What's the point of Initial Teacher Training? Former trainee voice on the influence of in-service ITT upon the practice of established post-compulsory teachers

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Abstract

This article investigates the perceptions of former in-service Initial Teacher Training (ITT) trainees in the post-compulsory sector of the United Kingdom (UK), and identifies how they intellectualised the contribution that successful completion of ITT had made to their practice as teachers. Former trainees reported perceptions of such professional enhancement in three key ways. Firstly, they felt more connected with the sector, connected with their institutions and connected with the realities of teaching following their ITT. Secondly, they felt a greater sense of professionalism, and were able to carry more practical and pedagogical skills into the workplace. Finally, they felt a stronger commitment to their own continuing professional development.
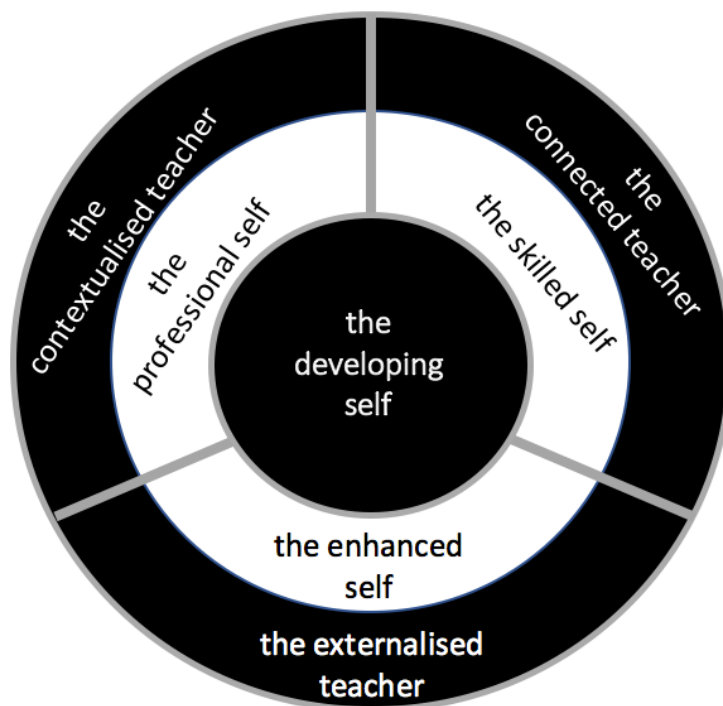
Graphical abstract

Figure 1 Model of influence of ITE on professional practice

Keywords

Introduction

In the UK, the majority of teachers in the post-compulsory sector undertake their ITT having already secured employment as a teacher, via part-time training held at either a University (HEI), College or other training provider (Simmons & Thompson, 2007), and fit their work around a typical course attendance of half a day, or one day per week, over a period of two academic years (Maxwell, 2014). However, recent and contemporary government policies seem to diminish the requirement for (and therefore the importance of) post-compulsory teacher training; so this paper asks what then are the benefits to be gained from HEI-based in-service training? Further, because of the comparatively relaxed policy towards undertaking ITT in this sector, many of those trainees who do partake in in-service training will have been working as teachers in the sector previously, often for a considerable length of time. This begs the question, what benefit would an already experienced (although untrained) teacher receive from undertaking in-service teacher training?

This research exploited the reflections and insights of past in-service ITT trainees who, exercising a lens provided by their experience of working within the sector, examined the influence that their ITT was able to have on their preparations for, and success in working as a teacher within the post-compulsory sector. Focusing on the in-service approach to training and using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, it promoted the voices of former trainees from two universities in the North of England. In addition to this, the research also addressed the perspectives of representatives from managers within the post-compulsory sector, including Human Resources and Education or departmental managers from a range of post-compulsory institutions.

Phenomenography is a paradigm of *anti-positivist* research. It gives primacy to the perspective and reflective interpretations of the individual, and has grown in significance since its foundation as a recognised methodology by Marton the 1970s. The key principle of the phenomenographic approach to research is that the constructions of experience developed by the participant are held as sacrosanct, indeed Marton and Booth suggest that "[A]*t the root of phenomenography lies an interest in describing the phenomena in the world as others see them, and in revealing and describing the variations therein*" (1997: 111). Because of the centrality of the participant's voice in phenomenography, many researchers have seized upon it as a tool for understanding how learners conceptualise their own learning, in an attempt to further develop the efficacy of pedagogical practice (Marton,1992; Prosser, 2000; Micari, Light, Calkins & Streitwieser, 2007). This research used phenomenography to investigate the ways in which in-service Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for post-compulsory education influences the professional practice of its trainees.

Methodology and methods

In keeping with the phenomenographic tradition, my primary research used no set definition of professional practice from literature, instead allowing the voice and interpretation of the

research participants to determine what they consider professional practice to be. This sits appropriately with the writings of both McCorquodale (2014) - who suggested that professional practice is an entirely personal notion, which is formed and driven by the personal beliefs and history of the individual - and also with Malmberg, Hagger, Burn, Mutton, & Colls (2010), who determined that notions of professional practice are built from more general concerns around personal adequacy, classroom practice, and the teacher's commitment to planning and organisation. Therefore in the case of this research, the term 'professional practice' refers to the personal actions and decisions undertaken by teachers in the course of their role. The term 'professionalism' refers to the ability on the part of the teacher to enjoy a more holistic view of their pedagogy, using this lens of professionalism to act with personal autonomy and confidence in the undertaking of their craft.

