are not simply defined by activity or occupation. As Roth and Lee (2007: 215) succinctly explain, "Whichever identities are salient for an individual during a particular context exist in a complex dance with one's sense of agency and position within the social world." Mark felt comfortable calling himself a plumber, though he was a full-time teacher. In similar circumstances Pat called himself a

trainer, but Rick, ostensibly no different to the other two in that he had been at the college for the same amount of time and had worked in construction, called himself a teacher. Therefore, rather than considering becoming a teacher as the only final destination I will consider what the trainees learnt about being a teacher during their time on placement

Billett (2001b: 209) found that trainees given the greatest opportunity to participate in the workplace were those who made most progress, especially if they were guided directly or indirectly by co-workers. Billett makes an implicit assumption that this well supported environment promotes learning that is valuable, yet trainees will learn something from not participating and not being guided. Indeed, they may learn to cope. This exposes the judgement of value involved in analysing learning because coping might be enough, though coping might also imply a restricted understanding of teaching practice. In other words, through learning to be expedient, trainees may also learn to be rather dull, unchallenging teachers. Drawing on a CHAT conceptualisation, if the object is coping with workload the quality of teaching is less important than if the object is creating circumstances conducive to engaging students. This distinction may also help to explain discrepancies in the meaning of a successful placement. A trainee like Danny objectively had an appalling experience of teaching on placement; his students were disaffected and occasionally aggressive and he had little or no support. He felt he had "*been eaten alive"* sometimes, but he still described his placement as "*fantastic."* First of all, this is testament to his resilience, but learning to manage such challenging students was what made his placement positive. Danny learned to cope. Yet, by his own description his approach to teaching moved from interaction to traditional transmission, so arguably the range of techniques he applied and his pedagogical practice regressed. This is not to say that all Danny or any of the others learnt was just to withstand being on placement, because as already argued many of the characteristics of placement are analogous to being a teacher. Nevertheless, the compliance may have consciously been strategic because trainees could not alter the circumstances of their placement, which they needed to successfully complete to pass the course. They just had to tolerate it. Besides, some trainees were frank about rejecting the attitude to students

that they encountered on placement. So, there may have been peripheral participation, legitimate or otherwise, but this only describes what the trainees were doing, not how that was influencing their perceptions of teaching.

Nonetheless, there was a more organic alteration within the trainees' capacities. Without exception the trainees explained that they gained confidence over the period of the placement, in the sense that trainees gained a belief that they could teach. This was even the case for those too coy to actually call themselves teachers. Gaining confidence is not necessarily about socialisation or internalisation of collective beliefs and conventions (Wrong 1961), but rather it is about exposure to situations that were at first unpredictable because they were unknown and which then became familiar. Humans are not bees destined to forever make the same wax cells, because humans have consciousness, I can learn from experience and alter my practice. Once the trainees better knew the conditions of the placement, those conditions became more predictable and controllable or at least they could make sense of uncertainty (Schön 1991: 20). Along with this growing familiarity with the circumstances of teaching, trainees were able to practise approaches and sometimes to discuss these with other practitioners. Confidence, in this understanding, is subjective and dependent on situation (Norman & Hyland 2003: 264). Moreover, as they gained credibility on placement in the role of teacher, their confidence grew (Schön 1991: 261) and this growing sense of confidence is closely related to the trainees' evolving self-identification as a teacher, however that was defined. As the trainees acted like teachers they began to *think* like teachers and to think of themselves as teachers. Therefore gaining confidence can be considered as learning and the notion of a ZPD is also useful in seeing this type of learning as dynamic and relative at any point.

Learning starts with immersion in a language community where the trainees might hear and even use but not fully understand terms that carry key concepts. They increasingly make sense and refine those concepts. Finally, they are able to use the concepts and engage in and contribute to the process of meaning making (Edwards 2005b: 61). This was observable in the judgements that the trainees made while

teaching and in this regard at least, even when the placement had been troubled it was beneficial. Providing the opportunity for the trainees to enhance their confidence by learning to be confident, is one of the most useful functions of teacher training (Norman & Hyland 2003). Yet, confidence is primarily about perception of self, not necessarily about enhancing quality or range of practice. Indeed, increased confidence may have allowed the reversion to the traditional teaching of previous experience in schools or colleges to be rationalised. Colleges as they are currently organised may be a good place to become confident in withstanding the vagaries of the FE sector, but they may not be good places to learn to teach because an important aspect of the trainee's formative experience of placement was alienation.

The four elements of Marx's (1975: 326 –328) definition of alienation are developed fully below. Here I briefly outline the four main elements, which are: separation from the product of labour so people do not control what they produce at work; separation from the process of labour so they do not control how they work; separation from others; and separation from one's sense of human self, because humanity is defined by the capacity to consciously act upon the world as it is found, which is restricted by the current organisation of capitalist society. These describe alienation as objective relationships although the experience of alienation is subjective. My focus in this thesis is not on the economic aspect of alienation, that is to say the extraction of surplus value from the labour process, but the economic aspect is illustrative of the subjectivity of experience. Amongst the highest paid engineers working for British Telecom (BT) are the small group with expertise in mobile satellite link-ups, which produces some of the largest profits for BT. In purely economic terms these engineers are among the most exploited because individually they produce the greatest profits for the company. Their autonomy and high salary alleviate the experience of alienation, however. Alienation is fundamentally about relationships and control, not about anxiety, and the link between the objective circumstances of and the subjective experience of alienation is nuanced. Nevertheless, lack of control is likely to lead to anxiety. Precisely because alienation is a set of objective circumstances that are entirely normal it is most often not even noticed. People's aspirations are limited by their experience of society and, to paraphrase Marx,

capitalism has its own ontology. Examples of the alienation of teachers have been cited throughout this writing, but here the words of Ruth, a well-established basic skills teacher at City College describing her senior managers are indicative:

> *You don't know what they are thinking. You don't know who is the messenger and who is the one making the decisions. And you don't know what the repercussions are going to be. [I am] not in control of their final strategy; final solution. You will never get a clear, straight defined answer from anyone within management about what's going on, because they themselves don't know what is going on. You are really just another wheel in that motion that has to keep turning in order that we keep working the way that we are doing.*

Ruth, like other staff at City College had little direct contact with senior managers apart from irregular set meetings, but their Foucauldian gaze was felt. This was not irrational paranoia, because staff were often summarily sacked. As so often in the data gathered for this thesis inequality of power through division of labour is the significant factor, but the consequence is a loss of control over practice at work; over the process and product of labour. Neither Pat nor Mark even knew what their new roles at the college entailed, even though they had been in them for months. Likewise, neither Pat nor Mark had any control over when they saw their manager; Pat's manager normally visited only when "*something has happened*". Andrea's manager, with the list of things to do "*as long as her arm*", had changed from being a friend to being a subject of Andrea's suspicion and Andrea stressed the isolation that she and her colleagues worked in much of the time. This is symptomatic; there is very limited communication between staff within the large organisation of City College. Moreover, teachers had little control over the students they took on to their courses; even those students who they knew were unlikely to succeed. For instance, Andrea's students suffered from acute social and behavioural problems and consequently were very difficult to teach. Out of twelve boys in one of her groups three have had Anti-Social Behaviour Orders served on them; "*it's always on the verge of kicking off*". But yet Andrea, like most trainees and most teachers in this study and elsewhere, copes, copes well or thrives and so any analysis of the impact of alienation must also be an analysis of agency. Andrea's description of the conversations in her staffroom is a harsh illustration of this contradiction:

Well, [the staff] always moan about the behaviour of students and how it is stressing them out and what problems they've had. But I think it's a good thing to moan about that because you need other people's perspective on what you should do or what you could do. It's just to comfort them really. But then, I suppose, it's how hard done by everybody is and how they never have enough time and how they've always got to cover for other staff. So there are always people moaning about not having any … time to plan. And I suppose that encroaches into your own personal time, doesn't it? And then we do have a little bit of a laugh sometimes. We do have a laugh.

