

**Observing vocational practice: a critical investigation of the use and  
value of teaching observations in the training of vocational teachers**

**Ann Theresa Lahiff**

**Institute of Education**

**University of London**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2014**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in  
this thesis is entirely my own

Word count (exclusive of appendices and references): 79,898

Ann Lahiff

July 2014

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the use, value and practice of teaching observations conducted as part of vocational teachers' in-service initial teacher training (ITT) in Further Education (FE) Colleges in England. The study is framed by a conceptual examination of the meanings of vocational, vocational learning and observation. This thesis emphasises the importance of understanding vocational learning as an embodied practice and as 'learning as participation' in the workplace and in work-related settings. It conceptualises vocational learning as part of the development of expertise along a horizontal axis, which encompasses social and cultural aspects from different disciplinary and/or vocational areas and not only cognitive dimensions. The thesis presents a conceptualisation of the observation of teaching as a contextualised and developmental process. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is used to both frame the research methodology and subsequent analysis. A case study approach addresses the research questions through the observation of 'observations' and interviews with vocational teachers, teacher educators, and vocational mentors. Two distinct activity systems are subsequently defined by their respective yet interacting objects of activity. These are identified as the development of 'pedagogic expertise' and the development of 'pedagogic expertise for vocational practice'. The thesis confirms the value of ITT teaching observations to vocational teachers' development. It concludes with some implications for practice and contributes to our understanding of vocational teachers' learning and development.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks to Bill Bailey, Jocelyn Robson and Ian McNay who supported me in my initial research endeavours when I moved from FE to the University of Greenwich and to David Guile for providing me with research opportunities at the IOE.

Thank you to the participants in the research conducted for this thesis who let me share their experiences of teaching observations. Without you, the research would not have been possible.

To my PhD supervisor, Professor Lorna Unwin OBE, whose wisdom, advice and encouragement has been unending.

Thanks to my family. To Rosie who helped turn my classroom sketches into readable diagrams; to my sister Jackie for always believing I could finish and to my daughter Connie, for letting me know, as this marathon neared completion, how proud she was of her Mum.

Finally, my thanks to Pete. Your calmness and humour in the face of adversity, coupled with your enduring love and support has been truly inspirational.

Thesis Contents	PAGES
List of Tables	<b>11</b>
List of Figures	<b>11</b>
List of Diagrams	<b>11</b>
Chapter One: Background and Context	<b>12</b>
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Professional experiences	
1.3 Teaching observations and vocational teachers	
1.4 Further Education	
1.5 The FE teaching workforce	
1.6 Teaching qualifications held by teaching Staff	
1.7 Research aims and questions	
Chapter Two: Vocational Education and Training	<b>29</b>
2.1 Introduction	
2.2 Defining the vocational	
2.3 Beyond the polar extremes	
2.4 Retreat from occupationally-specific vocationalism	
2.5 Culture of meaning underpinning the vocational	
2.6 Contradictions played out in policy circles	
2.7 Defining vocationalism in its own terms	
2.8 Vocational learning assumptions	
2.9 Context	
2.10 Development of expertise	
2.11 Conclusion	

Chapter Three: The Education and Training of the Vocational Teacher **60**

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Evolving nature of vocational teacher training

3.3 Gendered provision

3.4 In-service courses for vocational teachers

3.5 The haphazard and local approach of the 1970s-1990s

3.6 Regulation and control

3.7 Mandatory teacher training for FE

3.8 Post statutory provision and vocational teacher training

3.9 What part has teaching observation played in vocational teachers' training?

3.10 Teaching observations for vocational teachers

3.11 Research-based literature

3.12 ITT observations

3.13 Conclusion

Chapter Four: Conceptualising Observation **98**

4.1 Introduction

4.2 What is observation?

4.3 Using the camera to focus observation

4.4 Epistemological foundations

4.5 Hermeneutic/interpretive epistemology

4.5 Realist perspective

4.7 Conclusion

## Chapter Five: Methodology

**116**

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Methodological framing

5.3 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

5.4 System consensus and power relations

5.5 An activity system heuristic

5.6 CHAT as a methodological lens in studies of teacher development

5.7 Developing the methodology

5.8 Developing the case study sample

5.9 Observations, interviews and further ethical considerations

5.10 Triangulation

5.11 Case study pilot

5.12 Fieldwork

5.13 Conclusion

## Chapter Six: Case Studies 1 and 2

**153**

6.1 Introduction to Case Studies

6.2 Case Study 1: Catering

6.3 Biographies

6.4 Context

6.5 Observations of teaching

6.6 Mentor's reflections and feedback discussion

6.7 Education tutor's reflections and feedback discussion

6.8 Johnson's reflection on the observation process

6.9 Summary points: Case Study 1

- 6.10 Case Study 2: Health and Social Care
- 6.11 Biographies
- 6.12 Context
- 6.13 Observations of teaching
- 6.14 Education tutor's reflections and feedback discussion
- 6.15 Vocational tutor's reflections and feedback discussion
- 6.16 Maria's reflections on the observation process
- 6.17 Summary points: Case study 2

Chapter Seven: Case Study 3

**195**

- 7.1 Biographies
- 7.2 Context
- 7.3 Observations of teaching
- 7.4 Education tutor's reflections and feedback discussion
- 7.5 Vocational mentor's reflections and feedback discussion
- 7.6 Alan's reflections on the observation process
- 7.7 Summary points: Case Study 3

Chapter Eight: Case Studies 4 and 5

**214**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Case Study 4: Plastering
- 8.3 Biographies
- 8.4 Context
- 8.5 Observations of teaching
- 8.6 Education tutor's reflections on the observation and feedback discussion
- 8.7 Vocational mentor's reflections on the observation and feedback discussion
- 8.8 Clive's reflections on the observation process
- 8.9 Summary points: Case Study 4



- 8.10 Case Study 5: Painting and Decorating
- 8.11 Biographies
- 8.12 Context
- 8.13 Observations of teaching
- 8.14 Education tutor's reflections of observations and feedback discussion
- 8.15 Vocational mentor's reflections of observations and feedback discussion
- 8.16 Simona's reflections on the observation process
- 8.17 Summary points: Case Study 5

## Chapter Nine: Analysis and Discussion

**246**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Subjects in the Activity
- 9.3 How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted?
- 9.4 CHAT and the Object of Activity
- 9.5 Development of Pedagogic Expertise
- 9.6 Development of Pedagogic Expertise for Vocational Practice
- 9.7 Health and Social Care exception
- 9.8 Mediating artefacts
- 9.9 Observation proforma
- 9.10 Observation feedback discussion
- 9.11 Learning as participation
- 9.12 Learning in context
- 9.13 Artefacts
- 9.14 Conclusion

Chapter Ten: Conclusion	<b>285</b>
10.1 Vocational Education	
10.2 Methodological contributions of CHAT	
10.3 Reflections on the research strategy	
10.4 Implications for practice	
References	<b>299</b>
Appendices	<b>321</b>
Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet	
Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule, education tutors and vocational mentors	
Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview schedule, vocational teachers	
Appendix 4: Observation process diagram	

### **List of Tables**

Table One: Part-time and full-time FE teaching staff by region, England

Table Two: Subject area taught by teaching staff, 2010-11

Table Three: Highest teaching qualifications held by staff 2012-11

Table Four: Case Study participants

Table Five: Fieldwork observation proforma

Table Six: Fieldwork observations and interviews

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Vygotsky's model of mediation

Figure 2: The structure of a human activity system

Figure 3: Two interacting activity systems

Figure 4: Vocational teachers' observation as an activity system

Figure 5: Vocational teacher and vocational mentor profile

Figure 6: The object (the development of pedagogic expertise) in the activity (teaching observation)

Figure 7: The object (the development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice) in the activity (teaching observation)

### **List of Diagrams**

Diagram 1: Observation 1, Catering observation in the kitchen

Diagram 2: Observation 2, Catering classroom observation

Diagram 3: Observation 3, Health and Social Care classroom

Diagram 4: Observation 4, Health and Social Care classroom

Diagram 5: Observation 5, Wigs and hair classroom

Diagram 6: Observation 6, Wigs and hair salon

Diagram 7: Observations 7 and 8, Plastering workshop

Diagram 8: Observation 9, Painting and decorating workshop

## Chapter One: Background and Context

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis explores the use, value and practice of teaching observations conducted as part of vocational teachers' in-service initial teacher training (ITT) in Further Education (FE) Colleges in England. It has emerged firstly, from my reflections on learning from accumulated professional experiences as a teacher trainer and secondly, from engagement with research literature which focuses on the FE context at the centre of my professional experience and on the activities of those upon whom FE depends – its teachers. This engagement led to a realisation that the cultural history and set of practices, which related to vocational teachers in-training, was largely absent. This absence was particularly acute in relation to teaching observations, even though they play a central role in the training and assessment of teachers. The expectation of this thesis is, therefore, that its research-based findings and conclusions will make a contribution to the research literature and thereby offer additional insight to those involved in designing and implementing curricula for vocational teachers in-training where teaching observations, rightly, take centre stage.

This introductory chapter is structured in three parts. Firstly, I provide an overview of the professional experiences that have led to this study and which have framed my interest in teaching observations conducted with vocational teachers in-training. This is followed by an overview of the context in which vocational teachers work and an account of the FE teaching workforce in FE colleges in England. The final section of the introduction presents the research questions, which have guided this research, and provides an outline of the structure of this thesis.

## **1.2 Professional Experiences**

My personal and professional involvement with teachers in FE colleges is extensive. This involvement began as a college student, where I accessed an education not available to me in school and gained qualifications that enabled me to access Higher Education (HE). Like most FE teachers, a period of employment preceded my entry to a career teaching in FE when I worked in the civil service, for the then Department for Employment as an employment officer. In the early 1980s, when I gained my first job in FE, I initially taught subjects commensurate with my degree in social science and contributed to the second chances of students who realised that continuing education beyond 16 did not necessarily mean more of the same in the tightly controlled learning environment they had experienced in school. The 1980s proved to be one of the most exciting, controversial and challenging times in FE as new courses and training opportunities were developed as a result of the UK government's response to the changing economic conditions of the time with its high level of youth unemployment (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). The so-called 'new FE' (Bates et al 1984) meant new opportunities for me to teach on courses which formed part of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) and Youth Training Scheme (YTS). Similarly, contributions to new curricula developments such as the Certificate in Pre-vocational Education (CPVE) and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) brought contact with learners for whom education had, generally, been a less than positive experience. These new programmes required reconsideration of the pedagogic assumptions that had hitherto informed my practice. In particular, the new programmes also brought contact with potential employers and workplaces and their respective pedagogic practices. In teaching on these courses tensions between the education of the learner and the requirements of the workplace mirrored the dualistic conceptions of the role of FE at the time where it was conceived as both at the centre of skills development and also as a place for disaffected, marginalised youth (see inter alia Bates et al 1984; Finn, 1987; Unwin 1997; Hyland and Merrill 2007). After 10 years

teaching in FE, I became an initial teacher trainer<sup>1</sup> and, for the past 25 years have been part of programme teams in four different FE or Higher Education (HE) contexts teaching on ITT courses, supporting FE college teachers as they progressed through in-service training - the most common route of teacher training for teachers in FE colleges (Maxwell, 2010; Orr, 2009).

### **1.3 Teaching Observations and Vocational Teachers**

As a teacher trainer, I have taught on the full range of courses that could be seen to epitomise the developing ITT curriculum for FE from the early 1990s up to the time of writing (2014). Chapter Three of this thesis explores the development of ITT for FE and, as is discussed, irrespective of whether ITT for FE has been undertaken on a voluntary or statutory basis, observing teachers in their place of work has always featured in ITT programmes. Although I have refrained from calculating the number of teaching observations I have conducted for the purpose of ITT, reflection over my 25 years as a teacher-trainer led me to conclude that the process of observation and, particularly, the feedback opportunities it presented, provided one of the most mysterious, challenging, engaging, potentially developmental and empowering aspects of initial training for FE teachers. In my professional capacity, I have therefore always argued for the centrality of observation in the tutor-trainee teacher relationship. However, observations of practice take up a large resource, particularly where tutors travel some distances to observe teachers in context. In defence of my position, which emanated from professional experiences and engagement with colleagues, I searched for additional research-based evidence on the efficacy of observations. I quickly became aware that there was little research conducted on the practice of teaching

---

<sup>1</sup> Those involved in programmes of initial teacher development both describe themselves as teacher trainers or teacher educators and use the descriptor initial teacher training (ITT) or initial teacher education (ITE). Throughout this thesis I will use the terms teacher trainer and ITT as I wish to embrace a much wider conception of training, which is inclusive of traditional educational discourse. This position is taken up in Chapter Two.

observations for FE ITT, quite apart from their efficacy. To all intents and purposes, teaching observation was an invisible practice.

The specific interest in vocational teachers in-training emerged over the course of my professional experience in ITT. Firstly, I became aware that, although vocational teachers had extensive periods of work in vocational fields as diverse as beauty therapy, dance, catering, childcare, construction, engineering, hairdressing and visual merchandising prior to teaching, these experiences appeared to be undervalued once their ITT course led them, metaphorically, down the corridors of HE. Professionally, this meant that I became involved in developments in the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (Lahiff and Fenner, 2000) and developed courses which offered continuing education beyond ITT to vocational teachers for whom higher education had, hitherto, been seen as inaccessible (Lahiff, 2005). Secondly, the acknowledged 'dual identity' (Robson, 1998; Robson, Bailey and Larkin, 2004) of vocational teachers meant that in training to become teachers they had been seen to 'face two ways'. Their respective vocational setting and the experiences and expertise they had gained meant they entered teaching with an occupational identity already formed. Yet development of pedagogical expertise brought with it the process of becoming a teacher and the adoption of a teacher identity (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Nasta, 2009; Orr and Simmons, 2010; Robson, Bailey and Larkin, 2004). Therefore, the experience of ITT was seen to present vocational teachers with challenges that were additional to those of their colleagues who taught academic subjects as they juggled the demands of a dual identity.

As Moody and Wheelahan (2012: 326) have argued, unlike others teaching in FE, vocational teachers:

...reformulate vocational knowledge from work where it has mainly a productive function to a teaching-learning function, and they make this recontextualised vocational knowledge comprehensible to others – to students and novice practitioners or workers.

It is, arguably, this reformulation that is being observed in teaching observations. However, whilst there is a growing literature on the training experiences of pre-service FE teachers, there is limited academic research that centres specifically on vocational teachers' learning experiences (Avis et al, 2011; Maxwell, 2014). For these professional and research-based reasons, the research will focus on vocational teachers' experiences of teaching observations and the use and value these experiences afford.

#### **1.4 Further Education**

This thesis focuses on the experiences of vocational teachers in FE colleges in England. There are differences across the four nations of the UK in terms of education policy. However, I would argue that the findings of this thesis are relevant both within the UK and internationally. Attention does have to be given here, however, to the way FE is positioned within English education policy.

The term 'Further Education' is used in England to describe a wide range of learning contexts and a diverse range of education and training providers. FE is defined, therefore, by complexity, not only in terms of its institutional arrangements, but also in terms of its provision and the range of learners it serves (see Huddleston and Unwin 2013 for a discussion).



The recently established Education and Training Foundation (ETF)<sup>2</sup> describes FE as including: Colleges of Further Education; Sixth form Colleges; Adult and Community provision; Offender learning; Work-based learning as well as third sector organisations, such as charities (see: [www.et-foundation.co.uk](http://www.et-foundation.co.uk)). In addition, there are also national specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and colleges specialising in art, design and performing arts as well as agriculture and horticulture.

The category of colleges known as General Further Education (GFE), offer an eclectic mix of academic, professional and vocational courses across a range of qualifications. These include Qualification and Curriculum Framework (QCF) levels 1-4; courses for students with learning disabilities and difficulties; and HE courses in association with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The national inspection service, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (2013) estimates that whilst 3.7 million learners were engaged in some form of government-funded education or training in FE as a whole, over two million of these students studied in FE colleges in England in 2012/13. The age group of learners is wide with students ranging from 14 year olds to adult and mature learners. Sixth Form Colleges, in contrast, provide largely academic courses leading to GCSE and A level qualifications for students aged 16-19. Whilst the greatest proportion of students in FE colleges is over 16 years, the lower age limit of 14 is a result of a 2002 policy initiative, which gave school students the opportunity to attend FE colleges for vocational courses.<sup>3</sup> To give the numbers of students attending FE colleges some perspective, it can be seen that FE has consistently catered for more 16 to 18 year olds than schools. For instance, during

---

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the conclusions of the Government-commissioned Lingfield Review included the endorsement of an FE guild which would provide a single body to set professional standards and codes of behaviour, and develop qualifications. In November 2012, the opportunity to develop the guild was awarded to the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers. In May 2013, the FE Guild became the Education and Training Foundation, officially launching in August 2013 [<http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/our-organisation/>]

<sup>3</sup> The Increased Flexibility Programme was introduced by the then Department for Education and Skills. <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/increased-flexibility-programme-key-stage-4-interim-report>

2009–2010, 831,000 16- to 18-year-olds studied in FE colleges compared with 423,000 in maintained schools, academies and City Technology Colleges<sup>4</sup> (Rogers, 2011:237).

Arriving at a definitive number of FE colleges in England is more of a challenge than might otherwise be supposed. This is primarily because FE colleges have been subject to change over time, through mergers and some closures (Huddleston and Unwin, 2013). It is also because there is a somewhat confusing demarcation of the type of institutions that are included in an FE college head count. Nevertheless, the most recent annual report by Ofsted (2013) calculated that there were 237 GFE colleges in England.

Squeezed between compulsory schooling and HE which, as Robson (2006) has made clear, have always been at the centre of governments' thinking, the work of FE, its students and its teachers, can be seen to have remained below the policy radar until relatively recently. Described as the 'Cinderella sector' of the English education system by Ainley and Bailey (1997), this metaphor has been widely used to summarise the lack of attention given to colleges and their students by successive governments. This does not mean to say that colleges were without a distinctive mission. On the contrary, as Robson (2006:4) has argued, "The defining characteristic of FE for so long was that it provided vocational education". However, the vocational focus of FE is also, arguably, responsible for the comparatively low status it holds in comparison to the sectors it sits between (Raggatt and Williams, 1999, cited in Robson *ibid*).

Bailey (1983 and 1987) has explained in his review of the technical education movement that some FE colleges emerged from earlier Mechanics' Institutes whilst others arose during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through local council funding in direct response to a perceived gap in technical education provision. This established an

---

<sup>4</sup> Despite the descriptor, City Technology Colleges are part of schools provision in England providing learning for 11 through to 18 year olds.

association with technical education and, for example, apprenticeships, which continued well into the 1970s. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that for some, the FE College is still referred to as the local 'tech' even though the range of courses on offer has mushroomed beyond a relationship with industry and commerce to academic and professional education, widening access to HE, and second chance learning.

FE colleges have, however, been subject to considerable specific policy attention in the last 15 years. This has meant that whilst they have been required to play a major role in the skills agenda of successive governments, they have also been viewed as key players in a social inclusion and social justice agenda (Hodgson et al. 2007; Fuller and Unwin 2012). Indeed, as Orr and Simmons (2010: 78) have argued, FE is now positioned in policy discourse as a key vehicle for achieving both economic and social goals:

Against a backdrop of continuing economic neoliberalism and increasing globalisation, further education has been identified as a vehicle to carry two related policies: creating social justice through widening participation in education; and boosting the economy through enhancing the skills of the nation. (Orr and Simmons 2010:78)

According to some commentators, this policy spotlight has led to a complex web of increased regulation and centralisation, coupled with funding-driven initiatives designed to ensure more accountability (see Avis et al 2011; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Coffield et al, 2008 for further discussion). This regulation and centralisation has been seen to be very much in evidence in relation to the attention paid to the training of teachers. In Chapter Three, a historical overview of the move to regulation on the training of teachers in FE is provided which illustrates this changing regulatory landscape.