Hasselgren and Beach (citing Marton, 1992) suggest that phenomenography is "*a research method designed to describe the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon is experienced, conceptualised, or understood, based on an analysis of accounts of experiences as they are formed in descriptions*" (1997: 192). It therefore sits within the interpretivist paradigm, and was developed initially through research into trainees' perceptions of their university learning experiences (Marton & Booth, 1997: 135), the research attempting to see the world through the eyes of the student body (Svensson, 1997; Ashworth & Lucas, 1998).

Using thematic coded analysis of the raw data, the principle areas of commonality around the subject matter were drawn from the various participants, in order to meet the aims of the research. The primary aim in phenomenography is to uncover a collective phenomenon, arrived at by generating - through phenomenographic analysis - a "*clearer and more articulate account of* [participants'] *conceptions than* [participants] *would themselves have generated unaided*" (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998: 417). The 'categories of description' arising from the process are termed 'conceptions' which when analysed and synthesised become the 'outcome space,' or the phenomenographical overview of the area being studied.

Unlike grounded theory, which does not have a particular favoured methodology (Flick, 2009), phenomenography upholds the interview as its central tenet for data collection (Bowden, 2000).

The study utilised a purposive approach to sampling (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), where respondents had to meet each of the following criteria:

1. have completed their in-service post-compulsory ITT programme after 2007;
2. have spent at least one academic year as a teacher in the post-compulsory sector *since* completing their ITT; and
3. be currently employed as a teacher in the post-compulsory sector.

In the case of the managers of teachers interviewed, a simple purposive statement was used to determine suitability for the study, this being that managerial participants should be a current manager within a post-compulsory education institution, who has responsibility for staff development including promoting the need for ITT with their staff.

The most often cited disadvantage of purposive sampling is the potential for the researcher to omit a vital characteristic or perspective from the selection. This was acknowledged through ensuring that each of the five sectors of post-compulsory education identified by Fisher and Simmons (2010) were included within the population:

1. Further education;
2. Local authorities;
3. Public Services;
4. Private education providers; and
5. Higher Education.

This study captured the unique perspectives of 21 currently employed, former 'In Service' trainees of Initial Teacher Training, and was carried out in the United Kingdom via semi-structured interview. The participants had each undertaken their ITT courses from one of two universities located in the north of England, both of which have established national reputations in relation to ITT. Of the interview respondents, all were aged between 21 and 50 years, however more than half were aged between 31 and 40 years. The opinions of both male and female respondents were sought, with 10 of the 21 former ITT trainees, and one of the five managerial respondents being female. A wide variety of teaching contexts were also revealed, demonstrating appropriately the breadth of the post-compulsory sector, with college staff, the Police Service, the Prison Service, the Third Sector, Adult and Community education, and private industry all represented in the study. Five representatives of management from both public and private subdomains of post-compulsory education were additionally interviewed.

Findings and Discussion

It was clear from the analysis of the results that the principal themes or 'categories of description' (Marton, 1981) emerging could be separated into three clusters;

- Categories of description relating to impact external to the respondent;
- Categories of description relating to impact internalised by the respondent; and,
- Categories of description relating to suggestions for moving ITT provision forward).
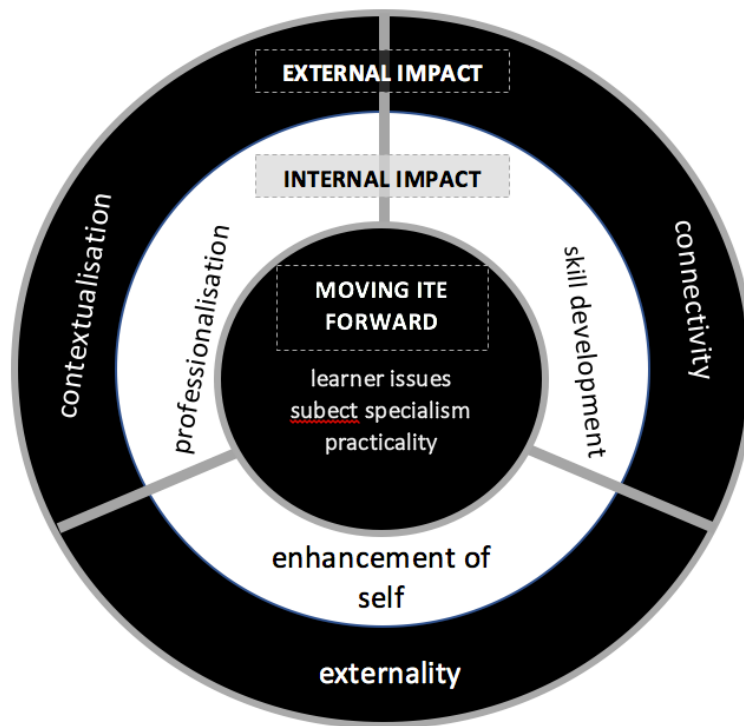

Figure 2: The outcome space: a construction of conceptions

Relating to impact external to the respondent

This theme referred to categories of description where the respondents reported an impact of ITT, previously outside their perceived locus of control. The responses within this cluster were invariably favourable, and provided an inherently positive commentary on the impact of ITT. The categories could be broken down into three conceptions.