This embattled, black-humoured camaraderie provides some insulation against the lack of control over their work. More fundamentally, this dialectic between encroaching powerlessness and the assertion of agency, even just a collective moan and a laugh, is significant to understanding the placement experience and what forms teachers in FE. It also helps to explain why many people enjoy working in an organisation like City College despite the apparent objective challenges.

Trainees are quickly introduced to this lack of control. They have little influence over every aspect of the placement: where they are placed; how much teaching they do; who and what they teach; who their mentor is; or access to IT in the colleges. This lack of control in turn influences their ideas about teaching and FE. Many trainees wearily explained that retention and achievement targets drove the colleges where they were placed, sometimes to the detriment of pedagogy and the students' experience; "*it's all about finance,*" said one. This suggests the double bind of alienation mentioned (see below) where those entering FE may be attempting to evade or assuage society's malign pressures, and yet they find themselves subject to these pressures nevertheless. This is intensified by the impossible task that the government has given FE as described in chapter three. FE is the vehicle to deliver social justice and a more competitive economy through education and training. However, the connections between these elements only exist in rhetoric. There is no evidence of a causal link (Brown *et al* 2008: 17). So, the government scrutinizes and controls FE more and more closely to ensure FE achieves something that is apparently unachievable, no matter how good the teachers are. FE can only fail. Yet, like the existing teachers, few trainees were ground down by this and many maintained a sense of personal commitment in spite of those pressures. For some,

that very commitment to education provided a bulwark against a sense of powerlessness. To reiterate, although the value of education may be an arbitrary cultural construction in Bourdieu's terms, the commitment to it is not artificial and in the subjective view of many, education is broadly socially useful. The tales that teachers tell about the students they connected with or 'turned around' hold enormous value precisely because education can and does improve the lives of individuals. Comprehending that is highly motivational for many teachers even though objectively they still have little control and they remain isolated. Nonetheless, the participants in this research applied or asserted their agency depending on their individual situation in college and their own wherewithal, or *habitus*. For instance, three years after making the comments quoted above Ruth had successfully pursued an official grievance against a senior manager. For the trainees, though, there is a further troubling element, which is that as learners themselves they were alienated from what they were learning (Lave & McDermott 2002). To return to Marx, there is a discrepancy between the exchange value of learning (in brief, that which will be tested in order to obtain a certificate) and its use value (Lave & Wenger 1994: 112). This is perhaps clearest in trainees' attitudes to pedagogical theory, which were perfunctory in several cases. Though at a deeper level, the inability to perceive the benefit in any kind of conceptualisation of teaching and the dogged pursuit of practical, 'hands on' teaching tips and techniques exposes the limits of aspiration characteristic of alienation. In any case, the movement from trainee to teacher involved a coming to terms with the limits of agency and with alienation. That different trainees reacted differently to this is fundamentally because alienation is subjectively experienced, but also because the limits of agency are contingent upon often very local factors. Importantly, though, coping with alienation does not imply good teaching that engages students.

Conceptualisations

At the beginning of this thesis I wrote that theory related to practice by systematically explaining phenomena. It provides a framework, or frameworks, on which to construct a conceptual understanding of interactions and observations. Hager (2005:

843) posits four major criteria for assessing theories of WBL. These are how well they:

1. View such learning as a process.
2. Take account of social, cultural, and political dimensions.
3. Reflect metaphors of social construction of concepts including learning, self and environment. Hager used the term re-construction to show that there is a process of remaking involved in these metaphors.
4. Avoid single factor or universally applicable explanations.

These four criteria structure the assessment of theory employed to explain the factors involved in the trainee's experiences and the influence of these factors on ideas related to teaching. The third of the four is more problematic than the others because as Sfard (1998) pointed out, metaphors can constrain as well as aid thinking about learning. In essence, though, this third criterion can be related to the second, which is to say that learning is an integral part of self and environment. Any theorisation that ignores that, as for example a simple acquisition model may do, is inadequate to explain the complexity of learning in the workplace. Moreover, thinking about Hager's criteria reveals how learning involves both its own construction as well as relationships with other constructions such as those of self, society, values or other learning. I earlier cited Winch (1998) who criticised the fixation of building universal theories of learning while ignoring the particularity of individual cases. His criticism is potent, but looking carefully at the particularity of one small group of FE trainee teachers exposes the need for a conception of learning that looks at setting, self and society in relation to individual cases. That may be interpreted as universal theory, but certainly a theorisation is required that explains connections between individuals and their social setting. Moreover, education is different to many other areas of work because it has an important ideological function and it has a place in people's conception of social ethics which both affect the ideas people have about the job of teaching.

The general messiness of the placement experience has been described and this makes generalisation not just difficult, but potentially misleading. However, the methods used to gather data with their various fields of vision have made it possible to describe the main factors that interact to create and disseminate ideas about teaching, although the relative strength of those factors may differ for individuals. It is apparent that trainees arrive on the ITT course and on placement with well-formed ideas about teaching and being a teacher. Often, these ideas are related to a general notion of teaching rather than FE teaching and they were resilient despite experiences that challenged them. These prior notions concern the moral value attributed to education, which is seen in the stated motivations for being teachers. These may be narratives of self-justification, but they are only persuasive because of the place of teaching in society. Someone claiming their motivation for being an accountant was to "put something back" would be less convincing. Furthermore, that the occupation of teaching holds social status over construction trades, for example, was well understood. This indicates the general inequality of society and in particular the class-based dichotomy of perceptions about those who labour with their hands and those who labour with their minds. There was also evidence of well-formed ideas about the practice of teaching. These were expressed in a vernacular discourse of traditional schools, and to a lesser extent colleges, which partly exposed how these ideas had been shaped by prior experience of education. This shared cultural construction of what teaching involves is also apparent in recent reforms of ITT in FE such as the introduction of subject specialist pedagogy and the prescriptions of national standards. These reforms are based on a conception of teaching shaped by schools and hence, the construction of what teaching involves has both formed and is reinforced by legal and organisational structures.

Beyond understandings or conceptions pertaining to education, the capacities, attitudes and expectations that the individual trainees carry to the placement are crucial to how they develop and learn there. These individual attributes reflect their experience of the world as I illustrated by comparing my daughter's and my grandmother's experiences as teenagers. More to the point is that individuals do not just observe the world, each is of it, and so that means each is of society. A human

"is not only a social animal, but an animal that can individualise himself [become an individual] only within society" (Marx 1974: 125). There is no other way. As Marx identified in the same passage (p124), the entirely solitary or isolated figure *à la* Robinson Crusoe only exists in fantasy, so understanding the individual requires understanding their society. Saleem Sinai from Salman Rushdie's (1981: 370) Midnight's Children asks, "Who what am I?" His answer speaks for complexity and for humanity.