### **1.5 The FE Teaching Workforce**

In 2010-2011, in its analysis of the FE sector workforce, the then Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) (2012) gathered information from 214 GFE colleges and 85 sixth form colleges in England, accounting for almost 217,000 staff data records. While the data covers *all staff* in the FE workforce, including administrative and professional staff, technicians and service staff, it does provide details of the social composition of teaching staff by region, subjects taught, salary levels, and the highest level of teaching qualification achieved. The data in relation to gender, part-time working, subjects taught and teaching qualifications held are relevant to this thesis as they provide some background to issues raised in Chapter Two on vocationalism and in Chapter Three on the training of vocational teachers.

In terms of the employment of teaching staff in FE, the LSIS (2012) data confirms that, apart from the North East of England, the majority of teaching staff in all regions are employed part-time, with Greater London having the largest number of staff teaching part-time. Table One, below, illustrates the ratio of full-time to part-time staff across England.

**Table One: Part-time/Full-time teaching staff by region, England.**

**Adapted from LSIS (2012:24)**

English Region	Teaching staff	
	Part-time	Full-time
East of England	55.4%	44.6%
East Midlands	61.1%	38.9%
Greater London	64.8%	35.2%
North East	48.6%	51.4%
North West	58.8%	41.2%
South East	60.9%	39.1%
South West	70.6%	29.4%
West Midlands	62.8%	37.2%
Yorkshire and the Humber	58.9%	41.1%

For researchers, the increasing use of part-time, hourly paid teaching staff illustrates the practices of FE Colleges operating in an increasingly de-regulated context with a workforce employed to reflect any potential change to funding for courses and to enable it to act flexibly in a competitive marketplace (Avis, 2003; Steer et al, 2007).

In terms of subjects taught, the LSIS data confirms that by 2011, more staff were teaching visual and performing arts and media in FE colleges than any other subject, whilst English, languages and communication, health, social care and public services were also identified as popular subject areas. As can be seen in Table Two below, the areas with the lowest levels of teaching staff were Land-based provision and Retailing, customer service and transportation.

**Table Two: Subject Area taught by Teaching Staff, 2010-11** (Adapted from LSIS, 2012:37)

Area of learning of main subject taught	Number of staff	Per cent
Visual and performing arts and media	12,959	12.2%
English, languages and communication	9,633	9.1%
Health, social care and public services	9,094	8.6%
Foundation programmes	8,867	8.4%
Business admin, management and professional	8,483	8.0%
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	7,893	7.4%
Science and mathematics	6,399	6.0%
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	5,935	5.6%
Humanities	5,806	5.5%
Construction	5,542	5.2%
Information and communication technology	5,003	4.7%
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4,562	4.3%
Land-based provision	2,729	2.6%
Retailing, customer service and transportation	1,980	1.9%
<i>Not known / not provided / other staff</i>	<i>11,168</i>	<i>10.5%</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,053</b>	<b>100%</b>

Some caution needs to be paid in interpreting this table, however, as some of the areas at the top of the table, particularly visual and performing arts; health and social care, are also areas with relatively higher levels of part-time working. This means that a member of staff could be teaching the same subject as their main subject area in more than one college (LSIS 2012:37). Unfortunately, the LSIS commentary does not provide a breakdown of the 10.5% of responses indicating the subject area is 'not known/not provided/ other staff'. It might however reflect the fact that subject categories may not capture the realities of the descriptors teaching staff use to define their role. However, whilst all other categories have recorded relatively few changes in percentage points from 2006 to 2011, staff reporting their subject area as 'not known/not provided/other staff' has leapt from 1.7% in 2006-7 to 10.5% in 2010-11.

Based on the analysis of average teaching pay, the LSIS report also notes that staff teaching in the areas at the bottom of the table, (land-based provision and retailing, customer service and transportation) were also among the lowest paid in this occupational group. Given that workers in these areas of the UK economy are amongst the lowest paid too, there is congruence here between labour market economics and employment conditions in FE (ONS, 2014). For the purposes of this thesis and, in particular, for the conceptualisation of vocationalism in Chapter Two, the table provides a useful reference point for the concentration of staff in particular subject and vocational areas.

Another aspect of the LSIS report that is relevant to setting the context for this thesis concerns the gender breakdown of teaching staff. By 2011, over half (58.9%) of teaching staff in FE were female. LSIS (2012) notes that this has remained consistent since 2005-6, and reflects a pattern which LSIS attributes to the higher number of female teaching staff who work part-time. However, researchers in the field (see inter alia, Ainley, and Bailey, 1997; Leathwood, 2000; Simmons and Thompson, 2007; Simmons, 2008) have argued that whilst part-time working is generally associated with women, the establishment of a female dominated teaching workforce in FE cannot be fully explained by such working patterns. Rather, attention is turned to the changing provision of FE and the relationship with the employment market. Industries which typically provided colleges with, chiefly, young male craft workers have declined or disappeared altogether whilst service sector employment opportunities in health and social care, for instance, have experienced growth and are typically associated with women (Simmons,2008).

The increased participation of women in teaching positions has not been seen as an indicator of equality. Reduced conditions of service and increasing workloads have led, according to Simmons (2008:268), to a “degree of cultural feminisation in the workplace”, where permanent relatively well paid positions are replaced by temporary

short term contracts and lower levels of pay. As will be seen, although this thesis does not focus on gender specifically, the gendered dimension of vocationalism and of the development of vocational teacher training is referenced in Chapters Two and Three.

### **1.6 Teaching qualifications held by teaching staff**

A critical review of the requirements for teachers in FE to hold a teaching qualification is central to the discussion in Chapter Three. It will be seen that although short-lived, teaching qualifications became a regulatory requirement for all teachers in FE Colleges in 2001. In September 2007, following the implementation of the Further Education and Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations, all new teachers appointed after September 2007 were *required* to be working towards one of three new qualifications: Preparing to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector [PTTLS]; Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector [CTTLS]; and Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector [DTTLS]. Since September 2013, these regulations have been revoked (For further discussion see Chapter Three).

LSIS (2012) records the highest teaching qualification held by staff 2010-11 and this data provides the clearest insight into teaching qualifications held by staff in FE (see Table 3, below).



**Table Three****Highest Teaching Qualification held by Teaching Staff (2010-11) LSIS (2012:32)**

Teaching qualification	Number	Per cent
Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)	3,234	3.0%
Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS)	993	0.9%
Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS)	2,922	2.8%
Certificate of Education	25,307	23.9%
Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	25,653	24.2%
BEd / BA / BSc with concurrent qualified teacher status	7,861	7.4%
Level 4 FE Teaching Qualification - Stage 3	1,392	1.3%
Level 4 FE Teaching Qualification - Stage 2	1,657	1.6%
Level 4 FE Teaching Qualification - Stage 1	1,603	1.5%
Level 3 Teaching Qualification (e.g. CG 7303)	5,368	5.1%
Learning and Development Awards - includes predecessor Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) awards	2,230	2.1%
Other teaching qualifications not listed	3,945	3.7%
None of the above	5,059	4.8%
<i>Not known / not provided / not applicable</i>	<i>18,829</i>	<i>17.8%</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,053</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The LSIS data confirms that, throughout the period, the highest teaching qualifications of the greatest proportion of staff in FE were the Certificate in Education and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Normally, these qualifications are HE-led or HE accredited qualifications. In 2010-11, a combined total of just over 48% of staff with a teaching qualification had either of these awards (23.9% held the Certificate in Education and 24.2% the PGCE). The combined total of holders of the new 2007 awards is 6.7%. From the table it might also be deduced that the percentage of staff without a teaching qualification is in the region of 20% i.e. staff who have not listed a qualification or who do not declare a teaching qualification. It should be

remembered, however, that this data is inclusive of responses from 85 sixth form colleges. Teaching staff in sixth form colleges are more likely to teach academic subjects offered in schools. Typically they have a similar profile to teachers in schools, with an historical requirement to gain a PGCE prior to employment.

Whilst the data is informative in terms of the named teaching awards held by FE staff, and will be useful for the discussion in Chapter Three, it tells us little about the staff who hold these respective awards. That is, it is not apparent whether staff are part-time or full-time, male or female and, more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, what subjects qualification holders teach.

Having set the contextual background for the thesis and provided an overview of the professional experiences from which the thesis has emerged, the next section identifies the research aims and research questions that underpin the thesis.

### **1.7 Research Aims and Questions**

The research aims for this thesis were formulated on the basis of my professional experience, outlined above, and as a result of the recognition that the practice of teaching observation in relation to the training of vocational teachers was noticeably under-researched. The research aims were therefore to:

- investigate the phenomenon of observation
- explore the process of teaching observations conducted as part of FE in-service ITT programmes
- critically evaluate the use and value of teaching observations as a feature of ITT
- consider any recommendations and changes to observation practice to enhance learning from teaching observation

In order to pursue these aims, four research questions were developed at the outset to frame this thesis:

- i) **How is the concept and process of observation conceptualised in relation to the development of professional expertise?**
- ii) **How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted?**
- iii) **What use/value is attached to the observation process by the observed and the observer?**
- iv) **How might learning-in-context (situated learning) be maximized?**

To address these research questions, the chapters of the thesis are structured in the following way. In Chapter Two, the scene is set for the focus on vocational teachers by conceptualising vocational education and training. Chapter Three provides an historical context to the initial training of vocational teachers by identifying the place that teaching observations have taken in the ITT of vocational teachers. This is then followed by a critical review of the literature on ITT teaching observations conducted in FE. Chapter Four develops a conceptualisation of observation and, in so doing, paves the way for the development of an appropriate research methodology for the thesis.

The perspective of participants involved in the process of teaching observations was deemed essential to this thesis as, only in this way, could vocational practice be considered and the use and value of observations be analysed. Chapter Five, therefore, outlines the adoption of a case study approach to generating qualitative data through observation of 'observations' and interviews with participants involved in the teaching observation process - vocational teachers, education tutors and vocational mentors.

The adoption of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and, particularly, the development of an activity heuristic, act to guide the research and frame the subsequent presentation of case studies of vocational teachers' accounts of the process of teaching observation in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Guided by CHAT conceptual tools, the discussion and analysis in Chapter Nine identifies the extent to which teaching observations conducted as part of vocational teachers' ITT are considered valuable and useful and under what conditions. The concluding chapter of this thesis identifies the ways in which the vocational teachers' case study accounts make ITT observation practices visible and enable recommendations to be made to maximise learning from vocational practice.

## **Chapter Two: Vocational Education and Training**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Given that the observation of vocational teachers-in-training is at the centre of this research, it is important to establish the understanding of 'vocational' that informs this thesis. This chapter examines, therefore, the ways in which vocational education and vocational learning are conceptualised. Starting with a discussion of vocational in the academic literature, it draws upon multi-disciplinary sources informed by both philosophy of education and theories of work based learning. An overview of the retreat from occupationally specific vocational education charts debates that suggest that the culture of meaning underpinning the vocational have been compromised. Attention then turns briefly to two recent reports, which exemplify the ambiguity and conflation of terms used to analyse vocational education. This is then followed by a review of the current Coalition Government's understanding of vocational education and records a foray into an aspect of education hitherto neglected by most UK governments. The final section of the chapter confirms the conceptualisation of the vocational that frames this study and identifies the key elements of this conceptualisation that will inform this thesis.

### **2.2 Defining the Vocational**

It is acknowledged that 'vocational' is a "fairly elastic term" (Pring 1993:60). The variety of approaches taken by those who strive to develop clarity in the conceptualisation of vocational is testament to this elasticity. Discussions of the vocational are informed by philosophical, (see inter alia Winch, 2000; Pring, 2003; 2007) psychological (Billett, 2001; 2007), anthropological (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and sociological standpoints (see inter alia Colley et al, 2003; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004).

From these various standpoints, conceptualisations of the vocational underpin discussions of systems of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Clarke and Winch (2007), for instance, use the comparative dimension to illustrate the ways in which systems of VET are reflective of the broader socio-economic and political systems in which they operate. They (2007:8) argue that this is necessary for: “sensitizing our readership to the fact that different VET systems have different social, historical, institutional and political roots”. This enables them to make contrasts between the French, German, Dutch and British systems of VET and connections with systems in Australia and in the United States of America (USA). However, this thesis is not concerned with developing an understanding of *systems* of VET. Rather, its focus is on developing a conceptualisation of VET per se.

The work of Theodore Lewis (1994 and 2007) is helpful in framing the discussion of VET by tracing the lineage of its philosophical aspects from a broader discussion of the purposes of education. Positioning liberal education at one end of what he described as the ‘polar limits’ of the discourse, Lewis characterised it as an education, which saw the virtue of learning for its own sake. Lewis cites the positions of the philosophers Michael Oakshott and Paul Hirst in the 1970s as offering classic and clearly uncompromising understandings of what a liberal education should include (and, by implication, exclude). Concerned primarily with a comprehensive development of the mind, a liberal education was understood to be valuable in itself, with no particular end in sight and without the need to consider the development of specific skills. Similarly Pring (1993:51), in his critical appraisal of the work of Oakshott and Hirst, offers a characterisation of liberal education in a pure form in which:

...education is seen as an initiation into forms of understanding which requires no external justification and which best takes place far removed from considerations of utility.

Moreover, liberal education was seen to be exemplified by the study of distinct forms of knowledge; distinct disciplines, such as mathematics, history, sciences. These distinct forms of knowledge were seen to offer particular ways of thinking about and understanding the world. As Pring (1993) identified, in the tradition of liberal education, what should be learned was determined by, “inherited intellectual and cultural traditions”, as well as how it should be learned. The ‘how’ was considered to be a transaction between teacher (authority) and pupil or (beginner) and conducted by the means necessary for the initiation into those traditions (ibid:54).

Enshrining the dualistic conception of educational traditions, vocational education was positioned at the other end of the polarised discourse. To explain the positioning, Lewis cites the work of David Snedden, state commissioner for schools in Massachusetts, circa 1914, and one of the primary architects of 20<sup>th</sup> century American vocationalism. Snedden was seen by Lewis as an exemplar of mainstream American vocationalist thought up until the 1980s. For Snedden, vocational education meant, “...education which conferred skills that could be used directly to productive ends in industry” (Lewis, 1994:201). Education should be seen to be serving the needs of the wider society and meeting its economic needs in particular. Construed as an investment in human capital, vocational education was seen as providing the means to a more profitable and successful society. Furthermore, and continuing the economic frame of reference, the recipient of a vocational education would become a ‘good producer’, whereas his/her liberally educated counterpart would become a good utiliser or consumer of goods (Lewis 1994).

Snedden’s contribution to the development of an approach to vocational education in the USA and, in particular, his later advocacy of separate institutions for the implementation of a true vocational education, is recounted by many writers in the area of vocational education. Winch (1998) saw parallels between Snedden’s articulation of vocational education in the USA with that of Adam Smith’s in the UK. As

Winch explains (ibid: 373), Smith saw the provision of a “substratum of primary education to ensure basic literacy and numeracy” but little else. The development of HE was seen as the preserve of those who were “likely to be inventors and engineers”, and a strictly controlled provision of on-the-job training for unskilled and semiskilled work, “as and when there [was] a market demand for the relevant products”.

For Clarke and Winch (2007) the Smith/Snedden approach epitomised dominant traditions of conceptualising vocational education with its emphasis and *raison d'être* being the “training for particular jobs in order to serve the needs of employers” (2007:10). Additionally, vocational education signified not only the acquisition of skills, but also the development of qualities, attitudes and knowledge deemed appropriate for employment. For Pring (1993), there was also the accompanying shift in the language through which the transaction between teacher and learner was described. No longer solely determined by considerations of the disciplines, the transaction between teacher and learner in vocational education was framed by considerations beyond the educational and academic community and included employers and the associated economic needs of society.

### **2.3 Beyond the Polar Extremes**

Theodore Lewis' (2007) presentation of the polarisation metaphor is useful in so far as it not only presents the dualistic discourse evident in the traditional presentation of VET, where VET is seen in relation to Liberal Education as 'the other' distinct form of education, it also sets up the possibility of some sort of alignment. Indeed, much of the discussion of vocational education in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond has been concerned with what might be seen as a struggle for the middle ground and, for some, a re-positioning of what is/ should be understood by vocational education at the centre of a continuum. In these discussions, some of which are outlined below, vocational education and liberal education have been construed as having shared goals and



generic intentions with respect to serving the needs of the economy and/or the individual. As will be seen later in this chapter, the consequences of such a discursive realignment are not without significance.

This is not to say that Lewis' middle ground had been hitherto neglected, or that an alternative to the Smith/Snedden framing of VET was not evident. As Clarke and Winch (2007), for example, have argued, an alternative tradition to the Smith/Snedden account of VET has always been evident. This tradition was concerned with personal emancipation as much as economic development and was associated with the work of Georg Kerschensteiner in Germany and with the work of the American philosopher, John Dewey, a contemporary of Snedden, in the USA. Georg Kerschensteiner (1852–1932) was originally a mathematics teacher before becoming, like Snedden, an Educational Administrator. He was director of public schools in Munich, Germany, from 1895 to 1919 where he introduced and maintained an extensive system of vocational secondary schools and post compulsory vocational schools from the early twentieth century until the 1920s (Winch, 2006). (For a detailed study of Kerschensteiner's work, see Gonon 2009). This review will, however, draw upon Dewey's work.

For Dewey, the separation of the liberal from the vocational simply did not make sense (Pring 1993). His approach conceived the vocational and the concept of 'vocations' as going beyond the economic imperatives of the society. Rather than the limited, narrow understanding of the vocational of Smith/Snedden tradition, Dewey saw the vocational aspect of education as preparing young people for the world and, in his 1916 account, it is clear that it included an educational process that informed and offered choice. Moreover, the function of education, he argued, was in assisting individuals to identify the 'vocation' or calling to which they were suited. Defining 'Vocation' was therefore an important aspect of Dewey's (1916:358) position:

A vocation means nothing but such a direction of life activities as renders them perceptibly significant to a person, because of the consequences they accomplish, and also useful to his associates.

His vision gave a full intellectual and social meaning to vocation and, for Dewey, education for vocations (even at the time of writing in 1916) would include:

...Instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production; and study of economics, civics, and politics. (ibid:372)

The narrow, limiting vision of vocational education that Lewis positioned at one end of his polarised continuum was therefore a far cry from the Dewey vision. Dewey's educational vision, placed historically in stark contrast to his contemporary, David Snedden, in the USA, was far from instrumental, utilitarian and conservative. It offered, in contrast, a much more humanistic account and a more holistic approach which gave value to the learning and practice of work not only for its use, but also for the intrinsic value to the individual.

Dewey's (ibid:372) overall vision was not of an education system, which simply reproduced inequalities of the past:

To split the system and give to others less fortunately situated, an education conceived mainly as specific trade preparation, is to treat the schools as an agency for transferring the older division of labor and leisure, culture and service, mind and body.

He was aware, however, of the likelihood of interpretations of vocational education as a narrow form of trade education, as a "means of securing technical efficiency in

specialized future pursuits” (ibid:369). He was therefore critical of developing an understanding of VET which took its point of departure from the industrial regime that currently existed as it would, of necessity, “perpetuate its divisions and weaknesses” (ibid:372). For Dewey, “Nothing could be more absurd than to try to educate individuals with an eye to only one line of activity” (ibid:359). As Winch (2000:36) has argued, vocational education is not, therefore:

...a distinct strand in education separate from the rest, it is one branch that grows out of a common trunk which encompasses liberal and civic, as well as vocational aims.

If only aspirational, the transformational potential of Dewey’s work on the vocational aspects of education is also widely acknowledged. Billett (2011:29) argues that:

Dewey’s (1916) goals for vocational education went beyond personal emancipation and development, and positioned it as a means for individuals to engage with, and through which to transform, society.

This transformational vision of vocational education has served to position Dewey as an educational philosopher who has inspired many to define a broader purpose for VET and many discussants use Dewey’s deliberations on vocation as a starting point for their own examinations. However, such a broad church of followers has led to some contradictory and challenging tensions within the literature. Of particular interest has been a so-called retreat from occupationally-specific vocationalism (Lewis, 1994).