The *Contextualisation conception* identified the notion that ITT graduates were able to locate their own role and responsibilities within the wider context of post-compulsory education. It revealed an enhanced appreciation of the context in which the trainee works, and the role of *post-compulsory teacher* that they were undertaking. The conception referred to the extent to which respondents felt that their training provided a required context for their roles and responsibilities as teachers. It differed from the forthcoming connectivity conception in that it referred to the contextualisation of the role, rather than situation of the trainee within that role. In addition, it differed from the externality conception, which addresses how training broadens the perspective and influence outside their immediate sphere of influence, or community of practice.

Being mindful of the above discrepancies between the three categories of description relating to the impact of ITT external to the person, the 'contextualisation' conception was constructed through the use of intrinsic descriptors in both the interviews and questionnaires, for example: *it made my job clearer*, or *I understood the role more*. This tallied closely with the writing of Coldron & Smith (1999), who discussed the critical importance of 'knowing

one's place' in the early stages of forming a professional identity. They suggest that "[i]*dentity as a teacher is partly given and partly achieved by active location in social space*" (2009: 712), ratifying the phenomenographical findings disclosed here, which emphasise the feeling that respondents had in relation to being able to locate and structure their practice more easily in the social context of teaching following their ITT.

Respondent Zahra completed her teacher training 7 years prior to her interview, although she had been a teacher for 11 years. She had a variety of experiences in the post-compulsory sector, having worked previously for both a large FE College and a small private training salon. At the time of the interview, she suggested that:

> It [ITT] gave me everything that I needed for my job, it made a lot of things clearer. It made everything come together. I think you're a little bit blind at first, you know, there's your teaching hours, there's your lesson plan. It [ITT] put the job together for me.

This was supported by respondent Daryl, a tutor in an FE College who had undertaken his ITT at a different university to the previous respondent, and had undertaken his training much more recently, being interviewed two years after completion. Relating neatly to Zahra, having had experience of teaching prior to starting his ITT, he stated that:

> I think it helps to put things into perspective more than anything, I don't think it [ITT] necessarily develops your ideas, but it helps you to put things into context. It's given me structure more than anything, you could never teach someone how to deal with a certain situation, it just happens like that, bump, but everything's easier because it's been put into context.

Interestingly, this seemed to infer teachers in post-compulsory working at their pedagogy without perhaps being able to see the 'bigger picture' of their role, which was built upon by Elin, a beautician who undertook her ITT with several subject specialist colleagues within a larger mixed subject group, was extremely positive about the diverse specialist group that she had been part of at her University:

> studying with people from the same [subject] area did help, so I liked that there were people from my area. But I also liked that there were people from other [subject] areas there because you got different perspectives of where people worked and what their job roles were. It brought something extra into group conversations.

Next, the ***Connectivity* conception** introduced the perception of connectedness of the graduated ITT trainee to the teaching profession, and practices and contexts therein. Although categorised differently from the 'contextualisation conception', this conception is on many levels clearly linked as it deals with the ability of ITT to provide connectivity for the trainee to the profession or field of teaching. The analysis within this conception resonated with the writing of Sachs, who discussed the importance of teacher identity creation as a

nexus of 'multi-membership' and as an active member of a community (2001), in that "[t]*eachers' professional identities are rich and complex because they are produced in a rich and complex set of relations of practice*" (2001: 160). It was the feeling on the part of the respondents of being connected both *to* and *with* these relations of practice that the phenomenographical approach revealed.

Respondents were unanimous in their praise for the shared experiences gained through being in class with other trainees. Respondent Daryl, a male trainee in his forties, with a five year career in teaching at the time of interview revealed: "[laughs] – *it helps you to get a lot off your chest in class, you might be frustrated but people listen. And you learn from everybody else doing that as well, you can help people out as well*." This aligned with Krishnaveni & Anitha's professional characteristic of *collegiality* (2007), and was echoed by another respondent, Lizzie, a trainee who had undertaken the same university's ITT as course as Daryl, but with more prior experience and stated:

> It was nice that we were all different, over the two years there were a lot of people from college that were teaching, there were some that were teaching in the community, there were hairdressers, beauty therapists, and they were all different ages. It was nice to see how they taught and the problems that they had encountered.

Although not making specific comments regarding what was learnt, respondents clearly identified with and felt that they benefitted from the community of the classroom. Here the writing of Timoštšuk & Ugaste (2010) resonates, where the personal teacher identity is found to be deeply connected to the personal and social context in which the teaching and learning is situated, and that the ongoing learning and development of teachers is a fundamentally social exercise. Malachi, a tutor with thirteen years of experience, six of which were prior to any teacher training confirmed the importance of the classroom community, "*I could relate what I was being taught in the classroom to what I was actually doing, I could actually put it into practice. But equally if I put it into practice I could come back the following week and discuss it with the group*."