> I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. … I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world.

A large factor in that world to be swallowed is its inequality, so not all experiences have the same value. Therefore, what trainees carry to the placement is indicative of their position in society. An evaluation of the relative strength of influences indicates that those formed prior to the ITT course and placement are often the strongest. In the first chapter I stated the intention to test CHAT, CoP and Bourdieu's *field/habitus* concepts in relation to the creation and dissemination of ideas about teaching on pre-service placements. I chose these three because they were commonly used in WBL. It was never my intention to set up a contest between them but rather to apply them to the particularities of a situation. They all informed my methodology and my interpretation of data, but here I want to revisit them in the light of what has been considered.

A concept such as culture can hold very many meanings and so a precise definition has been used which has provided a perspective on the variety and hierarchy of cultures to which trainees may be exposed. At the level of college departments this approach revealed lack of coherence and consistency except in few places. Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) described a community of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice". There is a stress on the moulding effect of the language used in a situation. As Vygotsky (1978: 28) put it, "words can shape an activity into a structure". Wenger (1998) later isolated three identifying elements for a

community of practice: mutual engagement; joint enterprise; and shared "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions and concepts" (p82). Felstead *et al* (2007:1) interpreted this third element as collectively carrying out tasks that are discussed during and after completion; and the extent those tasks enhanced a sense of belonging in the workplace. Applying these, communities of practice rarely existed in the college I looked at most closely. To be more precise, a conceptualisation that rests on communities of practice does not contribute greatly to understanding the processes involved in placements, except to clarify that coherent communities acting together rarely existed in this study. Other factors were much more powerful in shaping the trainees' ideas even where communities did exist at City College. CoP theory "does not tell us what is learnt, only what is done" (Edwards 2005b: 57). Bathmaker and Avis (2005a) used Lave and Wenger's notion to analyse the situation of placement trainees in FE colleges to demonstrate their isolation. They then call for a wider interpretation of the trainees' situation, which "would take account of the wider social, economic and political context in which education takes place" (p61). Despite this, they maintain that CoP theorisation is a useful "analytical tool", but it seems poorly equipped for the task of wider interpretation. Arguably, it only achieves the first and possibly the fourth of Hager's criteria. Although many of those using this conceptualisation have recognised the importance of forces beyond the local CoP (see for example Barton & Hamilton 2005 and Wenger 1998), the emphasis of this conceptualisation is on the organisation, which is perhaps why it is so attractive to management consultants (Barton & Tusting 2005: 6). Likewise, in the circumstances of a placement it does not sufficiently allow for what individuals bring to a setting and it does not comprehend cultures where conflict rather than participation is characteristic (Fuller *et al* 2005: 65). Despite its elegant simplicity, CoP theory does not reveal a great deal about the creation or dissemination of ideas about teaching in this study.

For the research of the formation and propagation of ideas, the concept from CHAT that mental life exists in its expression is salient. People do as they think and vice versa. Therefore activity theory removes any mystique about the relationship between practice and thought. CHAT, as the 'cultural historical' in its name implies,

has its head turned towards the wider background and so an activity system has a history and a situation. What takes place within a system is affected by its goal and the "current state of action and its material context" (Roth & Lee 2007: 202). Therefore this conceptualisation makes a concrete connection between situation and actions, and it recognises contradictions and complexity. However, this explicit recognition does not necessarily mean that it is a useful tool to analyse the placement experience of trainees. In a similar way to CoP, one of the most influential interpretations of CHAT, that of Engeström, is focussed closely on the organisation and how it may be transformed (for example Engeström 2004). In the context of vocational ITT in Finland, Lambert (2007) describes the institution and the college where trainees are placed as separate activity systems and she explains how the contradictions between these systems can be alleviated. Yet, while a researcher can describe different goals for these systems, the unequal power between them can be ignored, as is the case in Lambert's work, and the stress is placed on making organisations run more smoothly while ignoring structural inequalities. As Avis (2009: 152) points out, those who have the power will shape what smooth running means and thus Engeström's version of CHAT is easily appropriated by the interests of capitalism (Avis 2009: 162).

Nevertheless, seeking different objects for the different groups into which the trainees were placed revealed the similarity of those groups and the strength of external pressures and influences. The insight that the object (or goal) of a system gives meaning to the activities in that system allows an explanation of, for example, how achieving targets and achieving the best circumstances for student learning may lead to quite different approaches to teaching. It demonstrated how the explicit setting of goals by those with most power can shape the practice of apparently distinct groups within an organisation, subsuming the differences between those groups. CHAT revealed many distinctions as superficial compared to what was in common within the overall culture of the college and of wider society. In applying Hager's criteria a distinction needs to be made between Engeström's version of CHAT, which only alludes to social, cultural and political dimensions without considering fully their influence, and the version of CHAT which Leont'ev (1978)

described which attempted to explain and synthesise broader influences. Nevertheless, it is arguable that neither fully deals with the inter-connectedness that Hager implies with the idea of the (re-)construction metaphor.

Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus* are explicitly representative of influence and inequality as expressed through the notion of social and cultural capital. The education system has a particular role in reproducing society's conventions and attitudes (cultural reproduction) and in reproducing relationships between groups in society including classes (social reproduction) (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 54). This and Bourdieu's (1989a: 41) explanation of the *field* of power and the need to consider other *fields* in relation to the *field* of power has informed every aspect of this thesis. The use of *habitus* to describe the set of personal and cultural attributes that trainees hold and how the value of these attributes is arbitrary and relative to the structures of society (that is, these attributes are not universal or innate) helps to explain how different trainees fared differently in ostensibly similar situations. Bourdieu's concepts also break down the dichotomy between conscious and unconscious motivation because both are aspects of *habitus* and an individual's dispositions. This was useful in describing why participants in this study had decided to become teachers, for example. Related to this is the concept of the often unseen imposition of power through *symbolic violence,* which is explanatory in how the dominant ideas in relation to education are accepted as normal, as the limits of expectation. Indeed, their apparent normality is what allows them to be so successfully disseminated. For Bourdieu (1990: 84-85) *symbolic violence* is realised above all else in the law, and there has recently been a great deal of legislation affecting FE as has been set out earlier. Furthermore, in a relationship that is resonant of that between activity and object in CHAT, the *field* provides meaning or status to the practice and ideas held by the trainees. For Bourdieu (1989b: 18) the constructions through which the world is understood are produced by how the world is internalised. Trainees had internalised the status of teaching, the moral worth of education and the conventional practices of schools because those have value within their *field.* Therefore, even if their individual settings or cultures on placement were different, that *field* of power was likely to prevail in how their ideas were

shaped. They carried this past into the present as a part of their understanding of the world and as part of their identity.

Reay (2004) criticised what she saw as the gratuitous use of Bourdieu's concepts in educational research, but the sophistication and interconnectedness of his ideas make them compelling as does their close connection to real practice, at least in his own writing (Grenfell & James 2004). These factors have made them central to this thesis's explanation of the creation and dissemination of ideas relating to FE teaching, too. Moreover, Bourdieu's notions have both the precision and the holism to meet each of Hager's criteria and the versatility of his conceptualisations goes some way to explaining their wide use in social science. There is another reason that may help to explain the popularity of his ideas, but one which does a disservice to Bourdieu himself. Bourdieu was a political activist with a commitment to socially progressive causes (Grenfell 2004). However, in the Anglo-Saxon world he is not associated with a political movement[9] so his academic writing has the appeal of radicalism without the threat of activism.