## 2.4 Retreat from occupationally-specific vocationalism

Largely in response to policy-initiated developments in VET in the 1980s in the UK, Hodkinson (1991) Coffey (1989) and Hyland (1993) are all cited by Lewis (1994:206) as being engaged in a “quest to redefine vocational education”. In this quest, a ‘retreat from job-specific vocationalism’ is evident and can be seen as an attempt to re-capture the full meaning of vocational education and avoid what Dewey had described as a narrow form of trade education. Similarly, Hayward (2004:4), in his foreword to the *Oxford Review of Education’s* special issue on Business, Education and Vocationalism, summarised a ‘turn to vocationalism’ as, “the over-promotion of the work-related learning aims of secondary and tertiary education at the expense of the civic, aesthetic and moral purposes of education”.

Whilst acknowledging the earlier nineteenth and twentieth century historical legacy of debates, most would see this ‘vocational turn’ as rooted in the 1976 Ruskin speech of the then UK Prime Minister, James Callaghan. This has been seen as particularly significant because it “...marked the point at which the perceived link between education and the economy became a central part of the recent political agenda” (Huddleston and Oh, 2004:88). The ‘new vocationalism’ or ‘pre-vocationalism’ (Bates et al., 1984; Holt, 1987) that emerged in the 1980s reflected the wider economic context with its growing rates of youth unemployment and the political direction of the UK government. It meant that what became ‘vocational training programmes’ were primarily concerned with the socialisation of young people into the appropriate attitudes and (life)skills for work, rather than the development of occupation-specific skills and learning at work. In other words such vocational programmes were more concerned with social consequences of youth unemployment than with vocational education envisaged by Dewey. By concentrating on narrow job skills and competencies and perpetuating the view that young people were the problem because they were seen to be “...ill-equipped in general, technical and social skills to obtain employment” (Huddleston and Oh, 2004:91), VET in general and work-based training in

particular had been, by the start of the twenty first century, effectively downgraded (Hager and Hyland, 2007).

The consequences for the conceptualisation of the vocational were readily apparent and focussed on increasing the life and social skills of students and motivating disengaged 16-19 year olds, not alongside the development of occupational expertise, but at its expense. Rather than embrace its work-based nature, VET was drawn into the formal education system, albeit, as Hager (2007: 109) has argued, “as the poor cousin”, and, as a consequence, its distinctive mission was hidden. In stark contrast, the distinctive mission of vocationally designated courses of law and medicine, dentistry and pharmacy continued to amass high status with no retreat from occupational specificity. Arguably, this was because there was an assumed mental-over-manual dimension with an accepted knowledge domain linked to the disciplines of science and maths, physics and law. Ultimately, a differentiated understanding of vocational continued to be ascribed to education and training as far as the professions was concerned.

For Stanton and Bailey (2001:8), in this period the distinction between academic or general education, on the one hand, and vocational education and training on the other, was “deliberately blurred” in an effort to raise the status of vocational education. However, such blurring and, in particular, the retreat from occupationally-specific vocationalism was seen as unhelpful in redressing the status equation between academic and vocational tracks:

The danger is that *unification* will enable features of the academic culture to become the norm, with, for instance, only academic standards of ‘excellence’ being used. There are also signs of preference being given to those methods of assessment that are most appropriate to academic subjects. (ibid:9) emphasis added

Likewise, in their review of VET policy, Stanton and Bailey (2004) cite examples of the trend towards the development of common curriculum frameworks, the monopolisation of examination bodies and attempts at arriving at equivalences between academic and vocational qualifications as instances of a damning unification based on a set of un-contested assumptions. Of particular note was the assumption that “parity of esteem is primarily determined by the extent to which a qualification gives access to HE” (ibid 2004:27). Stanton and Bailey have argued that simply suggesting a merging of the two areas will not give birth to a new order. Rather, they suggest, we will see the dominance of one order of meaning over another, with the consequential loss of the culture of meaning underpinning the vocational.

## **2.5 Culture of meaning underpinning the vocational**

The legacy of the attempts to develop a broader conceptualisation of vocational, through a merger with the academic and a consequential loss of the relationship to work and occupations can be seen today. The chapter now considers two relevant reports: a) Richardson and Sing (2011); and b) Atkins et al (2011). These reports were commissioned, respectively, by a charitable foundation that seeks to promote VET in the UK (The Edge Foundation) and one of the oldest UK qualification awarding bodies (City and Guilds of London Institute). They can be seen to epitomise not only a lack of an appreciation of the significance of work to an understanding of VET, but also to signal the confusion of terms used to define vocational education. Yet both reports have had influence on policy. For example, the Richardson and Sing report has been quoted by Lord Kenneth Baker, the instigator of the new University Technical Colleges (UTCs) in England (Baker 2013); and the Atkins et al report was cited as important evidence in the 2011 Wolf Review of 14-19 Education (Wolf 2011).

The executive summary of the research by Richardson and Sing (2011:v) is initially promising in definitional terms, with an acknowledgement that the use of terminology in this area is inaccurate, with adverse consequences for the area:

In principle, all school education is vocational. However, the term 'vocational' has come to be used to denote particular subjects and styles of learning which are generally accorded lower status than so-called 'academic' learning. The terminology of education in this area is inaccurate and, as a result, frames debates and policies that are bound to be muddled.

However, the findings centre on the impact of 'practical and vocational' learning from the perspective of academically able teenagers (those who are achieving above the national average). Such teenagers, the research found, valued 'practical learning' just as much as more abstract forms but despite this, most went on to follow academic paths.

This is not an unsurprising finding and one which Richardson and Sing connect to other research in the compulsory sector. Rather, what is surprising is that despite the acknowledgement that terminology in the area is inaccurate, 'practical learning' and 'vocational' are used synonymously throughout the report. Indeed, the term 'vocational' never escapes the parenthesis throughout the report and this is despite the working definitions of key terms that were initially provided:

Practical learning: learning that is 'for real' (including working with experts and practitioners from outside school or college) and learning that combines theory with practice by working on projects that have clear and direct connections with the outside world;

Vocational learning: learning linked to a particular job or career (including learning with a focus on developing the skills needed to carry out practical tasks in the workplace, supported by relevant background knowledge)

(Richardson and Sing 2011:2)

It is hard to find evidence of these definitions being operationalised in the research. Instead 'practical learning' seems to become synonymous with learning-by-doing or, more broadly 'experiential learning' and juxtaposed with a "higher-level analytical learning" (ibid 2011:61), to which the academically able learners were seen to gravitate. As for 'vocational learning', apart from the de-contextualised, generic, problem-solving and group working skills, much criticised by, amongst others, Guile (2002) and Keep and Payne (2004), other examples are conspicuous by their absence. In effect, notwithstanding the review of literature completed and the confirmation of interest shown by a range of academically able learners in 'practical learning', the opportunity to clarify vocational educational terminology was lost.

The report by Atkins et al (2011:7) set out with the overarching aim of exploring, "the perceptions held by young people of the vocational programmes they were undertaking, with the intention of using the findings to inform future policy and research". Students at two schools and two colleges in the North-East of England and in the Midlands formed part of the sample (although it is not clear how many students were included) and were seen to reflect a "...range of different cultural socio-economic backgrounds" (ibid). Data was gathered by focus group discussions and one in-depth interview at each site (an on-line questionnaire did not produce sufficient responses).

Notwithstanding the valuable contribution made by adding the student voice to the discussion of VET and, in particular, to eliciting the perceptions and aspirations of those already engaged on VET programmes, this report, in common with that of Richardson and Sing (2011), is illustrative of reports that either assume a collective understanding of the term, 'vocational education', or conflate a range of terms (practical learning, work related-learning, work experience and vocational) under one generic heading. Firstly, there is no clarification of what 'vocational education' includes or excludes in



this report. Yet, ironically, this is exactly what the researchers tried to get students in their sample to clarify. In the findings section of the report under the heading 'understanding of vocational education and training', Atkins et al (2011:34) state that, "The young participants in this study had no clear understanding of the term 'vocational', despite being on vocational programmes". In this discussion of findings, we learn that the participants were given prompts drawn from a list of occupations and researchers noted that:

...only craft occupations, such as plumbing and bricklaying, were commonly identified as vocational. More elite vocational occupations, such as lawyer and medical practitioner, tended not to have been considered to be vocational.  
(ibid)

This insight confirms the differentiated understanding of vocational when applied to occupation with perceived higher status. However, Atkins et al.'s findings also identify that participant definitions of vocational were largely focused on (the terms) 'practical' and 'skills', with many using the term 'hands-on'. In this regard, the researchers found that young people were clearer in their definitions of practical learning, although against what criteria their definitions were being judged was not apparent.

Secondly, although the reader can deduce vocational areas from the participants' descriptions of their experiences in the findings sections of the report (e.g 'Freddy had enrolled on an engineering programme', p.30; 'Stacey, a beauty therapy student', p.30, Zoe, who was following a course in childcare', p.31), the research does not identify which vocational areas are included in this research on vocational education. As such, the reader is unable to appreciate the vocational contexts, other than in the rather incidental way described above. This would seem to be a major omission as, for one; it implies that all (possible) vocational areas can/should/are being seen as the same. In other words, we do not need to know whether the experiences being described are

concerned with motor vehicle repair, engineering, retail or hairdressing; they are all 'vocational', 'practical' and any further differentiation is not deemed to be necessary. In contrast, it can be argued that it would be unusual to see a similar report on the experiences of learners on academic pathways without their discipline or subject being provided as context and without this being an important element of the reported sampling frame.

Thirdly, whilst the lack of work experience of the school teachers (presumably in the vocational areas they are teaching?) is acknowledged, Atkins et al (2011:39) confirm that young people recognised and valued the industrial experience of their teachers. Given that the point is illustrated by a quote from an engineering student at one of the colleges, it can be assumed that the teachers with valuable work experiences are more likely to be college staff. Again, this is left unsaid and yet where learning is planned, how and with whom is a central aspect of those concerned with VET. Similarly, and linked to the issue regarding lack of specificity of vocational areas, we hear nothing of the occupational, sectoral or workplace learning experience in the report. Instead, on page 39 of a 43 page report we learn, for the first time, something about the need to improve work experience and that the study calls for a radical conception of schools and colleges and their relationships with industries and commercial organisations. However, it remains a mystery as to whether any of these 'vocational' students have any real experience of a vocational area built into their programmes at all and, if so, the extent and organisation of such an experience. Given the cultural and historical connections that FE colleges have traditionally developed with industries and commercial organisations (Huddleston and Unwin, 2013; Unwin 2004), it is therefore remarkable that there has not been any differentiation between schools and colleges in this regard.

Finally, as might be expected from a report into the experiences of those on programmes described as vocational, the participants tended to view their experiences

positively. In the executive summary of the report, the authors identified the importance of 'vocational education' from participants' points of view, as drawn from:

...its value as a credential and from the unquestionable opportunities it offers them in helping to build self-esteem and develop new skills and confidence. It provides the opportunity for significant measures of achievement for young people who, in some cases, have enjoyed only limited previous experience of success in the education system (ibid 2011:6)

From this, it is not unreasonable to infer that vocational education is concerned with qualifications (credentials) and developing learners' self-esteem and confidence and that it is also aimed at so called low level learners who, presumably, need to be motivated to learn by doing. It says nothing about the development of vocationally specific skills or knowledge or about experiences of workplaces. Indeed, it could be argued that it says more about what participants' previous learning experiences failed to deliver than about vocational education per se.

In this report, the absence of an explicit declaration of what vocational education has been taken to be, coupled with the lack of differentiation between vocational areas and of the teachers in different sites of learning, is indicative of the taken-for-granted assumptions which permeate discussions in VET and leads, inevitably, to the reduction of vocational education to practical ways of learning for low-achievers. Such a reductionism, coupled with conceptual ambiguity, is significant because whilst the study set out to discover the perceptions of the young people engaged in vocational programmes, we never really learn about the vocational at all.

## 2.6 Contradictions played out in policy contexts

The conceptual ambiguity surrounding the vocational and the aims of VET and illustrated in the reports reviewed above has, of course, been exemplified by the twists and turns of English educational and training policy. However, whilst an analysis of the policy direction of VET in England is beyond the scope of this thesis, insight can be gleaned from the current UK government's apparent interest in vocational education and its commitment to "...raising the status of vocational education and training" (DBIS, 2011:21). Indeed, within a year of the 2010 Coalition Government taking office, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, set up a review of 14-19 vocational education, led by Professor Alison Wolf. In the foreword of the report, the need for the review is expressed by Gove in the following way:

Since Prince Albert established the Royal Commission in 1851 policy-makers have struggled with our failure to provide young people with a proper technical and practical education of a kind that other nations can boast. 160 years later the same problems remain. Our international competitors boast more robust manufacturing industries. Our technical education remains weaker than most other developed nations. And, in simple terms, our capacity to generate growth by making things remains weaker. (Wolf 2011:4)

In this one paragraph, Gove situates the perspective adopted by policy makers and others who discuss the relationship between the needs of the economy, young people and the need to develop technical and practical education, in a discourse of failure. He also situates the relationship in a discussion of competitiveness of the UK economy (or, rather, the lack of competitiveness) in an increasingly globalised market. He contrasts 'our failure' to provide a 'proper technical and practical education' with the apparent success of others who can.

In their critical appraisal of the Coalition Government's approach to VET in general and Gove's response in particular, Fuller and Unwin (2011a) show how the coalition government not only reintroduce the term technical education into the discussion (almost unnoticed) but also present vocational as synonymous with 'practical' and 'craft' with the result that their conception of the vocational is "...framed in terms of craft skills, of people fashioning artefacts" (ibid:196).

Young (2011:274) continues the theme developed by Fuller and Unwin and argues that Gove can be seen "eulogising the beauty of craft skills...and the intrinsic richness of manual work". This glorification of crafts and working with one's hands appears to hold an attractive image to Gove et al, whilst, in reality, the image is more nineteenth than twenty-first-century and less likely to resurrect the economy with its glorifications of a lost manufacturing age (Keep and Payne, 2004; Green and Preston, 2008). Additionally, with the emphasis firmly on 'the practical', Young (2011:274) argues that Gove ensures that the complexity associated with the glorified occupations goes unacknowledged:

He heaps praise on chefs and childcare workers, beauticians and care assistants, landscape gardeners and fashion photographers. That is fine; however...these [are] complex, sophisticated jobs, and as conceptual as they are practical.

Such a reductive approach to understanding the vocational is not an entirely recent or a party political phenomenon. Seven years earlier, Unwin (2004) had reported on a meeting with a Labour government minister who expressed puzzlement with the purpose, function and need for vocational education, given that the economy was now firmly a 'knowledge' economy, which prized higher education. Unwin characterised the economic perspective held by the minister, with its attendant educational implications, as follows:

We do not make things anymore and most sensible people will go to university and emerge as knowledge workers. Those who do not will be confined to the twilight world of the call centre and fast food restaurant. *There is nothing in the middle.*

(ibid:150) (emphasis added)

These pronouncements of the coalition government in 2010/11 and of the New Labour governments that preceded it, exemplify the ways in which successive governments have approached the discussion of the vocational and the development of policy around VET in England. It signals the conflation of terms such as practical and craft as a descriptor of all things vocational that has dominated the political and policy discourse of VET. The use of such terms extends to the definition of certain, selected occupations; to define VET pedagogies and, moreover, can be seen to reflect an assumed relationship between VET and economic prosperity with little consideration to the dynamics of the twenty-first century labour market.

The 2011 Wolf Review confirmed that vocational education in England had never adopted an official definition, and suggested that VET was, therefore, “extraordinarily complex and opaque by European and international standards” (Wolf 2011:9). To clarify the scope of her review, Wolf used what she called an existing ‘working definition’ – one that emerged from regulators who defined formal qualifications for 14-19 year olds:

14-19 is a highly regulated phase of education dominated by formal qualifications; and regulators currently require that all these qualifications other than GCSEs, A levels, iGCSEs and the IB *incorporate clear vocational content and referencing*. This rule usefully delineates the scope of this enquiry as involving, at a minimum, any such qualifications delivered to 14-19 year olds, and all young people on courses leading to them

(ibid 2011:19) emphasis added

Her review led to a series of recommendations, which were accepted by the government. In particular, she argued that there was at best a tenuous link between some courses described as vocational and the labour market. Level 2 qualifications, when obtained outside an apprenticeship framework, were seen to have little or no labour market value, whilst the content of many current vocational qualifications were not actually valued by employers. Additionally, she argued that the constant change in vocational qualifications was a limiting factor when the labour market recognised qualifications that were stable and familiar. She also focused on concerns about the functional literacy and numeracy of young people on vocational courses. This latter focus captured the particular attention of the government and has led to the incorporation of Level 2 Mathematics and English for all learners under 19 on all vocational programmes.

Notwithstanding the impact and widespread discussion of the report, given that the scope was defined by qualifications that were 'other than' academic, the outcomes of the review were more concerned with the range and diversity of qualifications, particularly below Level 3, than about vocational education and training per se. A different argument and approach was used when the government established an independent Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) chaired by Frank McLoughlan, Principal of City and Islington FE College in London. The aim of CAVTL was to raise the quality and improve the outcomes and impact of adult vocational teaching and learning in the further education and skills sector for learners and employers. Entitled 'It's about work' (LSIS, 2013), the commission's final report confirmed the centrality of work to any educational provision that was called vocational. The CAVTL report also identified what it saw as the best elements in vocational education.

That is, vocational education:

- had a clear line of sight to work;
- included the concept of the two-way street where employers, colleges and training providers worked closely;
- involved dual professionals who combined expertise in their occupational area, with expertise as teachers and trainers; and
- had access to industry-standard facilities and resources.

## **2.7 Defining Vocational Education in its Own Terms**

It has been seen in the preceding sections of this chapter that where vocational education is defined exclusively in relation to academic, general or liberal education this, in effect, has served to validate the space it occupies as second best. Whilst there is no denying the unequal status ascribed to education that finds itself defined as 'other', if vocational education is always seen in relation to academic education then it is invariably seen as deficient simply because of the trans-generational, a-historic status ascribed to general education regardless of its value (Pring 1993). An alternative response requires the development of an understanding of vocational education in its own terms. This, it is argued, will be rightly informed by the Deweyan perspective provided earlier in the chapter whilst avoiding the pitfalls of others in the struggle for the middle ground. The final section of the chapter now turns to defining what vocational education is when composed in its own terms.

The distinctiveness of the framing cannot be collapsed under the umbrella of a movement or indeed a shared context. The contributions are, of necessity, a selection, to offer an insight into the assumptions that underpin the developing argument of the thesis. The quest is for the development of an understanding of vocational education which does not lose sight of the 'vocational' and one which acknowledges in the light



of Dewey's holistic approach that: "...practical skills and vocational knowledge are central to the sustainability and enhancement of a creative, socially just and healthy society" (Unwin, 2004:152).

Billett (2011) argues that vocational education is commonly construed as, literally, post-school education and therefore defined in terms of a 'sector' of education with sector-specific issues. This is a limited construction for Billett as, defined in this way, it immediately excludes provision for occupations such as medicine, teaching and law, which take place in HE. By focussing on sector issues, Billett argues that there is less opportunity to see the commonality between the purposes.

For Billett, it is important therefore to develop an encompassing or meta-concept: the field of vocational education (ibid:25) to counteract the focus on sectors. He sees overall commonalities across the diversity of institutions involved in vocational education and, consequently, across levels and qualification outcomes. The commonality is evidenced in the broad association with developing and sustaining individual's capacities required for work and working life:

Their educational purposes are primarily concerned with identifying the knowledge required for effective performance in an occupation, organising experiences to capture that knowledge and then finding ways of enacting those experiences so that learners can come to be effective in the occupational practices. (ibid 2011:8)

These purposes can be seen within occupational areas as diverse as law, catering, hairdressing, and medicine. These commonalities give the field its character and leads Billett to conclude that it gives it its distinctiveness. These purposes set the vocational education field apart from other fields of education. So, for Billett, in defining

vocational education an occupationally-specific context is required, coupled with an identification of knowledge, an appropriate pedagogy and opportunities to practice.

This is a relatively common formulation in the field of vocational education, albeit with variations of expression. Winch and Gingell (2004:120), for instance, cite the elements articulated by Billett in their positioning of vocational education, emphasising the occupational specificity required:

Vocational education is thus far more than a matter of drilling or training for a restricted range of unskilled tasks. It involves induction into an occupation with its own place in society and its own ideals and traditions. It requires a complex combination of factual, theoretical and practical knowledge, not to mention the practice of specific occupational virtues.