The ***Externality* conception** demonstrated the sensation of being able to act, or being perceived to act differently outside their ordinary sphere of influence. Therefore, *externality* referred to a perception amongst the participants of being able to act with enhanced authority outside their ordinary sphere of influence, and was related to an increased feeling of confidence and empowerment when amongst stakeholders in post-compulsory education, outside their immediate colleagues and students.

This notion of an awareness of enhanced externality resonated with the literature well: Coldron & Smith (1999) discuss at length the key influence of a teachers active location within an identifiable educational social space, where a teacher's identity develops because of the actions, beliefs and ways-of-being developed by the social actors in their arena. Similarly, Flores & Day (2006) recount the importance of the teacher's social context, and in a lexicon very similar to that summarised above, discuss the impact of the leadership that a teacher experiences (or is subjected to), the ITT that they undertake, and the culture in which

they operate, on the emerging identities of new teachers. Like the previous conception, the phenomenographical investigation revealed resonance in the feelings of respondents with the writing of Ball (2004) and his notion of *exteriorization,* and also Sachs, who discussed teacher identity as a negotiation between the local and global environment (2001). She suggests that "[i]*dentity must be forever re-established and negotiated. It defines our capacity to speak and act autonomously and allows for the differentiation of ourselves from* [others]" (2001:155). In this research, former ITT trainees reported a sensation of being more respected and more able to express their views in the wider workforce arena. An example of this came from Daryl, who boasted about having a noticeable increase in being able to 'stand his ground' with the external verifiers who visit from his awarding body:

> You're not frightened now, at the end of the day, I've got the qualifications and the experience now, not to *take on* an EV [External Verifier], but to discuss things with an EV. A lot of people think an EV's coming in to be the headmaster and to browbeat, that's not right, that's not right [pauses]. No, I'm sorry you're here to help us and guide us. I've got that from the [ITT] discussions that we had in groups.

One former trainee (Dave), with 13 years of teaching experience, six years of this being prior to undertaking any ITT commented on how the lexicon of ITT had enhanced his belief in his position within the wider context of the role. Dave suggested that:

> We learnt a new language, a language that benefits management and observers more than trainees! Ha, we've been told this year by [his employer] that we have to put schemes of work online, and you think, why? Trainees won't understand that scheme of work. But it's [ITT] that taught us to survive in this scenario of Ofsted and internal observations.

This correlates effectively with the 2014 Professional Standards for teaching in the sector, most notably standard 20 which requires teachers to "*Contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others*" (Education and Teaching Foundation, 2014).

Relating to impact internalised by the respondent

This section refers to categories of description where the respondents have reported an influence of ITT that was internalised by the individual trainee. The responses within this cluster were again invariably favourable, and again provided an inherently positive commentary on the impact of ITT. There were three key conceptions or themes emerging from the analysis.

The ***Professionalisation*** conception revealed discussions around enhancements both intrinsic and extrinsic in the perceived professionalism of the ITT graduate. The conception was typified by a perception of increased professionalism amongst the participants, as a result of undertaking post-compulsory ITT. The conception resonated with the writing of Flores &

Day (2006) who noted the interplay between personal history and beliefs, with the contextual stimuli of the teacher's workplace when constructing, de-constructing and re-constructing teacher identity. This research took identity to be *a fluid lens through which teachers contextualise themselves and their pedagogical practice in relation to the wider profession.* Korthagen (2004) discusses the comparatively recent focus of trainee teachers and ITT on professionalism, identifying the increasing popularity of 'self' and 'identity' in research terminology in recent decades and identifies the changing nature of the teacher from giver of knowledge to enabler of learning. He also reminds us of the difficulty experienced by teacher trainers in enhancing a new teacher's self image, or improving a negative self-concept, referring to the importance of developing these 'core qualities' of the teacher. This context therefore enables a particular resonance with Agnes, a teacher with six years of experience (two of which were prior to her undertaking her ITT) of working in the voluntary sector. She suggested that her ITT qualification helped to enhance her perceived professionalism, and combat the stigma that she felt was attached to her role:

> I got a lot of validation out of it, a lot of confidence in what I do, I think working in a profession such as youth worker that's always been questionable in terms of its professionalisation. So the validation was particularly important, there's a lot of confidence that I got because when you go into secondary schools in my position, particularly when you're dealing with like GCSE trainees, trainees that are not going to achieve, teachers don't necessarily give you the value that they should for what you're doing, for providing an alternative provision, you're not always given that recognition that you're a professional doing a job, so it felt good to have that.

This was supported by Kristian, a trainer with a local police force, who completed his ITT after four years of teaching without a recognised ITT:

> I feel far more professional having got the qualification, more than I ever did before. It gave me a lot more job satisfaction, knowing that I was a qualified teacher rather than just a practising teacher, it gave me a lot of pride in what I did, the personal sense of achievement.