Each of the three theorisations that I have looked at for this thesis has drawn extensively on Marxist ideas, which do hold a threat for many, partly because of their associations with Stalinism, partly because they are associated with activism. Marxist ideas have been cited throughout this thesis, but in particular the notion of alienation with its explanation of objective circumstances and subjective experience has been alluded to throughout this writing, because this best explains the predicament of FE trainee teachers and what determines the development of their ideas and practice. De Ste Croix's (1981) scintillating application of Marx's ideas identifies five propositions on which the Marxist method is constructed (35-36).

1. People are social; individuals are of society.
2. The primary task of society is the organisation of production.

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[9] In France he is associated with the anti-globalisation movement, for example publicly defending José Bové, the farmer who led an attack on a branch of McDonalds in Millau.

3. People enter into a set of economic and social relations with the means of production and with each other through living in a particular society and according to its organisation of production.

4. In civilised societies from ancient Greece to present day Britain, there is a production of a surplus beyond what is consumed by those who are involved in production.

5. The extraction and perpetuation of that surplus has in practice led to economic exploitation, to the division of labour and to class struggle.

These propositions connect the individual, society and production and this connection is central to understanding how ideas are formed and disseminated. The propositions indicate that the major, but certainly not the only factor that affects those connections is the economic foundation on which society is organised and which limits what people can do (Marx & Engels 1968: 181). The ideas related to that economic foundation gain hegemony (Gramsci 1971: 12) and the economic foundation means that social relations become reified and hence conceived as relations between things (Marx 1976: 165-166). For example, the political powers that direct FE teachers and trainees are conceived as beyond the control of those teachers and trainees. Consider also Andrea's contention that she was thought of differently as a teacher than as a member of support staff because of how much she was paid. The contemplative role of the FE teacher or trainee has been considered, too. That is, the system of education is perceived as "pre-existing" and beyond the control of the teacher. It takes on a "phantom objectivity" (Lukács 1974: 83) so all that the teacher can do is work out, or contemplate, the best way to make it run well rather than to contest how it runs. That is a means to cope, too, and one that many of the trainees learnt. It is though, an adaptation to alienation.

Alienation

In the first chapter I noted my personal investment in education and FE especially, but I have been careful not to consider learning as inherently or necessarily 'good', as suggested in my definition of learning. Through the course of this research I found alienation and more specifically adaptation of expectation and behaviour as a result

of alienation. This too is a kind of learning as argued in chapters four and five, but here I expand on the Marxist notion of alienation. In an article that analyses Engeström's third generation activity theory (see chapter one) Daniels and Warmington (2007: 381) wrote about contradictions in the workplace.

> Contradictions are generated because, within the labour process, the human is simultaneously marginal and central within the activity system: simultaneously actor and labour-power resource.

Though Daniels and Warmington seem reluctant to use the word, what they describe is central to a Marxist understanding of alienation. Incidentally, this reluctance exposes some of the limitations of Engeström's interpretation of activity theory, as suggested above, though Leont'ev (1978), the originator of CHAT was himself explicit in his Marxist understanding of alienation. Williams (1983: 36; his italics) traced the history of the term back through philosophy and religion to very broadly define alienation as the "feeling of a division between *man* and *society*" and it commonly refers to a state of mind or angst. However, for Marx this division is not just a psychological dislocation, though that it is how it may be experienced; instead it is rooted in the economic exchanges of capitalism, which distort human relationships and human agency. According to Marx, human consciousness was adaptive because it was determined by the material situation of existence, but he argued that humans' fundamental nature lies in the ability to consciously shape nature through labour. Marx (1976: 284) memorably wrote that:

> A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee would put many an architect to shame in the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existing ideally.

This consciousness of labour allows humans to have a history that can be learnt from, building on successes or avoiding previous failures. Working on the world as they find it also alters humans in two ways; firstly and directly in the consciousness required for a particular task or activity; and secondly indirectly through collectively shaping the world people transform the circumstances that then shape

consciousness. "Through [labour] he acts upon external nature and changes it and in this way he simultaneously changes his own [nature]" (Marx 1976: 283).

However, in the very first chapter of Capital Marx (1976) describes how in capitalist society workers must sell their labour in order to earn a living and so do not own or control the product of their labour. It becomes the property of the capitalist, and thus it becomes *alienated* from the worker. The primary sense or meaning of the labour exists in that it provides income, not in the product of the labour itself. Therefore, in this materialist definition, alienation above all entails a loss of control, specifically a loss of control over labour, and labour is fundamental to what defines human nature. Marx (1975: 353) refers to this as "the objectification of the human essence" which he explains in this allegory: "the dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value, and not the beauty and peculiar nature of the minerals: he lacks a mineralogical sense." Marx identified four aspects in the alienation of humans (Marx 1975: 326-328) as follows:

a. Humans are alienated from the world because they are alienated from the product of their labour, which they do not control.
b. People are alienated from themselves through not controlling their own process of labour. Their primary relationship to what they do is that it earns a living.
c. People are alienated from their "*species-being*", from their essential humanity. This is a consequence of the first two, as Marx argues that purposeful labour is central to what makes us human.
d. People are alienated from each other because the economic processes dominant in society distort all human relations through the division of labour and its concordant differences in social status, and through the commodification of every aspect of life.

These processes are most obvious in manufacturing where workers produce tangible goods which are then sold as commodities. However, a society as complex and textured as modern Britain cannot simply be explained by the functioning of production and exchange, so any developed understanding of society, and therefore

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of alienation must look beyond the bare economic determinants that underpin society. Mészáros (1975: 289) wrote that "the crucial issue for any established society is the successful reproduction of such individuals whose 'own ends' do not negate the potentialities of the prevailing system of production." Even those who do not have a direct relationship to the means of production, such as FE teachers, are still shaped by society's fundamental economic relations. The ideological domination of ideas relating to capitalist economic relations is not the result of indoctrination or coercion, but comes about because most people, most of the time 'go along with' society as it is run; because the way that society is run, and the values that underpin it, have become internalised. Antonio Gramsci (1971: 12) referred to this as 'hegemony':

> The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci (1971: 58) attempted to identify how this "intellectual, moral and political hegemony" was maintained and he like Bourdieu (see Bourdieu & Passeron 1990) described how the education system plays an important role in reproducing the values as well as the skills that society needs (Gramsci 1971: 350). As already stated, this was not the focus in my thesis; rather I have concentrated on the FE teacher's own experience of alienation through the lack of control over their practice. The Hungarian philosopher and socialist Georg Lukács (1974: 89) wrote ninety years ago in a passage prophetic of much present-day white-collar work and especially FE teaching:

> In consequence of the rationalisation of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions. Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of this process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not.