Similarly, Young (2006; 2008; 2009; 2011) is quite clear about the distinctiveness of a vocational education. Firstly, vocational education is always sectoral. By this he means that it is shaped by occupations and, in particular, by the knowledge and skill demands of the sector. Secondly, and in contrast to general education, vocational education always points in two directions (see also Gamble 2006), that is, towards the particular occupation (or field), and towards the disciplinary knowledge that has been involved in the development of the occupational field. In this regard, Young gives the example of physics being a necessary component of engineering, but not of hairdressing. Thirdly, he suggests that it is always possible to distinguish initial from continuing vocational education, an element not so obvious from Billett's work. Fourthly, vocational education for Young has two explicit purposes: a) preparation for working life (the Dewey influence); and b) intellectual development and opportunities for progression (to HE). Finally, because of the previous characteristics, Young sees the vocational curriculum involving several types of knowledge and providing the basis for enabling the student to make connections between them.

This last aspect and the focus on the knowledge element of vocational education is a particularly important aspect of Young's work. The emphasis he gives to disciplinary knowledge (propositional knowledge) as opposed to practical or tacit knowledge as the anchor for vocational education can be seen to undermine the real value of vocational knowledge. This can lead to what Canning (2013:730) has called a 'relentless privileging' of a particular form of knowing. As he argues:

What counts is the sacred, vertical, abstract and transcendent. Not only does this count but it also constructs a paradigm within which every other form of knowledge is legitimised.

Fuller and Unwin (2011a) advocate the specificity of vocational knowledge and see this as one of the defining features of vocational education. They have argued consistently for the recognition that a truly vocational education cannot be articulated without consideration of vocational knowledge and that centring vocational education in occupations is not sufficient:

The way knowledge is conceptualized and integrated in vocational curricula is a critical indicator of the character of provision, including the extent to which it provides a platform for progression and supports the development of 'vocational practice' (Guile 2010). (ibid:197)

Here we see the elements of occupational knowledge and skills, occupationally specific experiences and practice combined with opportunities to progress not only to further and higher education, as stressed by Young (ibid), but also through an occupational hierarchy (Stanton and Bailey, 2004) as key elements in the articulation of vocational education. This conceptualisation forces us to consider the ways in which these

elements articulate in the construction of vocational education experiences and, specifically, the understanding of learning on which these constructions are based.

## **2.8 Vocational Learning Assumptions**

Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal book, *Situated Learning*, represents what most have agreed is a paradigm shift in the study of learning. From their work, researchers, particularly in the areas of workplace and work-based learning, have built on the concept of learning as an essential human practice (Hughes et al 2007). Their influential thesis on learning should be seen in contrast to the traditional or standard paradigm of learning which was concerned with understanding learning at the level of the individual and rooted in psychological theories of learning (notably Behaviourist and Cognitive). Sfard (1998) termed this approach metaphorically as 'learning as acquisition'. In this characterisation learning was seen as a product with visible, identifiable outcomes. Learners would accumulate codified knowledge, given by others who were experts. Learning was seen to have taken place once knowledge acquisition was assessed as a change in the property of the individual. Learning, it was argued, was a psychological process and essentially went on in an individual's head (Hughes et al, 2007).

In contrast, Lave and Wenger's (1991) ethnographic study of workplace practices proposed that learning did not simply take place in school or formal educational settings, with designated teachers and learners. Rather it was seen to occur as a social practice – as participation in communities of practice in workplaces. Sfard (1998) extended her descriptive metaphor to describe this as a form of 'learning as participation'. In this framing, learning was understood to be: dynamic; on-going; dialogical; and continually reconstructed as participants engage in action.

Knowledge in this construction was also seen as being created in social practice. In contrast to learning as acquisition, learning was construed as a process where

individuals learn as part of social engagement with other people and resources (Felstead et al, 2009) and, in so doing, become part of what Lave and Wenger (1991) defined as a community of practice. In Wenger's later work (1998) he confirmed that communities of practice comprised of three dimensions: mutual engagement; joint enterprise; and shared repertoire. As Fuller (2007:21) has clarified, the difference between a community of practice and any other social network is that: ... "social relations are formed, negotiated and sustained around the activity that has brought people together."

The movement towards understanding learning as participation offered opportunities to shift the focus of attention from the individual's cognitive ability to appreciate the collective practice that underpins learning in workplaces. However, for some (see inter alia, Billett, 2007; Loftus and Higgs, 2010) the collective focus may have shifted the emphasis too far. As Loftus and Higgs, (2010:38) explain, whilst: "discovering the importance of the social, we seem to have forgotten the individual person". There is, however, a rich tradition of researchers in the field of workplace learning who have considered ways in which over-lapping dimensions of workplace learning, such as workers' dispositions, individual biographies and membership of a community of practice are central to understanding the significance of individual biography in workplace learning (see inter alia, Evans et al, 2004; Evans et al, 2006; Hodkinson et al 2004).

In terms of confirming an understanding of vocational learning that has informed this thesis I will focus on two particular aspects of the previous review that warrant further clarification. That is, the issue of context and the conceptualisation of vocational expertise. The reason for the focus on these issues is firstly, the recognition that vocational teachers' ITT observations take place in classrooms and workshops in colleges (normally construed as the context or setting) and secondly, because the first

research question of this thesis asks: How is the concept and process of observation conceptualised in relation to the development of professional expertise?

## **2.9 Context**

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore definitional issues in detail, discussion of learning contexts follows from socio-cultural explorations of learning as participation. Defining what exactly is meant by context is contested as Edwards and Miller (2007) and Fenwick (2010) among others have argued. Edwards and Miller (2007:265) explain that a context might be considered “bounded container” within which learning takes place, or as a “...more fluid and relational set of practices”. In the former understanding of context there is the notion of a much more bounded, static setting and of a “container in which the individual moves” (Fenwick 2010:89). Whilst in the latter, the relational framing draws upon concepts of communities and networks rather than that of context (Edwards and Miller 2007) or a de-centred web of relations (Fenwick, 2010). However, such a dualism may not be entirely helpful in defining context. Whilst it is accepted that boundaries between sites of learning need to reflect more fluid conceptualisations of social practice, a fuller understanding of context also needs to take into account the physical, material and embodied nature of learning. This might then reflect a more firmly bounded understanding.

In this thesis, the social practice at the centre of investigation involves vocational teachers and their observers in (material) classrooms and workshops and whilst a material determinism needs to be avoided (Wertsch, 1998) an account of context at the micro level also needs to embrace this material reality. Defining context by moving beyond a micro level of inquiry is also important as Felstead et al (2009:6) have shown in their explorations of learning where: “...learning is a by-product of what workplaces are primarily about”. In this thesis, learning is not necessarily a by-product of the

workplace, given that FE colleges are about learning. Indeed as Ainley and Bailey (1997) have argued the business of learning is at the heart of the FE workplace. Nevertheless, in common with Felstead et al's (2009) conceptualisation, the productive system should not be ignored in an attempt to define context. This is because the productive system not only includes the ways in which work is organised (Felstead et al's 'second order issues') but also includes the wider structures, such as the nature of the market served and the ways in which products are made ('first order issues') that impact upon practices at the micro level of inquiry.

In definitional terms, the implications for this thesis are clear. Context needs to be understood as operating at both a micro (classrooms/ workshops) and a macro level as part of a productive system. At the macro level, as has been shown briefly in the introduction to this thesis, FE colleges sit in a productive system, which is increasingly highly controlled and regulated (Avis et al, 2011; Orr, 2009).

### **2.10 Development of Expertise**

The development of expertise can, almost implicitly, be construed as an essential element to consider in any form of vocational learning. Two aspects are important here. Firstly, a conception of what expertise is taken to be and, secondly, how expertise is developed. Dominant conceptions of expertise emerge from cognitive psychology which, according to Billett (2001:435), emphasises:

...the breadth and organisation of individuals' domain-specific knowledge in solving problems and overcoming impasses. These attributes are central to the hallmark of expertise: the capacity to perform non-routine tasks within a domain of knowledge.

Expert knowledge is seen as “...deeply structured and indexed, thereby permitting successful non-routine problem solving” (ibid). However, for Billett (2001), the deployment of knowledge and skills are dependent on situational factors and this situational awareness is not, in general, acknowledged in the conceptualisation of expertise that emerges from cognitive psychology. Like the cognitive conceptions of learning outlined above, expertise can be seen as residing in the heads of experts, whereas, from their social anthropological perspective, Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to expertise as being ongoing movement towards full participation and the formation of identity within a particular community of practice.

Participation in a social practice is, therefore, the foundation for expertise from this perspective. As Billett (2001:439) confirms:

...acceptable practice in one workplace may be quite inappropriate in another, as procedures are different and the goals for performance may be quite distinct. These factors influence not only the activities individuals engage in, but also what is taken as expert performance.

This does not mean to say that an individual’s capacity to practice is determined by setting alone, as the following discussion of the development of expertise clarifies. It does, however, confirm that expertise encompasses social and cultural aspects, not only cognitive dimensions.

A top-down ‘expert to novice’ version of the development of expertise is envisaged in the traditional conceptualisation of expertise. However, in discussions in the VET literature the development of vocational expertise is most usefully understood as involving development along a horizontal plane as well as a vertical plane (Engeström, 2004; Felstead et al, 2005; Fuller and Unwin, 2010). In the vertical conceptualisation, newcomers in a community of practice are seen to learn from those designated as



experts, whereas with the latter, the development of expertise is modelled around the relationships established across participants in an activity. The connections to conceptions of learning, previously discussed, are not lost here. Vertical expertise can be construed as being developed individually, and acquired and explained through a cognitivist rationale. As Winch (2010) has observed, this form of expertise is related to the development of subject expertise and rooted in declarative or propositional knowledge. Engeström (2004) meanwhile saw this notion of the development of expertise as wanting, given its propensity to represent knowledge as static, homogenous and unquestioning. In contrast, horizontal expertise can be construed as developing through participation with “...skill, knowledge and competence reside[ing] in local working communities, not transportable packages” (Engeström, 2004:147).

Additionally, in their discussions of apprenticeship as a model of learning, Fuller and Unwin (2011b) stress the importance of two specific criteria in the development of vocational expertise. The working environment, they argued, needs to provide opportunities for the development of expertise through practice with others. This would include the development of “tacit knowledge and skill” (ibid:37). However, unlike Lave and Wenger (1991), they argue that the learner also needs access to types of knowledge and expertise that will enable them to “grow beyond, as well as within, their current job role and sector” (Fuller and Unwin 2011b:37). In so doing, they signal the inter-relationship of social practice and individual capacity in the development of expertise.

Understandings of the development of expertise through vertical and horizontal axis alone may not, perhaps, fully emphasise the synthesis of knowledge, skill, and judgement that vocational learning requires. The following quote from Felstead et al (2005) serves as a reminder of the significance of the visceral in learning in some vocational contexts. It is included here to suggest that in giving due consideration to expertise in VET, the visceral must not be overlooked. Felstead et al (ibid) draw on

Darrah's (1996) research into wire-maker operators who explained what they undertake to do their job. This explanation places the body, as opposed to artefacts and other accounts, at the centre of the process:

Getting to know the 'feel' of the wire moving through the machine and knowing when a break is likely rather than relying on documentary evidence puts the body rather than the mind in control. Developing a 'sixth sense' of what is possible on which machine and knowing when to make adjustments while maintaining production.

(Felstead et al 2005:363)

In this extract, 'getting to know the feel of the wire' captures the centrality of the body to the development of vocational expertise.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an overview of the ways in which vocational education has traditionally been articulated. It has argued that despite the tendency to do otherwise, the starting point for an understanding of vocational education must be one that is conducted in its own terms, rather than in relation to any other type of education. Equally, and despite attempts to re-define the relationship to occupations and the world of work, it is crucial that vocational education sits within the particular occupational sector which shapes it and which in turn is shaped by it. Additionally, and drawing upon the work of Dewey, it has been argued that the vocational is not just about work in any narrow sense. Attention also needs to be given to the learning assumptions underpinning vocational practice and to this end; the chapter moved onto identify the contribution of the 'learning as participation' metaphor to an understanding of vocational learning. The final section confirmed the understanding of expertise that has informed this thesis.

The next chapter explores the wider contextual issues that frame the education and training of teachers who work with vocational learners and critically discusses the role teaching observations play in the process.

## **Chapter Three: The Education and Training of the Vocational Teacher**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Unlike many other European countries, ITT for vocational teachers in FE only became mandatory in England in 2001, when professional standards were developed and teaching qualifications became a regulatory requirement for all teachers in FE Colleges. The mandatory regulation was, however, short lived and since September 2013, this has been revoked. At the time of writing, it is for managers of colleges to decide what training is appropriate for their staff and organisation. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the following sections of this Chapter, although vocational teachers have only been required to obtain a recognised teaching qualification in recent years, many had gained qualifications to teach prior to this (see Chapter One). Establishing the extent to which all teachers in the FE, let alone vocational teachers, hold a teaching qualification has, however, never been as straightforward as might be supposed.

Prior to 2001, Clow (2001) notes that a Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) report of 1997 stated that a majority of those for whom data was available (60%) had some kind of teaching qualification. However, it is difficult to establish what 'some type of teaching qualification' actually meant and the paucity of the data held by providers (Ofsted 2003) ensures that no clear picture of the likelihood of vocational teachers holding a qualification to teach, prior to 2001, can be gleaned.

In Chapter One, insight into the type of teaching qualifications held by FE staff 2010-11 was provided (LSIS, 2012). Table Three, in Chapter One, which provided the teaching qualifications listed by staff in the LSIS report, offers the clearest insight into the proportion of staff with teaching qualifications in FE. It was deduced that approximately 80% of staff held a teaching qualification. A report from the Department

for Business, Innovation and Skills of the same year (DBIS 2012:21) confirms the deduction made from the table, noting that:

By the end of 2010, approximately 80% of teaching staff within FE colleges (98,062 people) were estimated to have or be working towards a recognised teaching qualification.

However, other than providing an overall figure, little else can be deduced from the available information. For example, a 'recognised teaching qualification' could include a six credit Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) qualification as well as a 120 credit, Level 5 Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). Moreover, given that data of qualifications held is not presented against any demographic information, any indication of the percentage of vocational teachers holding or expecting to hold a teaching qualification is lacking.

To provide a broader context for the consideration of the training of vocational teachers, this chapter therefore sets out to trace the historical development of vocational teachers' training. It then moves onto identify the role of teaching observations in the training of vocational teachers.

### **3.2 Evolving nature of vocational teacher training**

Bailey (2007) confirms that there was no provision of teacher training for those teaching in technical and further education colleges in England until the end of the Second World War. Prior to the war, those teaching in colleges consisted of: "...relatively large numbers of part-time teachers who did the majority of the teaching and among whom there was a high wastage rate" (2007:279). This, Bailey (ibid:280) argues, reflected the provision itself, which was already complex and a "...part-time, evening class affair". Similarly, in Frank Foden's classic account of the education of part-time teachers in further and adult education from the Second World War to the

1990s, the link between the training of technical teachers and the courses on which they taught was clear:

...technical education itself was mostly a part-time affair, the teaching done by either schoolteachers in the evening, or practitioners of trades and professions with no pedagogical training at all, and no encouragement, incentive, or opportunity to obtain such training. (Foden, 1992:2)

During the Second World War, a government committee under Sir Arnold McNair was charged with the responsibility to investigate and make recommendations about the supply of full-time technical teachers although, as Foden (1992) has observed, its primary concern was with the training of teachers in secondary technical schools. In line with discussions during the years between the First and Second World Wars within Technical Institutes and trades unions (Bailey, 2007), McNair recommended that training should take place after employment – on an in-service basis. However, in the event, and despite McNair's recommendations, a full-time one-year programme of training was given national priority. This strategy reflected wider government concerns relating to the employment of post-war armed service personnel and the supply of teachers for technical schools, as opposed to a strategy to develop technical and vocational teachers for the (post-compulsory) technical colleges. Nevertheless, it did place the training of technical and vocational teachers on the national agenda for the first time.

A rare insight into the lived experience of vocational teacher training in the post-war period is provided by Gomoluch and Bailey (2010). In their account of the history of Bolton, one of the oldest technical teacher training colleges in England, they (2010:140) describe how the college opened in February 1946 as part of:

...the government's post-war Emergency Training Scheme (ETS) for the recruitment and training of teachers for schools and colleges, and was the first centre established in the UK for the provision of courses of training for technical teachers.

Until 1950, all the full-time trainee teachers were men and women who had served in the armed forces or had been engaged in other forms of national service during the war. During this time, two more ETS training colleges for technical teachers were established in London and Huddersfield. After the end of ETS, the colleges were given status as technical teacher-training colleges under the auspices of their respective local education authorities and they operated a joint recruitment drive for a one-year pre-employment programme for technical teachers (ibid, 2010). Applications were limited to those aged over 25 who could demonstrate technical knowledge, qualifications and experience in their respective fields. Between 1946 and 1954, these three colleges trained over 2,000 technical teachers. However, as Foden (1992) records and Gomoluch and Bailey (2010) confirm, not all of these technical teachers went on to teach in colleges; instead one third entered schools, even though the new technical teachers' certificate was not seen as equivalent to the school teachers' certificate. By 1961, a fourth college was established in Wolverhampton to respond to the anticipated demand for technical teachers following the Government's announcement that it planned to: "...enable Britain to compete with the expansion of technical education in the USA and Western Europe" (Gomoluch and Bailey 2010:140).

This rationale can be seen to set the training of technical and vocational teachers firmly in the same discourse as evidenced in the discussion of VET in Chapter Two. As part of a human capital discourse, the training of technical and vocational teachers was considered a priority because it was associated with developing VET provision for economic competitiveness. As will be seen in the review of the training of vocational teachers that follows, where the perceived needs of the economy changes, so too does

the commitment to training vocational teachers.

### **3.3 Gendered Provision**

Gomoluch and Bailey's (2010) account of the pre-service award at Bolton also identifies the specific gendered profile, which marked the training of technical teachers at this time. Well into the 1960s, the four colleges were dominated by men, in terms of both their respective trainees and staff. Arguably, this profile simply mirrored the labour market, which was strongly stratified by gender and also reflected the importance of the manufacturing and engineering sectors at the time. As two participants in Gomoluch and Bailey's (ibid:143) study described:

There were all kinds of engineers which included pattern makers, boundary men, machinists, fitters, anything which came under the general heading of practical engineering, as opposed to mechanical engineers who design (Frank)...Occasionally you might get a girl on the electrical but not on the heavier engineering (Joe)

They record that motor vehicle, mining and building trades also attracted predominately male applicants but, by the late 1960s, the profile of both the trainee vocational teachers and staff at the training colleges began to reflect both the changing curriculum of FE colleges and the growth in other sectors of the economy in the late 1950s and 1960s. As the secretarial subjects, nursing and nursery nursing courses, health visiting and hairdressing departments grew in the colleges, so women began to appear on the technical teacher training courses, both as students and staff. However, an unintended consequence of this starkly gendered profile can be seen as reinforcing the gendered segregated labour market and the establishment of an association between the descriptor 'technical' with men, an association that has proven difficult to shift as data from a recent study into apprenticeships has evidenced (Fuller and Unwin, 2013). As has been seen in Chapter One, women now make up more than half of the teaching staff in Colleges.



### **3.4 In-Service Courses for Vocational Teachers**

Despite the promotion of pre-service courses and the establishment of four technical teacher training colleges, in-service courses also operated in this post-war period. Indeed, as Foden (1992) has shown, a day-release course for full-time teachers ran at Bolton College in 1952-53 alongside the full-time provision at the Bolton technical teacher training college. Expansion elsewhere of teacher training for vocational staff was, however, mainly occurring through a growing part-time, in-service training route which was most often organised and examined locally through Regional Advisory Councils and Local Education Authorities. Whilst this provision satisfied a need for training courses accessible to locally-based vocational teachers and enabled education authorities to plan their own provision, it also meant that training was subject to considerable regional variation offering limited staff movement between geographical areas due to the lack of transferability of training (Foden, 1992). However, a report of 1966 (The Russell Report) concluded that “still less than one third of the FE and technical colleges teaching force was teacher-trained” (cited in Lucas 2004a:68).