The ***Skills development*** conception examined the development of practical, pedagogical and administrative skills. The conception revealed a notion amongst participants that their technical or pedagogic skill was enhanced by undertaking in-service post-compulsory ITT. Carr (2000) refers to this area as *dispositional competence,* and disputes the notion that a teacher would possess a 'standard' set of generic competencies, thus adding value to this chapter, which asserts that alumna of ITT do embody particular competencies following training. In keeping with the phenomenographic approach, these codes emerged from the transcripts, and represent the entirety of the perceived skill development reported by respondents. The writing of Lucas also resonated here, particularly in relation to his notion of the 'competent practitioner' (2004), which referred to an approach in ITT which emphasized the need to demonstrate recognised skills and competencies of teaching. The positive emphasis on the practical skills of teaching reported by respondents in this study is

interesting when one considers the evidence of a current dichotomy in the lexicon of post-compulsory teacher training, where HEI provision is often considered to be more academic or theoretical than other options (Simmons and Walker, 2013). Despite this perception, there were explicit areas of skill development that respondents felt were worthy of comment, which related to the development of own academic skills, enhancing creativity in teaching and learning, together with General pedagogic skill, which again compared positively with the 2014 Professional Standards (Education and Training Foundation, 2014).

The **Enhancement of self** conception revealed enhancements to confidence, self-belief and perceived employability. Located within this conception was a perception of academic and vocational self-improvement and increased autonomy. It deals with more intangible concepts such as confidence and employability, thus justifying a distinct category of description, which then logically produced a conception separate to skills development, or professionalisation for example. A more thorough examination of the data reveals three significant subsections within this conception, these being:

- Sense of prospect;
- Sense of confidence; and,
- Commitment to own development.

The research detected a tangible feeling that graduates of ITT felt that they had increased their **sense of prospect** by undertaking the programme. Irwin simply stated in interview, "*You feel valued because you've got your CertEd.*" Initially it was unclear as to whether Irwin was referring to the fact that he had achieved the qualification necessary in order to teach; achieved his institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) or he was referring to his increased embodied cultural capital (ibid); whereby the skills, knowledge and abilities of teaching gained through his ITT had enhanced his feeling of *being valued*. However it became clear that he was indeed referring to the latter, providing an example of how his status within his private sector training company had increased following his completion of ITT, suggesting that, "*people will come to me for advice, they're coming to me for expert knowledge, because I've got a CertEd.*" This intrinsic credibility was also touched upon by a passionate Myfanwy, who enthused at the positive impact of ITT on her career:

> Let me tell you about two instructors, both female, and both about the same age. One of them is on long term sick, even though her timetable is really light. The other's flying. My manager says that the difference is teacher training. The flyer is trained and knows how to cope with the job.

These examples demonstrate effectively that the ITT programmes encountered by these former trainees are far more than simply a paper qualification, or academic exercises in pedagogy, but have had a genuine impact on their practices. In addition, there are overtones of Bathmaker & Avis (2005), who identified a feeling amongst their *pre-service* respondents that they themselves were distancing themselves from the ingrained and negatively modelled practices of the sector, and were taking responsibility for bringing change to the classroom.

The perception of increased *sense of confidence* was both explicit and implicit throughout the data analysis, both from the perspectives of former trainees and educational managers. Myfanwy stated that:

> I was a fairly confident person to start with, but the confidence boost has been massive. Not only when you have your lesson observations from uni, and you get your feedback, and what you're doing is right, but when you talk to the other trainees in the [ITT] class as well, you're getting feedback from them, sharing ideas. Confidence is a massive one [impact of ITT on professional practice].

This was triangulated by the thoughts of education managers, indicating a sincere satisfaction with sending their staff on such training. Kevin, a training manager in a large police force's training division suggested that, "*it gives them* [the graduates of ITT] *kudos, it appears to give them confidence in their own abilities, and provided that they're given time to get the qualification within work time, as well as their own time, they value it more.*"

Jamie, a recently graduated ITT trainee added his perspective to his enhancement at work, combining the discussed elements of increased confidence and therefore increased trust; despite the fact that he had taught for three years before commencing his ITT training, "*I've gone from 'zero' to 'hero' because of the qualification. I'm now functional skills leader because I'm now confident to put my own opinion across*." As with all the references to interviews made in the findings of this study, these were Jamie's own words; the emphasis on his ITT qualification's role in enhancing his career progression is particularly significant.

A significant number of respondents in interview commented on their perception that ITT had improved their *commitment to own learning and development*. Maxwell (2010a) made the link following her research between an enhanced sense of confidence (as discussed in the previous section) paving the way for teachers to *then* commit to their own development. In relation to his own emerging development needs in and around teaching (CPD), music lecturer Dave suggested that:

> I thought I was a teacher before I did it [ITT], I think the teacher training obviously gives you a certificate and a payrise [laughs], but it opened my mind to learning more. I think I may have started the teacher training thinking 'why do I have to be here' but once I'd got some of it covered, that [made] me want to know more, and then later I went on to *do* more.