The intensification of centralised control over FE teaching and teacher training in particular (as described in the chapter three) means idiosyncrasies are less tolerated as practice becomes more closely prescribed within a system that is experienced as "pre-existing," "self-sufficient" and "[functioning] independently". 'Good' teaching practice is centrally and precisely prescribed as are the appropriate outcomes of teaching. However, experience of this system does not unify teachers; instead it tends to atomize them because relationships with each other are distorted by the necessity to meet the reified strictures and standards of the system. The previous chapter explained the very limited contact even serving teachers had with their colleagues. Lukács (1974: 97-98; original emphasis) identifies how "the *contemplative* nature of man under capitalism makes its appearance" where:

> man's activity does not go beyond the correct calculation of the possible outcomes of the sequence of events (the 'laws' which he finds 'ready-made'), and beyond the adroit evasion of 'accidents' by means of protective devices and preventive measures (which are based in their turn on the recognition and application of similar laws).

Applying this to education would suggest that teachers may feel able to do little more than efficiently apply the standards and procedures they are given without considering the adoption of new ones. As the logic of the system is internalised the limits of aspiration are defined as teachers confine themselves to 'contemplating' (in Lukács's meaning) how education is organised, but do not engage in altering that organisation.

Yet education in general and FE in particular were often considered means of escaping or alleviating society's social failings by widening opportunities and expanding aspirations; education was frequently considered as inherently worthwhile by trainees and teachers in the sample. So FE teachers can find themselves in a double bind of alienation where they may seek to escape or alleviate society's ills and yet they find themselves subject to exactly the pressures they had sought to escape or assuage. Therefore the impact of alienation on the new teacher and how they react to it is significant in their learning and development as teachers. More generally, the conceptualisation of alienation helps to illuminate the circumstances of

FE teachers and how they react to those circumstances and to each other. Furthermore, this relationship between the objective conditions of alienation and the subjective experience of those conditions can help to explain why trainees reacted differently to the apparently similar situations of placements.

Marx's concept of alienation, though, also identifies the means to resist because the very circumstances of alienation contain the possibility of emancipation. As Daniels and Warmington (2007: 381), quoted above, wrote: "within the labour process, the human is simultaneously marginal and central…simultaneously actor and labour-power resource." To produce commodities or to run services, including FE, capitalism needs workers because the capacity to create value through labour cannot be separated from humans. To quote Marx and Engels from the Communist Manifesto (1968: 45):

> The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour.

Not only does capitalism need workers (or wage-labour in Marx and Engels's term), it combines and organises them. As Marx and Engels (1968: 46) wrote in the same passage, the bourgeoisie "replaces the isolation of the labourers…by their revolutionary combination, due to association." They memorably conclude that, "What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own gravediggers." That is, the system whereby surplus value is extracted from the labour process and which alienates workers, capitalism, is the system that at the same time creates groups of organised workers with the potential collective power to resist and ultimately replace capitalism. While this potential is perhaps most apparent in social upheavals involving industrial workers such as the Iranian revolution in 1979 or disputes such as the 1984-1985 British miners' strike, it has also been evident in FE, albeit at a rather lower intensity than the previous examples. Taubman (2000: 82-83 cited in Huddleston & Unwin 2002: 6) noted that following the incorporation of colleges (explained in chapter three) "further education had more days lost to strike action than any other section of the British economy" as teachers in the FE sector opposed a deterioration of their conditions of service. Resistance to the effects of alienation

can, however, take other much less conspicuous forms. Within this study, the continuing commitment of teachers to their students in the face of demands to be more business-minded ("*you've got to become a manager rather than a teacher*" as John the manager in the arts department enthusiastically expressed it) may be considered as evidence of resistance to aspects of alienation. Moreover, I identified above (p186) the "embattled, black-humoured camaraderie" of Andrea and her colleagues in the special needs department as a collective response to their alienation. In such responses the glimmer of potential emancipation from alienation through collectively resisting alienation may be perceived.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has attempted to answer the research questions related to this study in order to better understand the creation and transmission of ideas about teaching. This has led away from a narrow focus on college cultures to a broader view of society as it is structured and how society shapes ideas and organisation. The situation is messy and complex because individuals are not simply cloned by the culture they experience. Rather, they interact with culture or cultures according to what they have learnt and to who they have become at each stage of their lives. Therefore, the experience of the trainee can on the one hand be characterised by lack of control, but alienation is rarely an absolute and so on the other hand the trainees applied their agency according to their own wherewithal. The impression I am left with is not of individuals ground down by a situation of powerlessness. Rather, to varying degrees, I am left with the impression of individuals managing to assert their own humanity despite the difficulties they encountered. Humans make their own history, but not in circumstances they have created for themselves (Marx & Engels 1968: 96). De Ste Croix (1981: 27) expresses this clearly:

> In every situation in which one is making a judgement there are some factors which cannot be changed and others which can only partly be modified, and the better one understands the situation the less forced and unfree the situation becomes. In this sense, 'freedom is the understanding of necessity'.

It is on that basis of "understanding necessity" that the next chapter sets out some suggestions for how ITT in FE could be organised.

Chapter Six: Placements and the place of professional knowledge

> Careers and reputations are made as our research flourishes upon the rotting remains of the Keynsian Welfare State. Both those inside the policy discourse and those whose professional identities are established through antagonism towards the discourse benefit from the uncertainties and tragedies of reform. Critical researchers, apparently safely ensconced in the moral high ground, nonetheless make a livelihood trading in the artefacts of misery and broken dreams of practitioners. None of us remains untainted by the incentives and disciplines of the new moral economy.
>
> (Ball 1997: 258)

The quote from Ball warns that though I may be critical of government reform for FE I am still implicated in it even just as a researcher. I differ from Ball in this, however; although I too can perceive "the artefacts of misery and broken dreams of practitioners", I also perceive practitioners, including trainees, coping and thriving and engaging meaningfully with students despite the vicissitudes of policy and situation. As I have stressed, alienation and agency are both part of this story and good FE teachers do make a difference to the quality of education that students experience (James & Biesta 2007: 145; Coffield 2009). In this final chapter I want to make a case for the value of education and then come off the moral high ground of the disengaged critical researcher in order to make suggestions about ITT for FE, with particular reference to professional knowledge. I have been inspired to add this chapter above all by the work of Frank Coffield (2008 and 2009) who has made recommendations to policymakers, college managers, teachers and students. My points are primarily aimed at teacher educators and, obviously, my audience is rather smaller than that of Coffield. I particularly want to tackle the question that has nagged throughout this study of ideas about teaching: *What constitutes a successful placement?* and in writing this chapter I have also drawn on other work I have carried out recently in this area (Orr & Simmons 2009 and Orr in print; a).

Holloway's (2009) painstaking account of the intricate and protracted process of reforming ITT in FE reveals a significant democratic deficit. The powerful occupants of the myriad agencies he describes who continue to direct FE are unelected and

accountable only to ministers who rarely stay long in the job and who have little experience of FE. As seen, government ministers have had a particular view of the economic purpose of education. As Coffield (1999: 490) put it:

> Socrates taught me that knowledge would set me free; Peter Mandelson tells me that its modern function is to make employers rich.