This period also saw the emergence of nationally accredited schemes, with perhaps the most well known being the 1953 City and Guilds of London Institute’s (CGLI) Technical Teachers’ Certificate Programme. As Foden (1992:76) points out, the scheme was a product of the prevailing gendered conception of the technical teacher and, by and large, it recruited male teachers who were taught by male staff. However, despite claims to the contrary, the CGLI was not the first nationally accredited programme. The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) had already launched a scheme for a shorthand teacher’s certificate in 1949, followed by a teacher’s certificate in typewriting in 1950. These courses, in direct contrast, recruited women.

Apart from the gendered profile of their respective candidates, these first nationally accredited courses also reflected different goals. The RSA courses, for instance, emphasised the technical competence of the skills taught and was exemplified by a rigorous final skills exam for shorthand/typing teachers. In contrast, the CGLI courses did not test technical expertise at all. The reasonable expectation that these accrediting institutions might collaborate in the production of a joint, national certificate for vocational teachers was never realized. Instead: “The two bodies had long ago discarded the habit of co-operating, and at times proceeded on their own paths in a spirit of indifference to one another” (Foden 1992:77.)

This is not to say that the CGLI were only interested in vocational areas traditionally associated with men. A CGLI Domestic Subjects (Further Education) Teacher’s Certificate Course for teachers of Domestic Subjects (defined as needlework and cookery) ran alongside the Technical Teacher’s course until 1969, despite the intentions of the CGLI to amalgamate them long before then (Foden, 1992). The form, content and assessment of these courses also contrasted with the Technical Teachers’ award in that teachers of Domestic Science had to pass not one (as was the case for the Technical Teachers’ qualification), but two externally set papers. The additional assessment required a test performance before a CGLI examiner of their teaching of at least 10 students. This had to include:

...both demonstration by the teacher and practical work by members of the class; and submission to the examiner of a file of notes of lessons given during the course, together with any teaching equipment appropriate to these lessons.  
(ibid:88)

The separate history of the CGLI qualifications for technical teachers operating within the same awarding body was seen as a result of the resistance of the (women) teachers of Domestic Subjects who had a high reputation for competence. Once the

qualifications were aligned in 1969, there was continued criticism, initially by domestic subject teachers, who objected to what they saw as “...unduly easy access [into teaching] for moderately skilled part-timers” (ibid:90). Clearly for them, the technical teachers’ courses should perform a gate-keeping role where only the most competent would be permitted to teach the next generation of shorthand typists.

### **3.5 The haphazard and local approach of the 1970s – 1990s**

From this brief overview of the post-war period up until to the 1970s, it can be seen that, despite the differences in assessments and skills tests, training technical and vocational specialists to teach was considered desirable not only by the educational authorities and institutions that employed the teachers, but also by respective governments. For evidence of this, one needs to look no further than the setting up of the bespoke training colleges for technical teachers, to the various nationally accredited technical teachers’ courses, and to the plethora of courses that operated at a local/regional level. However, what all governments stepped back from in this period was the introduction of legislation to require teachers in technical and/or Further Education colleges to gain a teaching qualification.

A consistent narrative of the period also emerged and focussed on where the training of technical teachers should take place and whether it should be pre and/or in-service (Bailey, 2007; Foden, 1992). Developments of locally based, nationally accredited courses alongside HE accredited courses run in colleges and in some HE institutions laid the foundation for the pattern of training that has epitomised training routes for technical and vocational teachers in FE. Offered in ‘day release’ mode, these part-time courses have continued to dominate the routes to qualification so that figures suggest that some 80-90 percent of teachers in FE colleges have continued to undertake their initial training whilst already employed in the sector (Orr and Simmons, 2010).

Debates regarding what should be included in the training, and how teachers should be assessed and by whom, appeared to play out only in the development and subsequent alignment of vocationally-specific qualifications, as described above. Outside these areas, there did not appear to be much discussion as to the content, form and assessment of vocational teachers in training. Yet, there is historical precedent for such thinking. An insight into the pre-war thinking of the Board of Education about the training of technical teachers is given in the recommendations of its Chief Technological Inspector (Graham Savage) in 1933. Distancing itself from the training of teachers of schools, Savage, cited in Bailey (2007:284), argued that training for technical teachers needed to accept that, firstly;

Vocational instruction required not simply the teaching of a subject but also the showing of its application to specific industries. The second was the nature of the students who were already employed in, or preparing to enter employment in, industry...Training courses must help teachers to show the application of principles to particular processes, and help them deal with students who attended after a day's work, whose time was limited and whose knowledge of the practical was in advance of that of their understanding of principles.

In this account, insight is provided not only into the specific needs of those preparing to teach a vocational subject, but also their students' needs in particular vocational contexts. However, this attention to the needs of technical and vocational teachers can be seen to simply reflect the prevailing economic context of the time. As has been shown in Chapter Two, unlike the immediate pre and post war years, the contracting manufacturing base of the UK meant that the traditional technical and vocational courses that teachers were being prepared for were in decline by the 1970s and attention gradually shifted away from vocational teachers' needs. Whilst the demand for what has been seen as traditional vocational staff declined, the expansion of non-traditional courses taught in FE colleges continued to create a demand for staff to teach on them.

Foden (1992) records that a report on *Teacher Education and Training* (The James Report, 1972) was published against a backdrop of concern about the content and organisation of teacher training courses – largely in schools. However, the James Committee had taken the view that concerns about the quality of teaching in the schools sector should also be extended to FE colleges and, as Foden (1992:120) has argued, the presence of the Director General of the CGLI ensured that the committee’s remit shed light on the training of teachers in FE, even though there was “...little overt public concern”. Its recommendations were seen as radical in the sense that, for the first time, attention was turned to the needs of FE with the same underpinning rationale and assumptions about facilities and provision of training opportunities. In the event, although the James Report’s assumptions regarding training teachers for FE were accepted, its proposals for implementation were never realised.

A sub-committee of the newly established (1973) Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers (ACSETT) was then tasked with reporting on the training of full-time FE teachers. One of the recommendations of the report (known as the Haycocks Report, after the committee chair) was that induction training for all full-time staff should be made compulsory by a specified target date of 1981. Bennett (1979), writing as a NATFE<sup>5</sup> official, argued that Haycocks’ recommendations presented a ‘modest’ opportunity for regulation for the sector. This, Bennett argued, would begin to challenge the problems associated with local provision, as outlined above, because:

If a nationally coherent system [emerges] from Haycocks, it must ensure that teachers in further education have similar training opportunities [...] wherever they are teaching, and are not disadvantaged by working in one authority rather than another, or by moving from one region to another (ibid:45).

---

<sup>5</sup> The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) was a Trade Union organisation, which represented most FE teachers who were members of a Trades Union. It was merged with the Association of University Teachers in 2006 to form a new union, the University and Colleges Union (UCU).

Haycocks also argued that opportunities for the in-service training for Further Education teachers should be greater than those in the schools, in view of the high proportion of teachers in FE without professional teacher training. Haycocks therefore recommended that:

...release for in-service training should be increased to five per cent of the further education teaching force at any one time as soon as resources permit.

Cited in Bennett (ibid:45)

A second report by the Haycocks Committee focussed on the training of part-time staff and was published in 1978. This report confirmed the regional variation in the quality of courses aimed at part-time staff. Additionally, it highlighted the fact that existing training courses were not attracting many vocational teachers. It therefore recommended the establishment of a three-stage system to meet the various needs of part-time staff. However, and despite being welcomed by FE as a whole, the spirit of the report and, in particular, the target date advocated by Haycocks was never implemented. Nevertheless, whilst considerable regional variation continued and movement towards national regulation was no further forward, the Haycocks report was seen to be responsible for what Foden (1992:71) describes as, “the first big dent in the rising mass of untrained teachers”, even though training was still on a voluntary basis and normally only with the support of the employing organisation.

The relationship between the demand and supply of trained teachers persisted in the post-Haycocks era. As the numbers of FE college students increased so did the expansion of training opportunities for teachers, albeit at local and regional level. Indeed, in their overview of the expansion of General and Liberal Studies (GLS), Bailey and Unwin (2008) show that with the introduction of GLS as a component of all technical courses, there was an expansion of courses and conferences for teachers run by local education authorities (LEAs) and HMIs to cope with demand. Additionally, Bailey and Unwin (ibid) argue that this demand for more teachers was largely satisfied by an increase in the number of arts and humanities graduates who taught GLS to

technical students. This latter point is significant in so far as firstly, vocational learners were being taught by an increasing number of non-vocational teachers. Secondly, the expansion of teaching courses did not therefore develop in response to the needs of vocational teachers, but in response to the needs of the arts and humanities graduates. These graduates were later joined by a growing army of others who, in the 1980s, entered FE to teach so-called disaffected youth under the various programmes devised by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) (for a discussion of the work of the MSC, see inter alia, Ainley and Corney, 1990; Unwin 2010). These young recruits to FE had few real employment prospects in the economic turmoil of the 1980s, but were recruited onto 'pre-vocational' courses en masse as part of the 'New FE' (Bates et al. 1984) as has been discussed in Chapter Two. In contrast to the expansion of students in what was called Non-Advanced Further Education (NAFE), the technical and vocational student, like her vocational teacher, was part of a contracting FE provision.

From the 1980s to late 1990s, the development of ITT for vocational staff, as with all staff in FE, can be seen to have been on an ad hoc basis and with considerable regional variation. Development appeared to be dependent upon key factors, such as the ethos of the Local Education Authorities (up to the incorporation of colleges in 1993) and the FE college management's stance on ITT. By the 1990s, the monopoly previously held by the original technical teacher training colleges had all but disappeared in so far as 40 or so Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offered PGCEs and/or Certificates in Education for teachers in the post-compulsory sector (Lucas, 2004b). At the same time, the spread of national awarding body qualifications for teachers in the sector had mushroomed. A minority provision in the post-war period, these awards were offered by more than half of all FE colleges in the early 1990s as well as by Adult and Community Education Colleges. To some extent this dilution of provision might be seen to have reflected the shift in staff need across the sector and to mirror the multiplicity of courses and students that were now taught in the 'New FE'. At the same time, the reluctance to regulate the sector exemplified what Bailey and Robson (2002:333) have

referred to as, “25 years of official neglect with regard to the training of FE teachers”. This reluctance to regulate was finally brought to a conclusion in 1999 in the form of a Labour Government White Paper, *Learning to Succeed* (DfES, 1999). For many commentators this intervention, after so many missed opportunities, can be understood as part of the newly elected government’s strategy to improve the performance of further education through an increased emphasis on teacher training (Orr and Simmons, 2010). The white paper led to the establishment of national standards for teachers in FE and was the catalyst for a new era of regulation and control.

### **3.6 Regulation and Control**

In terms of both the requirement to train to teach and the development of regulated and centrally prescribed ITT courses for FE, most commentators identify 1999, with the introduction of national standards for teaching and learning for FE as a significant contextual event (Lucas, 2004b; Nasta, 2007). The Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) was established as a National Training Organisation (NTO) and it was tasked with the development of national occupational standards for FE. This involved endorsing all existing ITT qualifications and ensuring all ITT qualifications were being mapped to FENTO standards. Amongst other things, the introduction of national FENTO standards saw the beginnings of the development of externally endorsed curricula, away from curricula that had previously been primarily determined by individual HEIs and/or national qualifications and awarding bodies.

Even more significantly, however, the requirement to gain a recognised teaching qualification for the sector was announced in 2001. For the first time all new staff in FE had to gain a teaching qualification within a set period of taking up a post and, at the same time, Ofsted became responsible for the inspection of FE teacher training (Orr, 2010). In its first review of FE ITT, Ofsted (2003:1) acknowledged that “many colleges



had encouraged staff to gain educational qualifications offered by HEIs and national awarding bodies” prior to the new legislation, as the historical account provided, above, has confirmed. In terms of the quality of provision, Ofsted initially contrasted the situation in FE with the situation in schools and reflected that: “In contrast to ITT for primary and secondary teachers, FE teacher training has received little recent independent scrutiny through inspection” (ibid).

Ofsted’s inspection was clearly framed by its experiences of scrutiny of ITT for school teachers. The Ofsted report was critical both of the provision in relation to preparing teachers for FE and of the use of the FENTO standards:

The current system of FE teacher training does not provide a satisfactory foundation of professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers...While the FENTO standards provide a useful outline of the capabilities required of experienced FE teachers, they do not clearly define the standards required of new teachers. (Ofsted 2003:2)

The report highlighted a lack of consistency in relation to the support given to new teachers in the workplace. With its experience of scrutiny of schools-based teacher training, the report identified a less than systematic approach to mentoring of staff in the workplace, especially in relation to the development of subject expertise. Equally, it was critical of the frequency, assessment and quality of practical teaching stating that: “Few trainees receive effective mentoring in the workplace, and their progress is inhibited by insufficient observation and feedback on their teaching” (ibid:3).

The specific attention given to teaching observations by Ofsted was significant and, given their centrality to this thesis, this aspect is therefore taken up in more detail later in this chapter.

The government's response to the Ofsted report was swift. In November 2004, the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education announced the Government's proposals for the reform of initial teacher training for further education. A report, *Equipping our Teachers for the Future* (DfES, 2004), set out proposals to address the weaknesses in initial training in England that had been identified by Ofsted in 2003. By January 2005, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), one of the newly established Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), inherited the responsibility for teacher training including, according to Thompson and Robinson (2008:164), "...the task of introducing what is now commonly referred to as the 'reform agenda'".

The reforms were seen to borrow several of the features of schoolteacher training, including new professional standards, a subject-based approach to pedagogy and minimum levels of literacy and numeracy for teachers (Lawy and Tedder, 2009). On 1 September 2007, legal and contractual requirements were implemented to support the reforms. All new teachers in FE were therefore required to gain a qualification to teach by working towards either the designation of Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) or Qualified Teacher Lifelong Learning and Skills (QTLS) according to their teaching role. LLUK had responsibility for the development of required occupational standards for FE teachers. Built on notions of occupational competence, the fundamental premise behind the approach was that employer-led bodies (SSCs) should be responsible for setting standards for training and defining future development needs (Lucas and Nasta, 2010).

### **3.7 Mandatory teacher training for FE**

For the first time in their history, teachers in FE were not only required to gain a teaching qualification they were also expected to join what government decreed to be the preferred professional body, the Institute for Learning (IfL). The IfL was originally established in 2002, but became the preferred professional body, supported financially

by the government until 2010. Once qualified, FE teachers were also required to gain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and licence-to-teach status.

This was indeed a fundamental step and much of the subsequent discussion around the introduction of mandatory qualifications and a licence to teach in FE in England has been conducted within the discourse of professionalisation. That is, if professionals can be distinguished by their professional knowledge and expertise, their autonomous action, and their accountability to a professional body (Robson, 1998), then steps to require FE teachers to both evidence their professional knowledge of pedagogy through gaining a teaching qualification and by joining the IfL, was surely a step in the direction of professional recognition.

Whilst it was difficult to oppose such a rationalisation, Gleeson et al. (2005) had already questioned whether professionalising teachers in FE by imposing national standards and regulations would genuinely create a professional workforce. Others pointed to a fundamental flaw in government policy in that the policy failed to recognise the distinctiveness of the sector (Thompson and Robinson, 2008). Critics argued that the 'one size fits all' approach that had been adopted as the vehicle for regulation and professionalisation of the sector was not fit for purpose and brought with it unintended consequences for workplaces, for teachers who were either part-time and/or industry specialists and, ultimately, for students (Hulin and Lahiff, 2009; Jameson and Hillier, 2008; Orr, 2008).

Whilst Colleges had initially been supporting staff to become members of the IfL by paying subscription fees, by April 2011 all teachers were required to pay individual subscriptions. This tested the commitment of FE teachers to the IfL and led UCU to conclude that:

...present arrangements have lost the confidence of members who question their relevance in meeting staff development needs. We are, therefore, calling for a national level summit between the unions, the employers and government to review the current arrangements.” (quoted at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/iflfee>)

A boycott of the IfL ensued. Sparked by the stalemate that followed, a review panel under the chairmanship of Lord Lingfield was established by the Coalition Government in 2011. It published its interim findings in March 2012 and its final report three months later in July 2012 (DBIS,2012b).

Lingfield took the view that regulation had not proved successful as a means of achieving a professional workforce, although the criteria against which this decision had been made was not apparent. Instead, Lingfield recommended that:

...colleges and providers, as employers, should be given the freedom and the responsibility to decide what arrangements are most appropriate for their organisations and their staff . (DBIS 2012b:9)

Following the Lingfield report, the requirement for teachers to gain a teaching qualification proved to be short-lived. Despite the objections voiced by the IfL among others, the government accepted Lingfield’s view and revoked the requirement. The statutory requirement to obtain QTLS or ATLS was also removed, alongside the requirement for declaring 30 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) each year, although an expectation that CPD should continue remained. These latter recommendations also put the future of the IfL in doubt. (see: <http://www.ifl.ac.uk/about-ifl/who-we-are/history-of-ifl/the-future-of-ifl>)

Whilst critics of over-regulation might have felt vindicated, most had not anticipated the dismantling of the ITT regulatory framework for FE. However, the discourse of Lingfield reflected much of the de-regulation that had gone on in the compulsory

sector in England, such as the conversion of local authority funded schools to centralised funded academies with the employment of un-qualified teachers (BIS, 2012b). Whilst the abolition of the LLUK had already taken effect, the closure of the Learning and Skills Improvement Services (LSIS) by the UK Coalition Government, swiftly followed the Lingfield Review. The newly established Education and Training Foundation (ETF), together with the IfL, was initially given responsibility for the continued development of requisite qualifications based, it appears, on the occupational standards model. However on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, the IfL announced that, subject to ratification by its board, the IfL would close and its legacy and assets would be passed to the ETF. Although the reasons given were financial, the shadow cast by Lingfield was clear:

...the board has concluded that without further substantial investment or alternative sources of revenue, IfL's financial position would not be sustainable in the long term. More than anything, we wanted to ensure that the most valued aspects of IfL's offer, the things that made IfL special, would be protected in the form of a legacy for teachers and trainers in further education and skills, and felt that it would be best to initiate an orderly wind-down of IfL and its operations.

<https://www.ifl.ac.uk/news-and-events/ifl-press-releases/ifl-board-proposes-transfer-to-the-education-and-training-foundation/>

At the time of writing, there is still much uncertainty regarding the training of *all* teachers in FE and the feeling of 'having come full circle' permeates the system. However, with regard to the training of vocational teachers, it was the immediate post-war years, rather than the last 10 years, which provides the clearest attempt to shape the training of technical and vocational teachers. As has been seen in the preceding historical review, the provision was aimed at those who had technical backgrounds and

the implicit assumption was that to teach vocational and technical areas, staff required a period of training. Whether the training was pre-service or in-service there was an acceptance, again implicit, that it was not enough to simply 'be' a technician, whether motor vehicle mechanic or shorthand typist. To teach successfully required training. Arguably, this approach reflected governments' responses to the needs of post war economy and the development of technical expertise for competitiveness, exemplified by Prime Minister Harold Wilson's 'white-hot technological' era of the 1960s. But, as has been seen, the growth of the FE sector in the 1970s and 1980s introduced a range of other non-vocational areas into the curriculum and the teachers required for this 'new FE' were seen to be different from the technical staff that had been the mainstay of technical colleges in the post war era. If the training needs of technical and vocational teachers had once influenced the development of technical teachers' courses in the post war era, their needs were firmly eclipsed by standardised 'one size fits all' FE teacher training that emerged post 2001.