Again, phenomenography's key principle of remaining faithful to the voice, understanding, and interpretation of the respondent was key in these conceptions. This was particularly so in regard to the *skills development* conception, where respondents were keen to discuss the ways in which they felt their skills had been enhanced, despite the fact that those perceived skills were diffuse across a variety of areas, as revealed later in this chapter. Identifiable notions of internal influences resonated with literature on the development of a teacher's identity. Van Vleen & Sleegers (2005) define teachers' identity as being their self-image, or the way in which the teacher sees themselves in terms of the professionalism, ability, and teaching skill

that they can mobilise. Rodgers & Scott (2008) also posit the importance of a teacher's own pedagogical agency in the continuing development of a recognisable identity. Indeed, these authors are critical of other studies that place (in their view) too much emphasis on the social factors affecting a teacher's development, and not enough emphasis on the teacher's ability to produce their own meaning and structures in term of professional identity.

Relating to suggestions for moving ITT provision forward

This subset of the outcome space relates to areas in which in-service ITT could be improved, or in which with experience and reflection, former trainees felt that their ITT curriculum had been lacking. There were three principal conceptions for former trainees revealed by the analysis:

The ***Learner issues*** conception dealt with the extent to which ITT provides support for teachers in dealing with issues of their trainees. It found a notion amongst participants that in-service post-compulsory ITT did not equip participants with a suitable appreciation of contemporary issues affecting individual post-compulsory learners.

The ***Subject specialist*** conception revealed the extent to which subject specialist pedagogy is incorporated within ITT. I defined the conception as: the discussion around the perceived success of subject specialist instruction in their post-compulsory training.

The ***Practicality*** conception identified the extent to which ITT keeps pace with contemporary developments in teaching. It located a perception of deficit in terms of the practical skills of teaching, where former trainees had to investigate their own development opportunities outside their ITT in order to develop themselves sufficiently. This section resonated with the writing of Husband, who found that former trainees of in-service ITT demonstrated a clear positive correlation between undertaking ITT, and a commitment to, and ability to determine own continued personal development (2015).
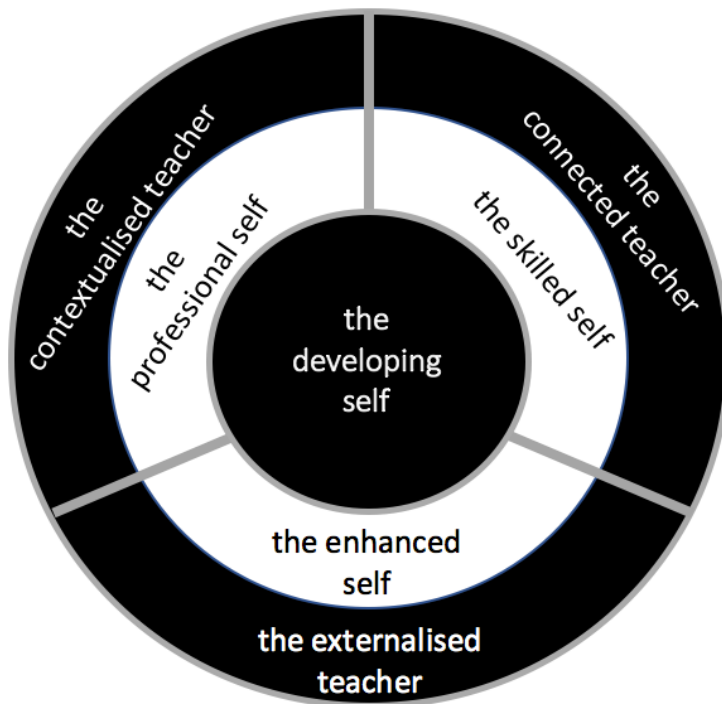
Moving forward

Figure 1 Model of influence of ITE on professional practice

The findings revealed a theoretical model which provides a visual representation of the influence of initial teacher training on professional practice. The model fills an internationally relevant gap in current knowledge, due to its focus on the perceptions of the *former* trainee, with the emphasis being placed on those who have taught for at least one year, following the successful completion of in-service only, post-compulsory ITT.

The model of the influence of Initial Teacher Training on professional practice comprises three major components, two of which are comprised of three modular parts. Taken holistically the model presents a visual interpretation of the trained post-compulsory teacher who is in the first instance, more aware of both their position in, and influence on the post-compulsory workforce, and who can use their heightened external exposure to the benefit of themselves and their locales. The model then reveals a perception of enhanced practice and thinking on the part of the trained in-service teacher. Here the teacher is able to identify where their own professionalism has been enhanced, along with the development of practical pedagogical skills, and development of their own sense of worth outside the classroom. Finally, and depicted centrally, the model reveals a teaching practitioner existing within an ethic of development, who can identify where they themselves require development beyond that offered by their in-service ITT. The following sections will develop this theoretical model.

Influences external to self

The first and outermost component of the model is that of *influences external to self*, which comprises three further modules of:

1. the **contextualised teacher** (from the contextualisation conception);

2. the **connected teacher** (from the connectivity conception); and

3. the **externalised teacher** (from the externality conception).

The contextualised teacher

Previously, the original *contextualisation* conception revealed a perception amongst participants that they felt an increased notion of being able to contextualise their roles and responsibilities as teachers, within the milieu of both the post-compulsory sector, *and* their own institutions. This is particularly interesting when one considers that all respondents had undertaken in-service ITT and were therefore already employed as teachers. It brings to mind the writings of Bathmaker and Avis (2005) depicting a marginalised workforce encountered by their pre-service ITT trainees; however in my research, in-service ITT trainees appear to have benefited in terms of de-marginalising themselves by undertaking their own ITT.