Mészáros (1975: 294) quotes someone Mandelson would approve of, Adam Smith (1763/1948: 321; original italics), to illustrate the limitations and the immorality implicit within this vision of education:

> These are the disadvantages of a commercial spirit. The minds of men are *contracted* and rendered incapable of elevation. *Education is despised, or at least neglected,* and heroic spirit is almost utterly extinguished. *To remedy these defects would be an object worthy of serious attention.*

Any serious discussion of education is a discussion of values; indeed, even choosing to use the word education involves a value judgement. Biesta (2009) has described the conflation of learning and education as "learnification" (p3). He defines the difference between these terms thus: learning is a term for a process with an emphasis on the individual and education is about a relationship between teachers and students and emphasises content. This echoes Young (2003: 553; original emphasis); "*the acquisition of knowledge* is the key feature that distinguishes education (general or vocational) at any level from all other activities." In recent educational initiatives there has been too much concern for making learning effective and too little on whether what is learnt is valuable or good (Biesta 2009: 2). Coffield and Edward (2009: 380) illustrate this in a quote from the first ever white paper on FE (DfES 2006: 18), which charges the sector with "ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is uniformly excellent" and as the government's rhetoric has inflated neither 'good practice' nor even 'best practice' are sufficient (Coffield & Edward 2009: 371). Yet, nowhere do ministers or their advisors discuss what learning involves, let alone what knowledge would be valuable. Reading Holloway (2009) demonstrates that this lack is also evident in the reforms relating to ITT for FE (see also Lucas 2007). It does not have to be so.

In the previous chapter I argued that the education system reflects society more than it can alter society. However, I also stated that education can and does improve people's lives and my commitment to education rests on this transformative possibility for individuals. Education, or at least what Biesta (2009) calls good education has a moral and can have a practical value. Seamus Heaney (2008: 71), Nobel-prize winning poet and former teacher educator, expresses this succinctly, "education can offer ampler prospects and a change of perspective or a reason for aspiration." As Heaney describes, good education is not just a matter of raising esteem and self-confidence because education can enhance real opportunities. Nor is good education about teachers administering therapy, as understood by Ecclestone and Hayes (2009). Rather, good education involves teachers taking their individual and collective role seriously and being prepared to argue for their own visions of education and so what they think students should learn. It means teachers co-operating to develop their practice. Good education requires teachers to maintain strong subject knowledge and to engage with students to enhance their knowledge and skills, which entails interesting, challenging lessons that do more than meet spurious performance indicators. Therefore, this vision of good education implies a professionalism for FE teachers which is a long way from the hundreds of competencies listed by government-funded agencies under the misleading heading of standards. Rather, this is a vision of professionalism that rests on knowledge, autonomy and accountability to students and colleagues. That is the kind of vision ITT should promote for trainees preparing to teach in FE.

While emphasising agency, however, teacher educators need to recognise the strictures within which they work. As was argued in chapter three of this thesis, the government has sought to tightly control not just the general direction of the FE sector, but also the operational practice of teachers and teacher educators. This poses a significant dilemma for those involved in teacher training who are critical of the dysfunctional elements of the present system but nevertheless need to practise within it, which is that their trainees have to succeed within that partially dysfunctional system. An analogous situation is the current emphasis on gaining qualifications, which has been called 'credentialism'. I may be critical of this

emphasis, but I may also encourage my own children to gain as many and as valued qualifications as they can precisely because there is such an emphasis on credentialism. With the points below I am therefore striving to find a balance between sweeping but disengaged critique and mere uncritical contemplation (in the sense that Lukács used the term) of how best to manage a highly flawed system. This latter concern echoes Mouffe's (1998: 13) criticism of what she calls "the radical centre" which ignores the social divisions and the inequalities of power in society (which I have been at pains to identify) and so envisages politics taking place on "a neutral terrain" and reduced to "an exchange of arguments and the negotiation of compromises." In this instance, such an approach would ignore the judgements of value in education and therefore would concede too much to Peter Mandelson and his ilk. The value of education should be argued about and for at every opportunity: in staff meetings; at consultation events with LLUK; through trade unions. The words of de Ste Croix (1981: 27) are worth reiterating here, too, "the better one understands the situation the less forced and unfree the situation becomes… 'freedom is the understanding of necessity.'" Trainees need to be aware of what they can and cannot change and unfortunately, teachers like teacher educators individually have little influence over the pertaining regulatory regime. Moreover, any suggestions relating to the initial training of teachers in Further Education must recognise the sector's broader context and complexity, which requires development that is sensitive to local diversity. Furthermore, placing any more demands on organisations and teachers may add to the "dysfunctional tendencies" identified by the *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (TLC) project (Hodkinson 2005b: 1), which divert attention to the achievement of performance indicators and away from education. These caveats should be considered along with the points I make.

I bring something else to this discussion. Through the process of producing this thesis I have been involved in a kind of apprenticeship in research. I have collaborated with peers and been advised and directed by experts. I have been allowed to make mistakes and so to find my own way through concepts, methodology and arguments, for which I am immensely grateful. Along with what I

have learnt about the creation and transmission of ideas relating to teaching, this tremendously formative experience of expanding my own knowledge and skills through structure and freedom has informed the following points.

What constitutes a successful placement?

I have argued that for the participants in this study the ideas about teaching that were held prior to their ITT course, many of which derive from wider culture, are often more powerful than those that are formed during the placement. Moreover, the experience of the placement can reinforce a perception of teaching based on a notion of expediency (especially relating to the administrative elements) and as largely technical (that is, as a set of techniques). Nonetheless, this study has shown that trainees perceive a genuine benefit in the placement and there is evidence that they develop as a result of the placement. It is consequently a crucial element in the ITT course. The readiness of the workplace to welcome the newcomer with structured strategies such as mentoring has an impact on what people learn there (see also Billet 2001: 209). However, also clear is that a workplace can induce learning that is inappropriate because it is based on poor practice or where there is restricted access to appropriate activities or expertise (see also Billet 2002: 31). In other words, the workplace context for placements matters and the workplace context may matter even more for the ninety percent of teachers in FE who are appointed without teaching qualifications which they gain in-service in the workplace. Although the TLC project researched student learning and not ITT, the notion of 'learning culture' they adopted is useful here. For James and Biesta (2007: 23; original italics) a learning culture:

> should not be understood as the context or environment within which learning takes place. Rather, 'learning culture' stands for *the social practices through which people learn*. A cultural understanding of learning implies, in other words, that the learning is not simply occurring *in* a cultural context, but is itself to be understood *as* a cultural practice.

That culture they describe is not merely the background within which learning occurs; learning itself is integral as part of the social practice that reproduces the culture. The TLC project outlined the factors that influence cultures of learning

(Hodkinson *et al* 2007: 415-416) which include the dispositions of and relationships between tutors and students and the amount of time they spend together; the location and resources available there; the course and its assessment; college management; government policy; wider academic or vocational cultures; and wider social and cultural practices affected by social class, gender and ethnicity. As this study has shown, the kind of influences identified by Hodkinson *et al* also impact on trainee teachers both within the sessions at university and during their placement. Both elements can be considered as involving learning cultures, though in this writing my focus is primarily on the latter.