### **3.8 Post-statutory provision and Vocational Teacher Training**

Notwithstanding the above, there have been reports focussed on the position of the vocational teacher-in-training. Two are of particular note. In 2007 the publication of an Ofsted (2007) report entitled, *Initial teacher training in vocational subjects*, was seized on by those interested in the training of vocational teachers in the sector as an indication, perhaps, that attention had (re)turned to needs of vocational teachers in the sector. However, in the executive summary of the report it makes clear that the intention was not, as might be expected from the title of the report, a review of the training of vocational teachers in the sector where they are most likely to be found, that is in FE colleges. Rather, the report summarized the attempt to open vocational routes to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for those employed in schools:

In 2003 the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), formerly the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), invited providers of secondary initial teacher training (ITT) to offer training in vocational subjects in the 14–19 age range. This was in order to meet schools’ needs for teachers of the new applied GCSEs and post-16 vocational courses, such as the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE). (Ofsted 2007: 1)

Rather than draw upon the expertise of FE teachers and institutions associated with technical teacher training, the default position was to secondary ITT. The provision was short lived. The report documents the challenges faced by the schools involved in providing vocational teaching experiences across the full range of 14-19 provision and, whilst the large majority of trainees completing the vocational courses did gain employment, “...in a substantial number of cases, [trainees] were not teaching their vocational subject” (ibid:7). Similarly, the curricula designed to be taught in schools by those with little or no experience of the world outside the school gates was also short-lived. AVCEs were withdrawn by awarding bodies in 2004, prior to the report’s publication.

A 2010 Skills Commission publication, *Teacher Training in Vocational Education*, rose to the challenge presented by the proliferation of vocational courses in schools by arguing that the time was ripe for the inequality of status between school teachers and FE teachers to be addressed. It argued for:

- ‘professional convergence’ in relation to enabling FE trained teachers to teach in schools;
- a consideration of a ‘Teach Too’ option for recruiting part-time staff as visiting lecturing professionals;
- more research into vocational pedagogy; and
- a fundamental re-think concerning the distinction between the Associate and Full Teacher roles attached to the ITT regulatory framework (Skills Commission, 2010).

The report did have some influence on government policy in that, since 2011, once they have achieved QTLS, an FE teacher has been able to apply to teach in schools and 'Teach Too' also appeared in the recommendations of the CAVTL (LSIS 2013) report. However, apart from arguing that the 2007 regulations may be responsible for inhibiting vocational practitioners to come into the sector, it actually had very little to say about the training of vocational teachers and made no mention what-so-ever of the role or significance of teaching observations in the training of vocational teachers.

Having provided an overview of the historical development of ITT for vocational teachers, this chapter now turns to the part played by teaching observation in the ITT of vocational teachers.

### **3.9 What part has teaching observation played in vocational teachers' training?**

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an account of the development of the FE ITT curriculum, it is nevertheless important to consider the extent to which teaching observations have been an aspect of the training of vocational teachers. In the literature reviewed in the preceding section of this chapter, teaching observations have appeared as an essential element of the various iterations of ITT courses for teachers in FE. This is hardly surprising. If only in assessment terms, a teacher training course without opportunities to observe the trainee teaching would seem wanting.

According to Lucas (2004a:66), evidence of the universality of teaching observations in FE ITT can be gleaned from the McNair report of 1944 which proposed that the technical teacher's qualification should be divided into four units, including the principles of education and of teaching and, importantly for this thesis, that teaching was also to be observed by "skilled practitioners". In a similar fashion, the 1957 Willis Jackson Report into the supply and training of teachers in technical colleges included an outline summary of courses of that time. It also stated that observed teaching



practice should be an essential element of the training, stipulating the length of training on placement desired at 11 weeks (Foden, 1992).

Gomoluch & Bailey, (2010) also confirm that for the prospective teachers on the full-time technical teachers course, teaching practice in colleges, supervised and assessed by staff teaching on the courses, was a key component of the award. Although the number of observations conducted was not fixed, all respondents in Gomoluch & Bailey's research cite four observations as the minimum required and six as the maximum, as 'Frank's' account confirms: "I used to reckon two, two per period ... three if I could, but I always used to think of two and two would be the minimum" (2010:145).

Gomoluch & Bailey's research also provides insight into the range of staff who acted as observers of vocational teachers. Whilst staff at the Technical Teacher Training colleges were the primary observers in all cases, others were also involved in the process of the observation and assessment of teaching practice. During this time, just as they had been involved in the recruitment to the pre-service courses, Principals of colleges were also involved in the assessment of practice through the observation of teaching and learning. This was confirmed by 'Tom', who records: "the [college] Principals played a part, of course, in the assessment of teaching practice ..." (ibid). With hindsight, this practice seems extraordinary and testament, perhaps, to the changes colleges have undergone over the past fifty years. However, it is not known how widespread this practice was or, indeed, whether other FE college staff were involved in observing trainee teachers as part of their assessment. Similarly, Teaching Practice and the assessment of teaching through observation was also a key element in the CGLI courses established after 1953 and continued to be a mainstay of the various iterations of the staged award up until 2001.

Whilst teaching observations therefore appear to have been a universalistic feature of all the courses that emerged, the frequency and conduct of observations were far from consistent. Lucas (2004a) for instance notes that a 1999 survey by the Universities Professional Development Consortium (UPDC) found little common practice between ITT courses in relation to the required number of teaching hours. This lack of consistency also applied to both the number of teaching observation visits from tutors from universities. Despite the odd reference to teaching observations as a central element of ITT for FE, however, the absence of critical debate about this aspect of ITT for teachers is worthy of note. From 2001, with the development of a new inspection framework for FE and Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and the passing of control for the performance and accountability of colleges to Ofsted, the silence was broken. With its remit to build continuous improvement across the sector and the then Labour Government's emphasis on the development of the nation's skills in the much neglected FE sector, the observation of teaching and learning emerged, according to O'Leary (2013:696), as an "important multi-purpose vehicle". As will be seen later in this chapter, the multi-purpose nature of observations has led, in some situations, to it becoming something of a poisoned chalice.

Attention shifted firmly to the part played by teaching observations in the development of teachers in training following the Ofsted survey of ITT in FE in 2003. As discussed in the previous section on the development of ITT for FE teachers, this report was the first to follow the introduction of FENTO standards. Ofsted visited eight HEIs and 23 FE colleges as part of a national survey to evaluate the quality and standards of initial teacher training (ITT) in FE. As has been seen, its conclusions were damning on three fronts: a) the development of subject expertise; b) mentoring in the workplace; and c) teaching observations.

In relation to teaching observations conducted as an element of ITT, Ofsted found:

...[trainees'] progress is inhibited by insufficient observation and feedback on their

teaching...[and the]...Observation of trainees' teaching does not have a high enough profile in their assessment (ibid:3)

Along with criticism of the number of observations conducted across the FENTO benchmarked courses, Ofsted also drew attention to the manner in which observations were conducted citing, for instance: "...insufficient moderation of the judgements made by those responsible for assessing trainees' teaching practice in all the FE teacher training courses" (ibid:19).

Ofsted also concluded that the practice of work-based mentors participating in observations was not consistent across providers. Perhaps most damning of all, the report concluded that, as a result of such inconsistencies: "...there is no guarantee that someone who achieves the teaching qualification is in fact competent in the classroom or workshop. This is a serious weakness" (ibid:25).

The weaknesses of teaching observations highlighted in the Ofsted report and the less than significant part observations played in the FENTO qualifications, led to the adoption by LLUK in 2007 of a specified number of observations for those following the newly created Diploma in Teaching Lifelong Learning and Skills (DTLLS):

There must be a minimum of 8 observations totalling a minimum of 8 hours. Any single observation must be a minimum of half an hour...Observations can be formative and summative. (LLUK 2007a:23)

Thus, whilst hitherto seen as an essential (but non- mandatory) aspect of ITT programmes for all FE teachers prior to the 2007 reforms, the observation (and assessment) of teaching became a mandatory requirement of the 2007 regulations.

### **3.10 Teaching observations for vocational teachers**

There is little published literature focusing on the observations of vocational teachers' practice within ITT. The literature that is reviewed here emanates from the broader field of teaching observations in FE. Yet even this field is limited, particularly if the search for literature is focussed on teaching observations conducted for ITT. To some extent the absence of literature can be seen to reflect the neglect of the vocational perspective in the education and training of young people and to evidence of the invisibility of practices at the heart of the training of teachers for FE.

The literature that focuses on teaching observations in FE can be seen, nevertheless, as taking three forms. Firstly, there are official publications where teaching observations are being viewed and assessed in terms of the contribution they make to the overall success of ITT for FE teachers (e.g. Ofsted and/or DfES publications). Secondly, there are surveys of practices in particular settings, where the intention is, for example, to offer good practice solutions by describing classroom observation processes and protocols, and comparing documentation. The third form taken can be seen as more traditionally research-based, emanating from the research community and, in particular, from HEIs where ITT for FE practitioners is conducted. Whilst this literature is not necessarily confined to observations conducted as part of ITT, the intention is to investigate practices and analyse findings framed by critical perspectives.

In official publications, the practice of observations tends to be considered wanting in a number of respects and has led to a regulatory regime which imposed the number and frequency of ITT observations. To respond to the inconsistencies noted in relation to workplace mentor subject specialist support, workplace mentors were also charged with the responsibility for completing four of the requisite eight observations. Whilst the manner in which observations were to be conducted was not prescribed, given the

professional standards-driven programme that emerged from 2007, the expectation was for consistency across providers.

In response to the FENTO regime and the focus given to the observation of teachers as an essential aspect of the assessment of teachers' initial training by LLUK, in 2005 a DfES Standards Unit programme of work looked to develop new ways to think about teacher observation in FE, alongside initial assessment and individual learning plans. One result of this project was that a number of colleges' ITT teaching observations practices were collated and documented with a view to the sharing of practice and the development of good practice guides in relation to the processes undertaken. Whilst a potentially valuable resource at the time, the Standards Unit has been since been disbanded and its associated resources are (at the time of writing) no longer available.

Whilst little attention was being paid to the process by which observations were conducted in ITT, the role of the observation of teaching in the self-assessment and inspection of colleges grew to prominence once Ofsted was charged with inspection. Two parallel Ofsted (2004a; 2004b) reports suggested that the schemes for the observation of teaching and learning in so-called 'underperforming colleges' were both poorly conceived and inadequately implemented. The issue of grading was central to both reports and it was concluded that ungraded observations conducted in colleges were less valid and unreliable. O'Leary (2013:699) has argued that, by 2008, when a follow-up Ofsted report entitled, *How Colleges Improve*, was published, graded observations were emphasised as being:

... a vital tool in the performance management of standards in teaching and learning. There were references to OTL [observation of teaching and learning] on almost every page, highlighting the importance attached to it by Ofsted.

These pronouncements did much to associate the observation of teaching with a quality assurance agenda in FE colleges. So much so that perhaps O’Leary (2013:695) should be forgiven for stating that: “OTL is a relatively new phenomenon in FE”, when observations of teaching and learning have been a part of the fabric of ITT in FE colleges since 1945.

In relation to surveys of practices in particular settings, Harvey (2006) can be seen as illustrative. The report presented results of a project which set out to identify best practice relating to ITT teaching observations from the existing practices of two F&HE colleges and one school involved in ITT. Descriptive in nature, the report produced an overview of ‘strengths and weaknesses’ of ITT practices and recommendations were made on the basis of perceived strengths. Processes and protocols were, therefore, made visible. However, differences in contexts and respective rules and regulations regarding ITT observations were not discussed. It was assumed that protocols and procedures were immune from contextual considerations.

Dyke et al (2008) present an account of the way in which one HE partnership overcame geographical distance between HE Education tutors and their trainees in colleges through the development of an on-line synchronous observation process. Dyke et al concluded that their on-line solution might add value to the teaching observation process. The was to present procedures and protocols and the survey of practice does not take up the opportunity presented to problematise ‘observation’. This study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

More recently, it is interesting to note that as part of a series of ‘*Achieving QTLS*’ publications, Duckworth et al (2010) promise ‘*Successful Teaching Practice*’ by following the observation protocols they advance, whilst Harper (2013) offers cases of ‘*Outstanding Teaching in Lifelong Learning*’ from her experiences as an Ofsted inspector as a guide to observation practice.

### **3.11 Research-based Literature**

As mentioned at the start of this section, there is little research-based work which focuses on observations in FE and even less that focuses on observations conducted as part of ITT. However, research by Cockburn (2005) and, later, O’Leary (2006) can, perhaps, be seen as at least setting the agenda for research-based studies into the process of teaching observations conducted in FE.

Cockburn’s (2005) research presented an overview of the process of observation conducted at one college of further and higher education. This qualitative study offered descriptive insight into the experiences of those involved in the process through interviews and focus groups with both observers and observees. Cockburn’s aim was to gather data on the perceptions of those involved in the process and to consider their respective attitudes towards observation. As an FE teacher trainer, Cockburn was an experienced ITT observer. However, a staff development role also required that he conducted observations for Quality Assurance (QA) and Ofsted inspection purposes, hence his interest in the processes involved. The principal models of observation that he identified were understood as being framed either by a QA /Ofsted/inspection agenda, or by a more developmental agenda, as was the case for the ITT programmes at the college. For Cockburn’s participants, the credibility of the observer was a key factor in the process of observation. Where, for instance, the observer held more than one role in the college, the lines between developmental and QA observation were less than clear and observees saw the outcomes from the process far less positively. Cockburn’s study is of particular interest. This is not only because it was the first that drew upon participants’ experiences of observations in FE,

but because it also began to identify how models of observation practice can be seen to be framed (and thereby understood) by the purpose for which they were designed.

O’Leary’s(2006) study focused on observations conducted as part of a quality enhancement brief of OFSTED and ALI<sup>6</sup>. O’Leary’s 2006 work was not based on empirical or primary research. Rather, he used secondary data and literature to inform his discussions of classroom observation in the context of FE. O’Leary argued that classroom observation had traditionally occupied a prominent role in teacher development and was used as a “tool by which to judge the quality of teaching and subsequently promote good practice” (2006:192). He suggested that it was a common belief that, somehow, a cause and effect relationship existed between observer feedback and subsequent improvement in practice. For O’Leary, this common belief needed interrogation and his subsequent research is the subject of further discussion in this section.

The dearth of research into the phenomenon of teaching observation in FE persisted throughout the mid-2000s, despite its centrality to both ITT and Ofsted college inspections. In contrast, whilst teaching observations were a relatively recent phenomenon in the Higher Education (HE) sector in the UK, there was evidence of a growing research interest into observation in HE. Whilst some studies were prompted by the increase in Higher Education Academy accredited ITT courses for HE practitioners and the introduction of systems of Peer Observations (Gosling, 2002; Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2007; McMahon et al. 2007), others focused on observations as a vehicle to promote reflective practice in HE (Mackinnon, 2001).

---

<sup>6</sup> The role of the former Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) is now undertaken by OFSTED.



With funding from Escalate<sup>7</sup>, Hardman (2007) undertook research on behalf of the University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education, the University of Warwick's Centre for Lifelong Learning, and the University of Leicester's Centre for Lifelong Learning. The purpose of the research was to consider how teaching quality improvements in HE might be supported by examining the use of teaching observation and comparing some aspects of this with experiences in FE. A case study approach was adopted and the outcomes from the research offered a critical perspective of the practice of teaching observations undertaken. Hardman's study emphasised that where colleges conducted observations, which combined the purposes of a Quality Assurance (QA) observation with a Quality Improvement (QI) or developmental observation, the effectiveness was highly ambiguous. Her research also made the case for more evidence of the effectiveness of schemes in FE.

Given the significant level of resource involved (staff time, training, management, follow-up), in carrying out teaching observation and especially in view of its frequent, institution-wide application in FE, there is surprisingly little evidence that the process or the schemes are evaluated in either sector, whether in terms of the manner of their application, the achievement of their aims or in terms of their impact. (Hardman 2007:43)

### 3.12 ITT observations

Funded by the Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) some research has focused on the process of conducting teaching observations in ITT. The Huddersfield Consortium for ITT offers a partnership arrangement between HEIs and FE colleges. A series of studies for the Huddersfield CETT (Peake, 2006; Burrows, 2008; Ollin 2009) showed that trainees perceived the observation process undertaken during their ITT

---

<sup>7</sup> The Education Subject Centre for the Advancing Learning and Teaching in Education (Escalate) was supported by the Higher Education Academy from 2000-2011 to produce and disseminate resources for staff and students in F&HE involved in Education Studies.

largely in developmental terms. This meant that trainees saw observation as a progressive process designed to reassure them, on the one hand, but also to encourage them to develop their practice. However, whilst Burrows (2008) confirmed trainees' continued perception that observed teaching was formative in nature, an emerging issue of grading ITT observations in line with Ofsted observations in FE colleges began to threaten the developmental emphasis for trainees. Ollin's (2009) research, conducted with colleagues in partner colleges, perhaps best exemplifies the tensions faced by observers when they found themselves utilising OFSTED inspection criteria to make judgements about teacher's developing practice for the purpose of ITT. However, it is important to note here that whilst the consortium moved to adopt Ofsted grading criteria for their ITT observations, there has never been a requirement for ITT institutions or consortia to adopt an 'Ofsted graded' approach to ITT observations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some ITT training providers have, nevertheless, adopted such an approach, perhaps fearful that their own Ofsted inspection of ITT provision might be looked upon less favourably should grading not be adopted.

The Huddersfield studies largely endorsed the findings of Cockburn and O'Leary, but also identified an apparent tension faced by FE-based observers who, alongside a teacher training role, were also operating in a college QA role. These observers were operationalising the Ofsted inspection agenda at the college whilst at the same time, acting as observers in the developmental ethos set by the ITT programme. This tension has most recently been explored in O'Leary's work into the observation of teaching and learning (2012; 2013). Whilst O'Leary's research focused on graded observations conducted as part of a QA agenda, it is reviewed here in so far as it relates to the observations conducted for developmental purposes in ITT. Its contribution to the wider literature is acknowledged as the first comprehensive study of teaching observations conducted in FE colleges.

O'Leary's research (2012; 2013) was conducted across 10 colleges and sought to establish the perceptions of staff as to the ways in which what he describes as 'the observation of teaching and learning' (OTL) fitted into college systems and also what seemed to be the main purpose of OTL. His data showed that when asked to do so, only 12.2 % (n=32) described their experience of OTL in the past year as fulfilling a 'Professional Development' purpose (2013:704) as opposed to a Quality Assurance (QA) and/or performance management purpose. Indeed, as O'Leary found:

A trend which emerged across data sets was how QA requirements took precedence over QI or the 'development' needs of tutors. OTL's potential as a tool for professional development thus tended to get lost (ibid:706)

Instead, O'Leary found that some observers tried to reconcile QA observations with those conducted under the professional development umbrella. Unsurprisingly, and despite the personal commitment of many to a developmental purpose, the priority given to QA agendas by the colleges as well as the allocation of limited resources meant that their commitment was compromised. For one of his respondents, her dual role as a college observer for QA purposes and as an ITT mentor enabled her to capture the differences between the purpose and value of these different observations:

The former is a quality control process aimed at providing quantifiable data whereas the latter is genuinely developmental and truly aimed at quality improvement. The latter is therefore eminently more valuable (Ibid: 707)

Utilising a discourse of surveillance, O'Leary advocated a release of the OTL from the "shackles of managerialist control" (ibid:711) and argued for a suspension of the use of graded observations in colleges.

In terms of the value of observations per se, O'Leary's research confirmed that it was the relationship between the observer and the teacher, plus the opportunity to engage in substantive dialogue, which differentiated one purpose from another. O'Leary's

consideration of the relationship between the observer and the teacher, plus the significance of dialogue in the observation process, features in the discussion of findings in this thesis.

In addition to the studies reviewed above, insight into the value placed on teaching observations by vocational and non-vocational trainees can also be drawn from the small yet growing literature, which explores FE teacher trainees' experiences of their ITT *per se*. Harkin et al's study (2003) was one of the first to identify the value trainees' place on observation. The research focused on the perceptions of teachers about the usefulness of their initial training. The report recorded evidence from the survey of practitioners of: "the high value of being observed teaching, and observing others teach" (ibid:15), and in the interviews conducted with a sample of 50 FE teachers, it was noted that: "One of the most significant findings from the interview data was the importance of observation in the learning to teach process" (ibid:27).

This did not mean to say that observational experiences were entirely positive. As other studies have pointed out (Cockburn, 2005; Ollin, 2009), the suitability of the observer was a key variable in the success of learning from the observation experience. In addition, the way that feedback was handled was also seen to vary, with some approaches being more welcome than others.