The connected teacher

The original *connectivity* conception revealed an enhanced perception of connection to the field of post-compulsory education, which again, reveals a discourse of prior marginalisation like that encountered by Bathmaker & Avis (2005). In this conception, graduates reflected that the university-led ITT that they had undertaken had enabled them to feel closer to the wider teaching community, citing practical examples such as being observed in their teaching, having knowledgeable ITT tutors, or taking part in in-class debates with other trainees.

The externalised teacher

The last of the three external influences was found in the conception of *externality*. This conception was built around the perception that respondents felt that they were perceived differently by those around them, which provided them often with increased confidence when dealing with for instance, external examiners or line managers; because of their perception that they carried more influence on completion of their ITT – but also that there was a perception external to themselves that they could now take on more responsibility.

Alumna of ITT are more able to locate themselves and their practice within the wider context of teaching in the post-compulsory sector. They are able to contextualise their position more fully, both in terms of having a more considered understanding of what it means to be a teacher and also in terms of their understanding of the sector in which they work.

Following the successful completion of ITT, teachers feel a far more significant connection to the post-compulsory sector and to the other employees and stakeholders within the sector. This includes the trainee body, as well as other teachers and management within their institutions. Following teacher training, trainees feel that they themselves are more visible in their practice. This gives a feeling of confidence which they perceive enhances their standing when viewed by external stakeholders. Examples of this included perceptions of increased confidence when dealing with external examiners, with their own internal management systems, or with external inspection regimes. Therefore, the previously identified *contextualised teacher* relates to an identification and interpretation of the field that is post-

compulsory education; the *connected teacher* relates to a growing familiarisation with said field; and finally the *externalised teacher* relates to a growing confidence in both interacting with, and manipulating the field. These influences can be considered to be latent functions (Merton, 1949) of ITT, in that they do not reflect specific aims of in-service ITT, however they are evidently of great benefit to the ITT graduate. Working in unison, these modules present an image of the trained post-compulsory teacher who is more aware of their environment, of their position and influence within the workforce, and is more mindful of the external context within which they operate.

Influences internalised by self

The next series of conceptions related to the perceptions amongst the respondents of the influences of ITT that they were able to internalise. The first of these internalised conceptions was that of *professionalisation*.

The professional self

This represented an overwhelming perception that participants considered themselves to be more professional, having completed their university-led ITT programme. This often stemmed from a feeling of enhanced confidence in the operation of their teaching roles, bestowed by completion of the ITT course. This also illuminated debates around dual professionalism and ex-officio professionalism (Clow, 2001); there appeared to be a tangible relegation of ex-officio professionalism following university-led ITT, accompanied by an increase in perceivable *teacher* professionalism. Pleasingly, this perception was overwhelmingly shared by the managers of post-compulsory education that were also interviewed.

The skilled self

The next internalised conception related to *skills development*. Here, analysis revealed three major areas of improvement on the part of the respondents, these being in the contexts of own academic skills, creativity in teaching and learning, and general pedagogic skill. In terms of academic skills, respondents volunteered information on how they felt that their ICT skills, their research skills, and their written skills had all been improved by undertaking ITT courses. Regarding creativity in teaching and learning skills (which was separated from general pedagogic skill in the analysis phase of the research, because of its specificity), respondents enthused about the opportunities that they had been afforded by ITT to explore and experiment with creative teaching techniques, indeed these proved to be some of the most fondly and apparently vividly remembered of the experiences of ITT. The general pedagogic skill was split into three subsections, each containing positive perceptions of developed skill: the development of skills in relation to teaching/delivery methods; the development of documentation or administrative (in relation to their pedagogy) skills, and; the development of ICT skills. However, it is important to mention that although respondents celebrated the skills and knowledge that they *had* learned from ITT, with experience they were able to identify skills and knowledge that were in deficit following their ITT experience.

The enhanced self

Alumna of teacher training also possess an enhanced self-esteem and enhanced sense of self. This firstly relates to a perception of enhance professionalism. Throughout the study respondents gave countless examples of how they perceived their professionalism to have been enhanced. Evidence included reports of inspection grades improving, reports of enhanced promotion prospects within institutions, all of which were perceived by the respondents to be linked to their successful undertaking and completion of ITT.

Additionally, graduates of teacher training felt that their personal and pedagogical skills have developed considerably following their training. These enhancements in skill could be around their own academic skills, for instance in terms of academic writing, or primary and secondary research skills. They also included enhancements in their own creativity as teachers, with evidence provided through rich narrative where former trainees discussed the positive impact on their own learners, that they linked back to improvements in the creativity of their teaching brought about by their ITT.

Despite the fact that many participants in the research had been teaching for a considerable length of time before undertaking their teacher training, it was found that teacher training had a considerable impact on the pedagogic skill of trainees. These included the development of new and innovative teaching methods, and enhanced and improved engagement with classroom administration, such as lesson planning and the creation of materials and schemes of work. Additionally, the development of ICT skills for the classroom were felt to be improved, although in some cases this simply served to whet the appetite for more sophisticated methods which were not forthcoming.