In chapter three I explained that as a result of the FE sector's reliance on teachers' subject specialist expertise over their pedagogy there has not been a tradition of professional development of teachers, which means the transformation of that learning culture is particularly difficult. While the primary purpose of an FE college is self-evidently to educate or train students, not to educate or train teachers, a coherent effort to enhance a culture of pedagogical development amongst trainee teachers and teachers seems likely to benefit the whole organisation (Fuller & Unwin 2004). At present some colleges exhibit approaches to the development of their own staff and by extension to trainees that Fuller and Unwin (2004: 130) have described as restrictive. These include limited participation in communities of practice; rapid rather than staged transition to full role; and a lack of organisational recognition or support for their employees who are learners. If a college's approach is to be more "expansive" (Fuller & Unwin 2004: 130) and conducive to development, the trainees' mentors could have a significant role.

The organisation of mentorship for trainees in this study was often random and the mentoring they received was of inconsistent quality, but trainees who engaged well with their mentors spoke of how they had benefited from the relationship. Ideally, mentors should be volunteers and they need to have the opportunity to train and remission from teaching in order to spend time with the trainee. How mentors engage with trainees is significant and they should not only be supportive, but also critical. Simply congratulating a trainee for coping may reinforce restricted

perceptions of teaching, so there has to be constructive challenge as well. Mentors should involve trainees in their teams and not leave them isolated as were so many in this study's sample. Furthermore, the collaboration and feedback that mentors can provide to trainees on placement are important for the growth of trainees' confidence (Norman & Hyland 2003: 268). Unlike Ecclestone and Hayes (2009: 80-81) I do not correlate this with training emotional teachers, though I concur that confidence on its own is hardly sufficient, as the next section will make clear. Trainees are not teachers and so mentors should ensure that their mentees have different expectations placed on them. Trainees should incrementally be given the responsibility for classes so to maintain the time to expand their knowledge and practice. Finally, a successful placement would allow trainees to experiment and to make mistakes too, all under the guidance of the mentor and their ITT tutor. But in teacher training, a successful placement is not enough on its own.

This study has shown a microcosm of the world of FE. Staff at FE colleges are under pressure to widen participation to sometimes challenging students; they have heavy workloads; they are now paid less than school teachers and colleges receive less funding than schools; the sector has experienced a stampede of policy initiatives over the past decade; and it is scrutinised more closely than any other sector of education. Small wonder then that expedience is often prioritised in this frenzied world and so the danger for teacher training is that a successful placement may mean just learning to be expedient. This identifies the paradox that placements in FE colleges are not the best place to learn to be FE teachers if that is to mean more than learning to be expedient. These limitations of the placement experience bring the argument back to the importance of the taught elements of the ITT course.

What do trainee teachers need to learn?

If all trainees need to do is to learn to cope with the vicissitudes of FE, then a messy and problematic placement may be all they need. If, however, the purpose of teacher training is to allow trainees to expand their knowledge and practice, as it should be, then something else is required. This study has investigated how trainees currently

learn about teaching, and mostly they pick it up through enculturation or in relatively informal ways. Here I want to emphasise knowledge rather than the process of learning and to suggest that teacher educators should be clearer about what they believe trainees should know by the end of their course, partly in order actively to counter some trainees' preconceptions. In considering what knowledge is valuable for a teacher in FE at the beginning of her career, what is clear from this study is that trainees need to know more than they may come across on placement. Moreover therefore, there is a place for teaching professional knowledge. I agree with Young (2003: 555) that, "…because the world is not as we experience it, curriculum knowledge must be discontinuous, not continuous with everyday experience." Trainees do not learn about education through placement because the placement is necessarily limited, which is why there is a need to train or *educate* teachers.

Comprehending this need to educate teachers exposes the limitations of constructing teacher training on the basis of reflective practice with its fixation on analysing experience. Thinking carefully about experience in a structured way is certainly useful in developing practice but if that experience is limited, as it often is, then so too will be the thinking. There is also concern that the variety of reflective practice currently used in FE ITT is muddled (Canning 2009) and that reflective practice has become simply another competency to be ticked off on ITT courses (Suter 2006). Consequently, there is a need for teachers in training to develop a wider conceptual knowledge, including educational theory, which may be practically applied, though applicability cannot be the only measure of value. In placing this emphasis on what new teachers should know, I am not suggesting a radically new curriculum for ITT courses. Indeed, syllabus documents already contain lists of topics to be covered, although arguably the introduction of centralised assessment criteria has pulled courses further away from knowledge (Lucas 2007). Rather, I am suggesting a relatively coherent body of professional knowledge should direct courses in order to challenge experience on placement. Nor am I suggesting that this body of professional knowledge for teachers should be created and codified by existing official agencies as Harkin (2005: 175) moots. The content of that body of knowledge must be the decision of groups of teacher educators in collaboration with

other teachers within colleges or, for example, within consortia related to universities. Deciding its content as it evolves will involve debate, arguments, fallings out and compromise, but it should not be solely defined by its practicality, nor solely by its appearing on central assessment criteria; what I have referred to as its exchange value.

The discrepancy between the use value and the exchange value of learning has been described in relation to learning as an alienated activity, which is exemplified by trainees' attitudes to educational theory. If theory is presented as not only unrelated to practice but also unrelated to a broader notion of professional knowledge, then these attitudes can be understood. For example, andragogy remains a little criticised feature of textbooks for ITT in FE (see for example Reece & Walker 2007 and Curzon 2003) despite the weak evidential underpinning for adults learning in a fundamentally different way to children. Its inclusion on ITT courses for the FE sector seems especially questionable given the growing number of younger students in colleges, but is symptomatic of an ossified perception of the relationship between professional knowledge and practice. Likewise, learning styles theory, which according to Coffield (2009: 50) "is either wasting the time of staff and students or is doing more harm than good" continues to feature in responses from many of the participants in this and other studies (see Orr & Simmons 2009). This indicates a highly uncritical consideration of theory on ITT, given the excoriating criticism that learning styles concepts have undergone in recent years (see Coffield *et al* 2004). It also indicates a much broader philosophical issue that pertains to professional knowledge as well, which is that not all knowledge is worth having. Knowledge must have a relationship to truth[10]. Judith Williams (2002 quoted in Young 2003: 555) expresses this clearly:

> Whether in astrophysics or literature, there is a body of knowledge to be learned and renewed. Most would like [it] to be useful and many would like it to be easy. However, it is not often the former and rarely the latter. What really matters about knowledge is that it is true or rather that we can learn or find the truth or truths as best we can, in any field. This is what education and more specifically, universities are for.

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[10] I realise that this is a controversial issue to which I cannot do justice here. See Young (2005) for more.

Trainees should eventually be able to discuss theory, not just name it, and use theory appropriately to critique and inform their own practice. Therefore the body of knowledge for teachers at the beginning of their career should include various theories of social and situated learning, which paradoxically trainees are unlikely to learn about simply through participation in the workplace. These conceptions of learning have not informed policymakers and nor are they currently recognised by set texts used on many FE ITT courses (again see for example Reece & Walker 2007 and Curzon 2003) where the metaphor of acquisition is apparent. However, it is also important that trainees should be aware of the criticisms of these conceptualisations, one of which is that they lead to a relativistic view of knowledge.

Situated theories of learning might become more influential if teacher training were explicitly placed within the much broader field of WBL, which as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, would open ITT up to a huge range of research and a significant body of knowledge. This wider perspective may encourage trainees and teacher educators alike to look beyond the current narrow strictures of FE colleges and the circumstances of their alienation. Most conceptions of WBL, including what I have argued in this thesis, emphasise context and collaboration in the process of learning because learning results from a relationship between individuals, their situations and society's structures. If these elements were clearly recognised, ITT courses could be directed away from the performative adherence to centralised criteria and towards professional knowledge. This would entail informed consideration of what trainees and their future students need to learn and what circumstances best promote that learning. The Further Education sector, which is so important to the lives of millions of people, deserves no less.