Conceptualised as a form of work-based learning, Orr and Simmons' (2010) qualitative research focused on in-service teacher trainee experiences of their ITT in two FE colleges. The trainees in their sample taught across a range of courses and included vocational teachers of: "...health and social care; information technology; art and design; childcare; performing arts and uniformed and public service courses" (ibid:76). The research focused on the trainees' journeys into teaching; their learning on the course and potential tensions between being a teacher and a learner, what Orr and

Simmons described as 'dual identities'. In this research, trainees reflected on their learning on the course and they identified that they learned from observations. Specifically, Orr and Simmons identified the differences trainees made between teaching observations conducted for 'internal' college QA purposes and those conducted for their ITT course, with the latter seen in developmental terms and, ultimately, more constructive to their learning and professional development. As one participant explained: "...the ones [observations] from the teacher trainers are great because you get loads of feedback and that is really what you need" (Orr and Simmons 2010:82).

Whilst it is not known whether observations were also conducted by workplace mentors, the research also pointed to the ways in which trainees' responses to and expectations of teacher trainers can be viewed as being framed by their 'learner identity', as opposed to their 'teacher identity'. In this latter role, everyday practice and the reality of surviving in a pressurised work environment in any given context is more pronounced. Acting on feedback on observation cannot therefore be assumed and all that can be gleaned from such insights is that teachers in this study found the experience of observation to be a helpful one.

Although not focused specifically on vocational teachers, but situated, like Orr and Simmons' research, in a discussion of work-based learning, Maxwell's (2010) research sought to identify workplace and ITT affordances for learning as experienced by FE teachers. Her research focused on six longitudinal case studies of in-service trainees undertaken over the first year of their in-service course. Specifically, Maxwell wanted to explore the factors that supported or inhibited development of trainees' conceptions of learning and teaching and their teaching practice. Maxwell found that the main ITT course affordances perceived by trainees were observations of their teaching, course activities, and their experiences as a learner on the course, with the observations of teaching by ITT tutors perceived by all case study trainees to be the

strongest affordance for learning. Maxwell, like Cockburn (2005), Peake (2006), and Ollin (2009), found that trainees valued the direct feedback on their practices and guidance on how to develop: “Observations created a pressure to change, introduced new conceptual ideas, built their confidence, and made tacit aspects of practice explicit” (Maxwell 2010:193).

### **3.13 Conclusion**

As has been seen, the body of research into FE ITT teaching observations is relatively small, and research into the impact on trainee’s development is conspicuous by its absence. At the time of writing, there has not been any research that investigates the relationship between ITT teaching observations and vocational teachers’ developing practice.

These studies have, however, provided some insight into the value placed by trainee teachers in FE on the observations. Studies have shown that FE teachers value the observations they experience in ITT (Cockburn, 2005; Harkin et al, 2003) and that they differentiate between observations conducted for different purposes (Cockburn, 2005; Hardman, 2007; Ollin, 2009 and O’Leary 2012, 2013). Research has also focussed on the ways in which new technologies might offer additional mechanisms to manage the process of observation (Dyke et al, 2008), whilst others identify the challenges that are faced by observers in making judgements about the quality of the teaching observed, particularly in a workplace context where inspection, accountability and intensification of labour is the lived reality (Ollin, 2009; Orr, 2009; O’Leary 2013).

The existing literature also points to the critical factors that underpin what are seen to be successful ITT teaching observations – such as the establishment of a relationship between the observer and observee and the opportunity to engage in discussion about the observed teaching. Finally, in all of the studies reviewed here, teaching observation

conducted for ITT has largely been construed as being part of a developmental discourse as opposed to part of a QA discourse associated with Ofsted grading criteria for inspection. Therefore, thus far, observations taking place in FE have largely been modelled dualistically, with more recent studies (Ollin, 2009; O'Leary, 2012, 2013) stressing the encroachment of a QA discourse into observations conducted as part of ITT in FE.

However, there are also absences in the existing literature regarding the observation of teaching. Perhaps the most obvious absence concerns research into the impact of the teaching observation process on future teaching practices and professional development of teachers - despite the investment in the notion of observation. This investment is exemplified by the confirmation of required number observations in the 2007 regulations. O'Leary had signalled this absence in 2006 in a slightly different way: ...the extent to which the feedback from assessment-based observations readily leads to an improvement in future classroom practice has received little detailed analysis in the literature of teacher education/development to date. (O'Leary 2006:192)

This absence is significant because despite the continued advocacy of teaching observation as an element of ITT programmes in FE between 2007-2012, little policy sector funded research into post compulsory teaching observation has been conducted. For example, the scoping of good practice in professional development among staff in FE and WBL (LLUK, 2006) did not include any examples of feedback on teaching observations. At the same time, the research community has been largely silent in this regard.

Additionally, in most of the discussions of teaching observations, learning from the observation experience, where it is considered at all, is almost always assumed to be one way - from the 'expert' observer to the 'novice' teacher in the classic vertical presentation of the development of expertise, as discussed in chapter two. Apart from

discussions within the literature on peer observation conducted in HE (e.g. Cosh 1998; Gosling 2002) the potential development outcomes for the observer are rarely considered. This absence might also reflect an orientation towards conceptions of learning as acquisition in the metaphorical framing of learning discussed in Chapter Two.

Other absences in the literature can be seen as more conceptual. The taken-for-granted nature of the phenomenon of observation is particularly apparent. From the available literature on teaching observations in FE, attention has not focussed on the phenomenon of observation at all. This implies that observation 'just happens' and leads to a less than helpful consideration of the relationship between the observer, the observed and the historical and cultural context in which observation takes place.

Finally, an absence in the literature of particular concern to this thesis is the lack of attention to the process of observation conducted as part of vocational teachers' development. To a large extent, what happens when ITT observations take place remains a mystery and attempts to 'make visible' the specific practices of ITT observations conducted in vocational learning contexts simply do not exist. This visibility is essential if teaching and learning (and the observations conducted) is understood as a social practice. Coupled with the generic absences, the research conducted for this thesis therefore aims to make a specific contribution to the literature in this regard as it not only asks about the usefulness of ITT observations for vocational teachers' development, but also asks how observations of vocational teachers are conducted. Thereby ensuring that the vocational is placed centre stage, as opposed to playing a supporting role in FE.



In the search for an appropriate methodology to address the research questions that frame this thesis, the next chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptual assumptions that frame teaching observations.

## **Chapter Four: Conceptualising Observation**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter develops a conceptualisation of observation for two main reasons. Firstly, to counter the absence in the literature, with its implicit assumption that, notwithstanding the framing of classroom observations by QA and/or QI regimes, all that is needed to observe is to 'be there'. Secondly, by treating observation conceptually, it will then be possible to identify and justify an appropriate methodological starting point.

The chapter starts with a discussion of what might be seen as commonly understood notions of observation. It then moves on to explore the ways in which observation has been conceptualised as a research tool within the literature on research methodology. This framing is seen as offering a helpful lens through which teaching observations might be best understood. Research studies from the literature on teaching observation are used as illustrative case studies to unearth some broader epistemological questions that need to be addressed before any satisfactory research methodology can be developed.

### **4.2 What is Observation?**

Perhaps the most obvious starting point is with an everyday understanding of observation: what do we mean when we say we observe something? On a common sense level we can assume there to be a relationship of some sort between the observer and those being observed. Equally it can be assumed that something is being seen and/or heard, and that, in most cases, a direct physical relationship exists between observers and observed. However, given technological advancement, it is no

longer beyond everyday experience to imagine observation being conducted without a direct physical relationship. In many situations in everyday life we find ourselves seeing each other across time and space via web-cams so that we might simulate the presence of another. Similarly, we are familiar with scenarios where others watch the rest via CCTV cameras – observing movements and actions undeterred by the cognition of the observed. There is a sense, too, in which observation can be seen as a natural occurrence: a rather passive endeavour – not only for the observed, but also for the observer.

Beyond these, and other, basic everyday assumptions about what observation is, or rather, how we might have experience of observation, a definition of observations help refine the everyday understanding. For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary provides the following clarification. The origin of the verb '*to observe*' is from the Latin '*observare*', meaning 'to watch'. Other verbs offered include '*notice*' and '*perceive*'. Additionally there is '*watch attentively*' and '*monitor*'. Moving onto '*observation*', this is described as: "the action or process of closely observing or monitoring" and, interestingly, "the ability to notice significant details". Beyond the passive more commonsense, everyday understandings, we move into the realm of some sort of action on the part of the observer. From these starting points, then, it appears that *to watch* is not quite as straightforward as might initially have been supposed.

The process of observation has been one of the cornerstones of natural and social inquiry. The scientific method requires systematic observation as an essential aspect of the methodology. Natural phenomena are studied for indicators of change under various conditions and variables are manipulated and controlled and changes noted and explained. Angrosino (2007:37) defining the process of observation in social inquiry, suggests: "Observation is the act of perceiving the activities and

interrelationships of people in the field setting through the five senses of the researcher”.

The five senses of the researcher to which Angrosino (ibid) refers, reminds us that observing a phenomenon may not only be a visual act. It can also be an auditory or tactile one involving smell and taste. Whatever sense is at the forefront, Angrosino (ibid) raises questions in relation to the objectivity of our five senses. Immediately there is the possibility that no two observers will always, necessarily, make sense of what is being observed in the same way. Doubt about the reliability of the senses is then established. Additionally, the observer may ask: ‘Am I better or more equipped to deal with visual cues or auditory ones?’; Should I watch without sound?’; and ‘What difference will it make?’.

Additionally, Angrosino (ibid) introduces the notion of perception in the act of observing. In so doing, the relationship between the phenomena being observed and the observer is interrupted or channelled by the processes of perception. The importance and relevance of perception to the act of observation has particular significance for Angrosino. He makes apparent a distinction between what he calls a natural facility to observe and a well developed screening process, which is something we learn as human subjects. However Angrosino’s argument about our collective natural facility to watch and observe a situation or phenomena can be questioned. Most discussions of early childhood development seem to focus on developing the ability of the child to attend to objects to which they are introduced. Rather than a ‘natural facility’, this process may be best thought of as a product of primary socialisation.

Irrespective of its natural or social genesis, the facility to observe is contrasted by Angrosino with the development of a screening process. This screening process enables us to function in any context of competing stimuli. Without a screening

process we simply could not take on board all the information with which we are surrounded in everyday life. One of the consequences of the screening process is, as Angrosino (ibid:38) remarks: "That which we do not see is almost always greater than that which we do". Thus in screening, the observer is involved in selecting and de-selecting from the total observational experience.

In a similar vein, Sanger (1996) focuses on related screening issues in his exploration of the process of conducting observational research. Sanger offers a comparable distinction between the world of observation and the world of seeing. Like Angrosino, Sanger suggests that when observing, what we see is, of necessity, filtered. The question then becomes: What are these filters comprised of?; Is the observer always aware of the filters in use at any one time?; and 'Is it important to the process of observation to make these filters apparent?'. In Sanger's (2007:38) discussion of the observational research process, screening processes and the use of filters are, most commonly: "an intrinsic part of the research method". In other words, where theories frame the observational research process they, of necessity, offer a filter (a lens, perhaps) that guides the selection and dismissal of stimuli.

Angrosino (2007:38), however, concedes that: "Sometimes they [filters] are simply artefacts of who we are; the preconceptions that come with our social and cultural backgrounds, our genders, our relative ages and so forth". In this recognition, Angrosino places the observer's subjectivity at the centre of the discussion, whilst Sanger (1996:3) argues that a key determinant of the distinction between what is observed and what is seen, is the desire to perceive: "If the actions we are engaged in are significant to us, then we slip the gear of seeing and engage in observation". For Sanger (1996:4), significance appears to be the outcome of: "The process of planning, selecting, ordering and eventually recording events may determine what we observe in practice".

The work of Angrosino and Sanger emanates from discussions concerning observation conducted for the purposes of social research. It may, therefore, have limitations in its applicability to less specialised contexts. Nevertheless, two generic points can be drawn from these respective contributions. Firstly, far from the passive (and neutral) activity conceived at the start of this chapter, a developing understanding of the process of observation reveals a more active role for the observer. This is the case both at the level of everyday experience and where observation is undertaken as an instrument of social inquiry. Secondly, in an observation, the observer is understood to be engaged in a highly selective process with filters being used implicitly and/or explicitly in the process of observation.

Wragg (1999), in a seminal text on conducting classroom observations in primary schools, is one of the few educationalists to draw attention to these conceptual considerations when considering the phenomenon of observations of teaching. In the preface to his text, Wragg states that although observing the behaviour of others is a so-called taken-for-granted activity, it is in fact far from the straightforward activity that is supposed. Wragg (*ibid*:vii) explains:

Much of what we see is repeated versions, with variations, of what we have observed many times before. It is because we have crossed the road thousands of times before that we know what to look for, though the context will be different on each new occasion [...]. Without the power of observation and deduction most of us would have been dead years ago.

He goes on to argue that before considering acting as a classroom observer, consideration needs to be given to the process of observation. For Wragg, there is the real possibility that an observer may delude themselves about what is happening, partly because in observing others, we often “observe what we want to see” (*ibid*).

To develop these points further and to draw out the implications for research into classroom observation, the discussion now turns to a consideration of two studies of classroom observation. In both studies, the process of conducting classroom observation is conducted through and with the use of video and computer technology. These studies are used to illustrate the importance of conceptualising observation.

### **4.3 Using the camera lens to 'focus' observation**

The studies profiled here are: a) Dyke et al. (2008); and b) Star and Strickland (2008). The former has been included, briefly, in the review of the literature in Chapter Three as it focused on computer mediated technological innovations introduced into the observation of teachers on an in-service, FE ITT programme in the England. The second study is an American study involving the pre-service training of school mathematics teachers and it is with this study that the discussion begins.

Star and Strickland (2008) sought to develop pre-service mathematics teachers' ability to learn from the classroom observations of peers. As is commonplace in ITT, students are required to observe peers, particularly in their subject specialist areas, so that they might pick up good practice or, more simply, so that they become aware of the myriad of things that take place simultaneously in the classroom. The starting premise of the study was that it was not always clear what trainee teachers gained from the experience of observing classrooms during training. One reason given for this apparent lack of learning from experience was that the pre-service teachers did not seem to be able to focus their attention on what Star and Strickland (ibid:108) referred to as the: "key features of teaching". In contrast, experienced teachers were seen to notice much more during observation opportunities, turning their attention to the myriad of on-going activities in classrooms. Additionally, Star and Strickland had found that the more experienced teachers made different kinds of observations to those made by

novice teachers in training and that this practice occurred even when observations were of videotaped (rather than real-life) classrooms.

To respond to this phenomenon, Star and Strickland designed a one-semester mathematical methods course with the specific intention of improving the ability of pre-service students to 'notice' classroom events. The course utilised videotaped classrooms and, initially, Star and Strickland (ibid:111) wanted to record: "...what pre-service teachers attend to—what catches their attention, and what they miss—when they view a classroom lesson".

At the start of the course the pre-service teachers watched videos of teaching situations without first being given criteria by which to view the videos. An assessment instrument, designed by the research team and composed of observed features of the classrooms, was then given to the teachers. The assessment instrument asked participants, by way of true/false statements, multiple choice and short answer questions, to recall classroom features in one of five categories: "classroom environment, classroom management, mathematical content, tasks and communication" (ibid:112). Analysis of results led to a list of noticed events. After the course, a post-assessment of another observation was completed, under the same conditions, and results were compared.

Whilst interesting in themselves, the differences between the events noticed, before and after, is not of particular interest to this discussion. Suffice to say that there were more significant differences in certain areas (e.g. the classroom environment), as opposed to others such as communication. Instead, the discussion here draws upon points made in relation to the process of conducting observation, and the implicit assumptions of the authors about the process of observation that appeared to inform the study.



Firstly, in terms of the assessment instrument, Star and Strickland (ibid:114) maintain that, in relation to the five categories chosen, none of the questions the students were asked required: "...any subjective judgement or interpretation about the events of the lesson [...] *All questions concerned observable events.*" (emphasis added). In this statement, it can be seen that the process of observation has been construed as an unproblematic event, separate from interpretation.

Secondly, at the start of the process of observation and in relation to how the students thought the teaching of mathematics was being conducted, Star and Strickland (ibid) described the observational skills of the pre-service teachers as mediocre, generally understood as second-rate or average. The students were seen by Star and Strickland as not being sufficiently able to notice pedagogic practice applied to mathematics.

However, as previously discussed, both Sanger (1996) and Angrosino (2007) point out that the filters used to screen observations may come from theoretical frameworks and current significant ideas. It is not unreasonable to assume that these pre-service students, in learning to become mathematics teachers, would have had some thoughts about subject pedagogy, even at the start of the training programme. Indeed, teaching mathematics may have been upper-most in their minds and they may well have drawn from their own experiences and significant events to construct an understanding of how mathematics could/should be taught. Contrary to Star and Strickland's conclusion, it can be argued that the so-called mediocre observation skills of the students simply reflected the fact that students did not focus on or critique what the researchers wanted them to notice, but focussed other things.

In discussing how the influence of ideas about mathematics teaching impacted upon students' observational skills, Star and Strickland (ibid:123) conclude that students:

....may have developed beliefs about mathematics teaching and learning that *interfere with their ability to observe*. Even experienced teachers' beliefs have been found to influence what is observed and how these observations are interpreted' (emphasis added)

The choice of term '*interfere with*' is telling. Rather than seeing beliefs about mathematics teaching as simply one way of filtering observations, interfering implies that there is some other truth out there waiting to be seen. *Even* experienced teachers' ability to see appears hampered in this respect. Star and Strickland (ibid:121) are apparently relieved to note that despite the poor performance on the initial assessment, it was seen to be easy to turn attention to other features of the classroom, particularly static ones i.e. classroom environment. Implicitly, there is a sense here that there are appropriate filters that need to be used to enable the observation to be valid. If this is the case, how can we know which filters are appropriate and, equally, whose judgments count?

The starting point for the second study by Dyke et al (2008) was the development of a strategy to enable observations required as part of FE ITT to be undertaken in a context where trainee teachers and their respective HE Education Tutors are separated by considerable geographical distances. The team involved had initially looked at using video to record the classroom teaching and analyse recordings afterwards. However, they recognised the limitations of such use of videos:

Although the use of video recording of teaching practice has proved valuable, the *observer's gaze* is essentially fixed and limited as s/he has no control over the camera [...] With video recordings, this scanning process which enables the observer to verify a judgment is much more difficult; the observer does not control the cameras. (emphasis added) (Dyke et al. 2008:38)

In response to the acknowledged limitations of the use of videotaping observation the team developed an on-line synchronous observation project to evaluate whether the outcomes of online observations were: "as valid and reliable as those of an in-classroom observer." (ibid:40). The project therefore compared whether online and in-class observers described a lesson in a similar way, reached the same summative judgments and gave similar feedback.

To operationalise the evaluation Dyke et al (ibid) explain that they conducted the observation live, in real time, using web-cam facilities. The on-line observers could always be seen by the observed and were able to interact with both the trainee teacher and the students if required. Being with the observed teacher (virtually) was designed so that the experience replicated traditional in-class observation and as part of the evaluation, there was another observer in physical attendance in the classroom.

In their discussion of the effectiveness of the on-line observations, attention focussed on the importance of the on-line observer's control of the camera. This was contrasted with the use of video recording. It was assumed that the control of the camera would counter most of the problems associated with the non-physical presence of the observer left to view a video recording that had been made of the teaching. The on-line observer was described as needing to: "activate Far End Camera Control and adapt to manipulating the cameras [so that they can seek] evidence to test interpretations and verify judgments" (ibid: 44). Given that the intention was to replicate face-to-face observation, it was assumed that in the classroom, the observer. "...probably does this

[manipulation] unconsciously by glancing round the room and, for example, registering the level of engagement amongst learners” (ibid).