Vitally, the study located a significant perception of personal enhancement amongst the alumna of teacher training. This included an enhanced commitment to their own professional development as teachers, and an enhanced sense of confidence which was evident throughout the rich narratives of former trainees, and related to both their professional practice and their confidence outside the teaching arena.

The research also revealed a sense of prospect, teachers who were willing to state that teacher training had improved their standing within their own institutions, which in turn impacted significantly on their own confidence as teachers. Again, this was irrespective of the length of time that the trainee had taught prior to attending their initial teacher training course.

Therefore, the second component of the model is that of influence internalised by self, which is displayed as the second concentric circle, and comprises the following modules:

1. **the professional self:** from my professionalisation conception;

2. **the skilled self:** from my skills development conception; and

3. **the enhanced self:** from my enhancement of self conception.

Introducing the developing self

The final of the three conceptions of impact was simply entitled, *enhancement of self*. Again, I was able to fragment this conception into three subsections, which were: *sense of prospect; sense of confidence*, and; *commitment to own development.*

The sense of prospect referred to a perception that teachers had an increased feeling of vocational self-worth following completion of their ITT, which linked clearly notions of 'growing into the profession' (Vonk, 1989).

Sense of confidence was another conception that leapt from the transcripts of interviewees, both teaching and managerial, with former trainees enthusing about the impact of increased confidence on their overall performance, and job satisfaction; whilst managers commented on the increased trust that they had in teachers who had undertaken ITT.

The final subsection of this conception of self-enhancement was a perceived increase in the commitment to own learning and development of teachers, where using the confidence and skills development discussed, some graduates now felt motivated to undertake further academic courses, such as postgraduate qualifications.

The model, in its innermost segment presents the finding that graduates of ITT are cogent in discussing areas of professional practice which are not sufficiently (in their eyes) covered by the ITT that they experienced. The initial questionnaire, together with the interview schedules for both former trainees, *and* the managers of former trainees specifically made enquiries around what ITT did not support, and what measures individuals had to undertake in order to develop their own practice.   The phenomenographical approach revealed that former trainees become keenly aware of how their practice must develop and evolve in order for them to succeed as post-compulsory teachers. This was highlighted during the research via the participants identifying areas of deficit in their ITT that they had, on reflection been able to identify. From the perspective of the middle range theory, the detail of the deficit will change through time, as the social and professional contexts of teaching adapt. However, at this point in time, the element of the model was identified through the respondents reflecting on:

- the myriad of issues experienced by post-compulsory learners, especially teaching trainees with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and safeguarding practice;
- the requirement for teachers to maintain their own subject specialism; and,
- building upon the vaunted skills development of ITT with a raft of more advanced techniques of teaching.

The graduates of teacher training were able to identify areas in which their own professional practice still required enhancement. On a practical level, these areas related to issues around their own learners, such as for safeguarding requirements, or dealing with trainees with special educational needs. They also considered issues around their own subject specialism, and following their teacher training had a deeper understanding of how their own pedagogical

practice could be further improved, thus committing them to the ethos of continued professional development. Thus it was seen that the alumna of initial teacher training were both more open to, and more knowledgeable about the requirement for a commitment to their own continued professional development, as per the professional values and attributes promoted by the Professional Standards (Education and Training Foundation, 2014).

Conclusion

This research was set within a context of reflexivity and reflective practice, the perceptions around Initial Teacher Training developing over time, since the respondents' completion of their own training. The narrative revealed that these perceptions were often not representative of the graduates' feelings whilst they were undertaking their teacher training courses, but developed over time following graduation from their training. This viewpoint was legitimised by Levi, a teacher who had been by his own admission, particularly disengaged by his ITT:

> At the time I was doing the course, working fulltime, it was a strain. I used to think 'what the hell am I doing here?' I could've been at work doing my marking or whatever, but there were four of us from our department who went and it actually gave us time to reflect and talk to each other, and build up a professional bond. I think at the time I thought 'why the hell am I doing this?' but now reflecting back I think that if I hadn't done that [ITT] then I wouldn't have been in the position that I am today.

The research findings are encapsulated by the model on the influence of in-service ITT on post-compulsory teachers (Figure 2), which exploits this new knowledge to create a vehicle with which to analyse initial training in the sector, and internationally.

The findings and supporting model of the influence of initial teacher training on professional practice revealed a discourse of considerable satisfaction with university-led ITT. This is manifest in the outcome space, which contains six clear conceptions of positive impact on the participants of ITT, perceptions that are borne out by both the narratives of former trainees of ITT, and the managers of qualified teachers in the post-compulsory sector.

The narrative of respondents was central throughout this research project, and the words of one respondent resonate in conclusion:

> I have to say now looking back at it, with both hindsight and reflection, that it was much better for me than I thought it was at the time. The position I'm in now, not everyone who teaches in that organisation has a CertEd, people will come to me for advice, they're coming to me for expert knowledge, because I've got a CertEd.

(Irwin)

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