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Appendix 1 Details of Respondents

Trainee teachers

Respondent and subject specialism	Age	M/F	Ethnicity	Previous experience (including of FE)	Number of semi-structured interviews	Approximate duration of observations
Constance (Early years, City College)	36-40	F	Black African	Worked in early years education in southern Africa; recently migrated to Britain; no experience of FE.	2	a. 1 hour (staffroom and department.) b. 3 hours (staffroom and classroom)
Danny (Sports, Town College)	20-25	M	White Irish	Straight from university; no FE experience	2	a. 1.5 hours (staffroom, department. and classroom)
Ivana (Photography, City College)	31-35	M	White British	Worked in photography; experience of FE as student (hairdressing) and p/t teacher.	1	a. 1.5 hours (staffroom)
Linda (Skills for Life, City College)	36-40	F	Black African	Worked in business in west Africa; migrated to Britain; no FE experience	1 (dropped out)	a. 2 hours (staffroom, department and classroom)
Martin (Fashion, City College)	20-25	M	White British	Straight from university; no FE experience	1	a. 1 hour (staffroom) b. 1 hour (classroom)
Paula (Fashion, City College)	35-40	F	Black African	Worked in fashion in west Africa; studied for MA in Britain before Cert. Ed. (as a foreign student); no experience of FE.	2	a. 3 hours (staffroom, coffee bar and workshop) b. 2 hours (workshop, department.) c. 2 hours (classroom)
Precious (Business, City College)	41-45	F	Black African	Worked in business in southern Africa and Britain; no experience of FE.	2	a. 3 hours (staffroom, coffee bar and classroom) b. 2 hours (staffroom and class)
Sean (Sports, City College)	20-25	M	White British	Straight from university; FE experience as student	2	a. 3 hours (staffroom and department) b. 2 hours (staffroom and class in gym) c. 2 hours (staffroom and gym)

Questionnaires to cohorts of trainee teachers prior to placements

Year	Number of responses
September 2005	106
September 2006	139

Focus group of trainee teachers (Lego-based session)

Trainee and specialism	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Danny (Sports, Town College)	20-25	M	White Irish
Gareth (ESOL, Town College)	20-25	M	White British
Karen (Skills for Life, Shire College)	26-30	F	White British
Paddy (Sports, North College)	20-25	M	White Irish
Sally (Skills for Life, Town College)	26-30	F	White British

Interviews with serving teachers

Respondent and subject specialism (all City College)	Age	M/F	Ethnicity	Length of service in FE at time of interview.	Mentor?	Approximate duration of observations
Andrea (Special needs)	40-45	F	White British	12 years (5 as a teacher, 7 in support roles)	No	1 hour (classroom and coffee bar)
Dave (Sports)	20-25	M	White British	1 year	Yes	2 hours (staffroom and gym)
Ian (Business)	36-40	M	White British	10 years	Yes	2 hours (coffee bar and staffroom)
John (Arts department manager)	26-30	M	White British	3 years	Yes	None (other than interview in staffroom)
Mark (plumbing)	31-35	M	White British	3.5 years	No	2 hours (staffroom and classroom) 1 hour (workshop)
Mike (Woodwork)	25-30	M	White British	4 years	No	2 hours (classroom) 1 hour (workshop)
Pat (Woodwork)	25-30	M	White British	4 years	No	2 hours (staffroom and classroom) 1 hour workshop
Ruth (Skills for Life)	40-45	F	White British	10 years (7 in other colleges)	Yes	3 hours (staffroom and classroom)

Appendix 2 Interview schedule for trainees

Inform respondent about the research project and how data will be used; ask for consent form to be signed.

1. What have you been doing so far on the placement.

   - How do you feel the placement is going?

   - Where have you been doing it? Where do you feel most comfortable?

   - Judgements in the classroom

   - How has the placement affected how you teach?

2. How were you prepared for placement? (examples)

3. Describe your relationship with your mentor.

4. Describe your relationship with other members of staff.

5. Describe your relationship with the students.

6. What do you think the students think about you?

7. How does your placement experience so far match up with your expectations of teaching in FE? (and of being an FE teacher?)

8. Is there anything else you would like to say about your placement experience?

Appendix 3 Questionnaire for trainees

First thoughts about WBE placement

Please take a few minutes to think about your placement and then answer the questions below.

Your Subject Specialism
………………………………………………………………………………….

1. When you think about your WBE placement, what three things are you most excited about?

2. When you think about your WBE placement, what three things are you most concerned about?

3. What are your first thoughts about the students you are likely to be teaching?

4. What are your first thoughts about the college staff you might come into contact with at your placement?

5. How do you think you will spend your time when you are at your WBE placement?

6. Before you started on the Pre-service course :

Had you ever been a student at an FE College?   Yes / No

Had you ever taught in an FE College?   Yes /   No

Gender: Male   Female (please circle)

Age: 18-29   30-39   40-49   50-59   0ver 60 (please circle)

Would you be happy for one of the research team to contact you for further information?

If yes complete the details below:

Your Name…………………………………….
Email…………………………………….

Appendix 4 Interview schedule for existing teachers

Explain the research project and ask respondent to sign consent form.

1. Describe your role at the college. Length of time. Qualifications.

2. Describe your life before working in FE.

3. Describe your day at work. How do you decide/know what you have to do?

4. Who do you speak to [about what] at work?

5. Where in the college do you feel most comfortable?

6. What is a successful student in your department? How do you judge that?

7. How would you describe a good teacher in your subject area?

8. If I were to observe one of your teaching sessions, what would I see?

9. If you meet someone for the first time, would you say that you were a teacher? If so… If not…?

10. How have you changed since you started working in FE?

Appendix 5 Interview schedule for mentors (additional)

1. How would you describe your role working with the trainee on placement?

2. How did you come to have this role?

3. What contact do you have with your trainee teacher?

4. Describe your relationship with the trainee teacher.

5. Describe what you would like the trainee to learn from the placement

6. What difficulties do you experience working with a trainee teacher?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about working with the trainee teacher?

Appendix 6 Trainee time sheet

Name: **Placement College:**
Subject Area:

Please complete the table below to show how you spend your time at college on placement over any three days. We do not need great detail; just note where you are and what you are doing, for example, what group you are teaching or observing; when you are marking in the staff room; when you are chatting in the canteen or working in the library and so on. Thank you for completing this chart.

Times	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
	Where	**Activity**	**Where**	**Activity**	**Where**	**Activity**
8.30 to 9.00						
9.00 to 9.30						
9.30 to 10.00						
10.00 to 10.30						
10.30 to 11.00						
11.00 to 11.30						
11.30 to 12.00						
12.00 to 12.30						
12.30 to 1.00						
1.00 to 1.30						

Times (continued)	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
	Where	**Activity**	**Where**	**Activity**	**Where**	**Activity**
1.30 to 2.00						
2.00 to 2.30						
3.00 to 3.30						
3.30 to 4.00						
4.00 to 4.30						
5.30 to 6.00						
Evening						