The assumption about observation at the heart of this study is that the observer in attendance has ‘the’ perspective; the correct version of events. Indeed, the shortcomings of the on-line observation were almost always seen in relation to what was assumed to have been achieved face-to-face. For instance, Dyke et al (ibid) confirm the apparent significance of ambiance and ethos in face-to-face observation and suggest that neither of these can be replicated by the technological access. They suggest that just by being there, not only in the classroom, but also in the college, the observer will absorb the ambiance. The ambiance is, in turn, treated as given; as pre-constituted. In their attempt to replicate the face-to-face encounter, Dyke et al (ibid) do not pay attention to the assumptions made about the ways of seeing in the default face-to-face observation. As a consequence of the observation, viewed through a camera lens, they conclude:

The preliminary tests highlighted the possibility that the way of ‘seeing’ through a camera lens may be different to the physical presence of an observer in the classroom and this, in itself, poses challenges for assessment.(ibid:43)

Whilst this may indeed be a valid conclusion regarding the differences between face-to-face as opposed to online interactions, for Dyke et al, once the possibility of ‘seeing’ is constrained by the partial vision given in the camera angle, the filtering system used when observing, when noticing and not-noticing, is fully appreciated. Perhaps because of this, they conclude that the process of conducting observations on-line: “...is intense, with more data to manage than they are used to as observers in the classroom”(2008:44). The effectiveness of using this on-line facility provides a useful metaphor for ‘seeing’. Immediately, because observation is conducted through a physical lens it becomes problematic and is considered to be a more complex process. What is ‘seen’ and what cannot be seen becomes the subject of scrutiny. In the process

of reviewing the experiences of on-line observations the familiar (face-to-face observation) becomes strange.

In both of these studies there are indications of the implicit assumptions about the notion of observation. Chosen because they both use a physical filter, literally a lens, through which observations take place, the implication is that there is a reality out there ready to be observed – ready to view. What is needed, it is implied, is simply the right filter. The next section goes on to explore, albeit briefly, the sets of epistemological assumptions about nature of reality, which are invited by these assumptions.

#### **4.4 Epistemological foundations**

Debates concerned with the nature of reality might seem, at first sight, a far cry from observations of classrooms. However, Usher (1996) reminds us of the generally neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. The studies, discussed above, might be seen as ‘guilty as charged’. In an attempt to address the absence, Usher (1996), begins by reviewing the distinguishing features of different types of knowledge claims so that we are clear about the importance to any discussion of educational research.

Usher describes the two main approaches dominating educational research as Positivist/empiricist epistemology and hermeneutic/interpretive epistemology, whilst Robson (2002) in his later summary, describes these two dominant approaches as Positivist and Relativist. Usher begins by providing an overview of the fundamental assumptions of positivist/empiricist epistemology. Firstly, the social world is seen as objective in that it exists independently of knowers. There is a clear distinction or separation between subjects and objects: the subjective knower and the objective world. In order that we may get to know this objective world Usher reminds us that,

from the Enlightenment, science became the privileged form of investigation. From this standpoint, only through scientific method (and empiricism) could we claim to know anything with certainty. By utilising the principle method of scientific inquiry, i.e. systematic observation, and ensuring the correct scientific methods, it is possible to explain, predict and (perhaps) control events. Ultimately, the purpose of the scientific method is to develop universal causal laws (Usher, 1996).

In his overview of the fundamental elements of Positivism, Usher confirms that one of the most important aspects of good science/good research is that the researcher is objective. The researcher is interested only in facts and the subjective (i.e. the researcher's concerns and values) must not interfere with the discovery of objective truth. In this traditional model, the observer is unbiased, value-neutral; subjectivity is eliminated from the knowledge claim. Or as Robson (2002:21) explains, "every scientist looking at the same bit of reality sees the same thing".

Whilst the fundamentals described by Usher have generally been subjected to critique in their transfer to the social world, for Usher (1996:11) the positivist approach is not only commonplace, but dominant. He argues:

The epistemology that underpins a particular piece of research is taken for granted. It is simply assumed that the research will be positivist/empiricist in its epistemology and therefore unproblematic as an epistemology.

However, above all else, it is the essential belief in an objective reality, existing out there, that concerns the particular epistemological exploration in this thesis. We can, perhaps, see evidence of these epistemological assumptions in Star and Strickland (2008) and Dyke et al (2008). In the discussion of the studies it was suggested that in different ways, both studies appear to take for granted that there is a pre-existing classroom reality out there that simply needs to be observed. Both studies

appear to be concerned with unveiling the barriers to seeing this reality. Providing the observers with relevant filters is what is considered to be important. The relevant filters are generally associated with notions of good teaching, aspects of classroom management and recognising the influence ethos and ambiance etc. Subject pedagogical knowledge may also be significant.

From the two studies reviewed, it appears that an un-contested phenomenon exists and once the appropriate filters are in place (e.g. for Dyke et al (2008) the proper camera angle and control of the web-cam) the observer will notice the important and significant things related to the process of teaching. The objectivity of the observer is apparently assumed: prior experiences, social differences in gender, ethnicity and age of observers are, whilst no doubt known, not mentioned in either of these studies, presumably because such variables are not considered relevant to the task at hand.

#### **4.5 Hermeneutic/Interpretive Epistemology**

In contrast to the classically dominant positivist epistemology, an interpretive epistemology rejects the objective knower and sees reality constructed in the minds of people and their interpretations (Robson 2002). There is no pre-existing reality to seek out. What is happening day-by-day, moment-by-moment is constructed socially by participants as they engage in conversations and in particular social practices. The social world involves subjective meanings and experiences; the social world is not given or taken 'as read'.

One of the consequences of the acknowledgement of non-privileged accounts of the social world is a conclusion that all knowledge is relative. The notion of an objective reality that can be known is thoroughly rejected. However, the object of research for many within the interpretive tradition is to uncover the various meanings held by participants. Indeed, the process itself helps construct the reality of the moment.

Working within this epistemological framework, the observer's role in research *can only be* at the subjective end of a spectrum. The process is a reflexive one i.e. the way in which the process of carrying out a research project on social life is itself part of that social life and made to be as transparent as possible (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000).

Other positions rejecting a pre-constituted, objective reality may also prove to be influential in discussions concerning observation. Most notably, developments in postmodernism further question the formerly secure foundations of knowledge and understanding. In postmodernism there is a foregrounding of complexity, uncertainty, heterogeneity and difference. This runs alongside the questioning of the notion that there is one true reality, stable and ordered, existing independently of knowers. For postmodernists, the real is unstable, in flux and contingent. We can sense 'the real' but knowing it is only possible through a signifying system, such as language. In so doing, the real is not simply being reflected as it really is but is also being translated through a medium that is neither value-neutral nor transparent (Usher 1996).

To 'know' the reality of the classroom then, from this approach, means to know participants' perspectives. Adopting an interpretive or relativist approach to observation will, of necessity, demand that the observer is cognisant of the observed. Whether the observer-as-ethnographer is tasked with providing multiple accounts of the situation (a classroom) or a gloss on reality borne out of a synthesis of accounts will depend, perhaps, on their respective views on the purpose of social research. From a Critical Theorist's perspective, for instance, the concern would be to address the differential power positions of the observed and observer. Critical of both positivist and interpretive paradigms, accounts would in themselves seek to redress the balance. As Robson (2002:28) has suggested in relation to feminist approaches: "...the purpose of feminist enquiry is to facilitate female emancipation and the understanding of women's views of the world".



Epistemological discussions do not therefore stop at questioning: 'How might we conduct an observation?'. The epistemological debates transfer into the realm of recording and accounting for what has been seen, particularly within a qualitative approach. In this regard, Bechhofer and Paterson (2000:5) offer a reminder of the challenges faced in composing a narrative, and take us back to discussions concerning the partial nature of observation:

...all description is both comparative and theory-laden because in describing we choose what to describe...We must always select from a potentially infinite wealth of possible observations, and in making them we implicitly compare what we see with something else.

In terms of reporting observations, this position will serve as a useful guide.

#### **4.6 Realist Perspective**

From contemporary developments in the realm of social theory, a Realist perspective (following Bhaskar, 1989) offers an interesting and potentially helpful insight into the nature of social reality. By way of introduction, a brief understanding of the insights offered by the perspective is attempted here.

Parker et al (2003) suggest that a Realist perspective accepts that social reality has human and non-human components and exists beyond the individuals who are involved at any point in time. Parker et al (ibid:179) argue that we can identify the elements that may exist beyond individuals, such as: "the relatively durable materials and practices, carrying cultures and social structures over time", but we cannot, however, predict how they will come together at any moment. Emergence is the key concept here; that is, when elements come together in an unpredictable way to

produce an entirely new phenomenon, which is distinct from its constituent parts. As a relatively recent approach to the social sciences, Carter and New (2004:15) note that a compelling case for viewing social reality as an, “object of knowledge independent of the individual’s cognising experience”, had been made by the Realists.

What in particular might this social realist approach offer this thesis? It is the argument of this thesis that the lack of attention given to the conceptualisation of observation in previous research has contributed to the implicit acceptance that, irrespective of the wider framing of observations, there is a pre-existing classroom reality, which simply needs to be seen. Social Realism suggests that this reality is ‘real’ but is also nevertheless emergent and the product of social interactions. It therefore seems to offer a broad epistemological starting point from which we may comprehend complex social phenomena resulting from disparate material and human interaction. This may provide a useful conceptual grounding for an understanding of the process of observation.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has established that the act of observation should not be considered to be a straightforward non-problematic event. Drawing upon discussions within research methodology from Angrosino (2007) and Sanger (1996), the active as opposed to the passive nature of observation is presented and attention has been drawn to the significance of the filters and lenses that observers use, mostly unconsciously, when asked to observe any social phenomenon. Yet, as seen in Chapter Three, in the literature on classroom observation there are few who directly address these conceptual issues in their discussions of observation. Instead, attention has focused squarely on the broader contextual framing of observations and, as has been seen, a dualistic modelling of observation has emerged which is based on either the discourse of QA or the developmental discourse of ITT.

The brief overview of epistemological positions in this chapter has confirmed that the dominant approach to observation is framed by a classically dominant positivist epistemology. These epistemological assumptions deny or seek to limit the significance of the subjective knower, stripping participants of their social selves. This position is not compatible with a view of teaching and learning as a social practice. Discussions inspired by interpretive epistemologies are seen to offer helpful conceptual standpoints when considering observation practice. In the context of this examination of observation, the contribution of Social Realism, with the emphasis on emergence, informs a broad epistemological starting point. The next task in this thesis is to explain the methodological approach and research methods developed.

## **Chapter Five: Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the approach taken to the generation of data to address the research questions of this thesis. To achieve this, the first part of the chapter provides a rationale for the adoption of a specific methodological framing. This framing also offers conceptual tools to analyse data generated. The second part of this chapter outlines the decisions made regarding the adoption of a case study approach and research methods; the sampling decisions made and the associated ethical considerations taken into account in conducting the research. The chapter concludes with an account of the piloting of the case study research methods.

### **5.2 Methodological Framing**

The literature review on observations conducted in FE (Chapter Three) placed observations conducted for ITT as part of a developmental discourse. The purpose of the observation was seen to hold the key to its usefulness. The opportunity to discuss the teaching that had been observed and to consider improvements in practice were key aspects of the developmental discourse. However, it was also established that little was known in the literature about how such observations were conducted. Indeed, such was the focus on 'the event' of the observation, the period where the teacher's practice is being seen by another, that only professional experience in ITT would alert one to the fact that other elements which, for example, afforded the opportunity to discuss the observation, were also part of the observation of teaching and learning.

Whilst the methodology guiding the research needed to be able to answer the research questions, it also needed to take account of the conclusions made thus far in relation

to teaching observations conducted for vocational teachers' ITT. That is, ITT observations for vocational teachers:

- are immersed in contested discussions regarding what is meant by vocational;
- are framed by a broadly developmental purpose;
- occur in workplaces as situated practice;
- take place in a social environment where relationships are embedded in the process of observation;
- should be conceptualised as a process, as a sequence of events with rules and practices guiding practice;
- are a product of cultural practices and historical events that have shaped them;
- involve observation participants as social beings with personal life experiences and vocational and/or academic histories as well as institutional roles. And finally,
- need to be captured as specific situated practices and made visible as a social practice.

The starting point for the adoption of a specific methodological framing for this research was the following quote from Miettinen (2000:63).

Observation necessarily takes place in a certain activity, context or thought community, using the concepts, instruments and conventions historically developed in that context. They steer the observations, and with them the observer interprets and generalises what is seen and regarded as problematic and important.

This extract from an article on Dewey's concept of reflective thought, seemed to capture the essence of conclusions made thus far in relation to teaching observations. In search of a methodological approach, further reading led to groups of researchers

who embraced broad perspectives of approaches derived from the work of Lev Vygotsky.

### **5.3 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)**

Variouly described as drawing from sociocultural and cultural-historical activity theory, researchers in these traditions draw specifically on Vygotsky and, as Ellis et al (2010:2) have argued: "...his methodological interest in the mediation of human activity by physical or psychological tools". Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an account of the differences between these respective approaches, it is nevertheless helpful to draw on Wardekker (2010) who concluded that whilst these respective approaches do not constitute a unity, collectively they do represent a difference in strands of thought, in ways of thinking about social phenomena. Such a paradigmatic conceptualisation offers the opportunity to consider conducting research informed by epistemologies that reject the more positivist approach reviewed in Chapter Four, whilst also critiquing the relativism of the interpretative paradigm inspired, as Wardekker (2010:241) has described, "by the idea of human beings as free agents, acting on their own interpretations of the world". Equally, and of particular significance to the methodological concerns of this chapter, Edwards and Daniels (2004:108) have argued that sociocultural and activity theory offers: "...a conceptual tool box to education which has the potential to enable it to operate as an engaged and transformational social science".

A sociocultural approach, such as presented by Lave (1988) and Lave and Wenger (1991), has indeed, already informed the understanding of vocational learning arrived at in this thesis. However, whilst essential to the conceptualisation of vocational learning, I also wanted to be able to model the observation of vocational teachers' practice in a way to ensure that broader contextual issues, for example, the rationale,

rules and regulations for the conduct of observations as well as the designated personnel, could also be captured. As will become apparent, CHAT offered these possibilities. An overview of CHAT and the some key criticisms of the approach therefore follow. The intention of the initial overview is to explain why CHAT provided a methodological framework for the thesis and to identify the specific contribution of Yrjö Engeström in this regard.

In Bakhurst's (2009:199) overview of CHAT, he notes that Engeström offers: "...a very detailed account of the diverse sources, philosophical and psychological, that inform activity theory". This account has, however, according to Bakhurst, been greatly oversimplified and in its place a less authentic account tracing the development of CHAT has become part of the self-consciousness of those who work in the tradition. A central aspect of this account, and confirmed by most who write about the origins, is the idea that there are three stages or generations of activity theory. CHAT is therefore described in most accounts as a result of a series of transitions through conceptions, modelled by a ubiquitous sequence of diagrams. Notwithstanding Bakhurst's concerns, a broadly chronological account of the directions and conceptual insights that help trace the development of CHAT follows. The intention here is not to present a chronology as an uncontested narrative, rather, it is to offer a narrative of a series of theoretical turns as they have unfolded, and continue to unfold.

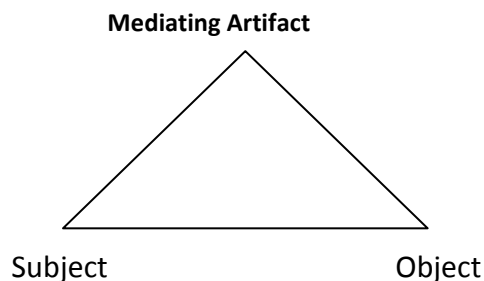
The 'first generation' of CHAT is located in the late 1920s and associated with the work of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky is credited with developing an anti-dualist solution (Miettinen, 2009) to the perceived crisis of psychology, dominated as it was by behaviourism's stimulus-response explanations of learning and psychoanalysis. Vygotsky was seen to open up a new way of thinking about the relations between mind, culture and history (Martin and Peim, 2009:131). Specifically, Vygotsky introduced the concept of mediation. In the model, behaviour and, by implication,

learning and action does not simply happen in response to stimulus but is mediated by artefacts (or tools) - created for the purpose or to promote, prompt and/or moderate behaviour (Bakhurst, 2009). With a specific focus on language, Vygotsky recognised that mediating artefacts influenced us because of their significance i.e. they have to be interpreted. Mediating artefacts were understood as both physical and psychological.

To illustrate his thoughts Vygotsky developed a famous triangular model, reproduced in Figure 1 below, in which his idea of cultural mediation is now commonly depicted as a triad of 'subject', 'object' and mediating artefact.

**Figure 1 : Vygotsky's model of Mediation**

(Adapted from Engeström 2001:134)



The subject here is understood to be the individual whose actions are the focus of the analysis, whilst the object in this triad is the focus of the activity. As Daniels (2004:123) explains: "...the thing that is to be acted upon". In terms of developing an understanding of human actions (and, in particular, how learning takes place) the introduction of cultural mediation into the equation meant, among other things, that the subject was situated in practice and could only be understood by consideration of their specific context and cultural means. Whilst this contribution has been understood as a hugely significant paradigm shift (Wardekker, 2010), the limitation of this approach for those who wished to explore or analyse the workings of a community, was that the unit of analysis remained at the individual level.



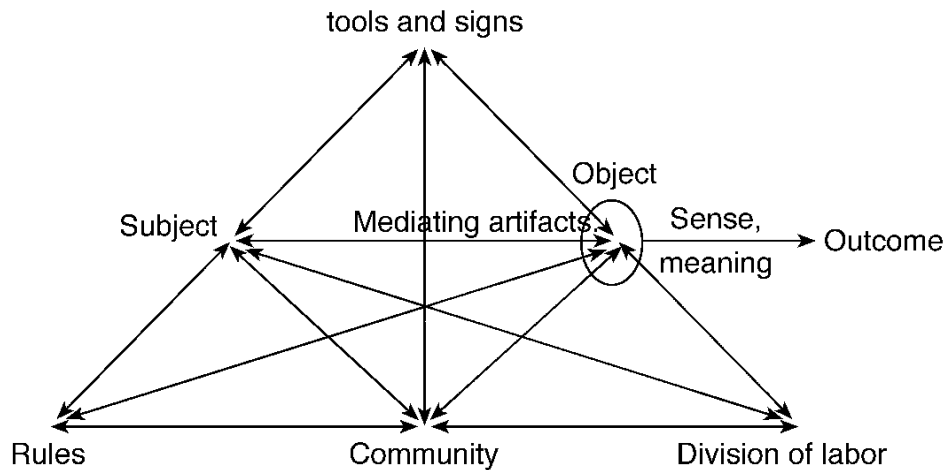
The turn towards the analysis of collective subjects (understood as the 'second generation' of CHAT) came with the work of Vygotsky's student, Alexei Leontiev. Leontiev's specific contribution is seen to have come through the distinction he made between individual action and collective activity. Bakhurst (2009:199) summarised this distinction in the following way:

An action is conducted by an individual or group to fulfil some 'goal'. An activity, in contrast, is undertaken by a community (deploying a division of labour, and various means of production) and it has an 'object' and a 'motive'.

Bakhurst clarified that in Leontiev's much celebrated explanation of the role of the beater in a primeval collective hunt, the beater's actions cannot be explained simply by his motive, the need for food or clothing. Rather, the beater's actions can only be explained once considered as part of a wider social *activity*.

According to Engeström (2001:134), the concept of *activity*, as outlined by Leontiev, provides the paradigm with "a huge step forward", enabling the focus to turn to, "...complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community". Engeström is credited by most scholars for developing the modelling of CHAT to augment this collective turn by presenting what he called an Activity System, represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The structure of a human activity system (adapted from Engeström 2001:135)



Avis (2009) is among many who explain that the upper part of the triangle represents individual and group actions embedded in an activity system, whilst the lower part of the triangle captures the division of labour between members of the community who are concerned with the same object, and also includes the rules that regulate action. These categories in the lower part of the triangle represent aspects of the social and historical organisation of an activity. Although not captured in the model, the dynamics of the system or the forces of its development, lie in its internal contradictions, or, in other words, in a dialectical relationship. (The significance of this aspect is reflected upon in the fourth principle of Activity Theory outlined below.)

The conceptual tools central to a CHAT analysis are found in this modelling of activity systems. Vygotsky's mediating artefacts are represented as tools<sup>8</sup>, which can be material or psychological. The key element is that they should be understood as

<sup>8</sup> The word *artefact* is sometimes used in preference to *tool* in CHAT research, the preference reflecting a more anthropological rather than psychological orientation

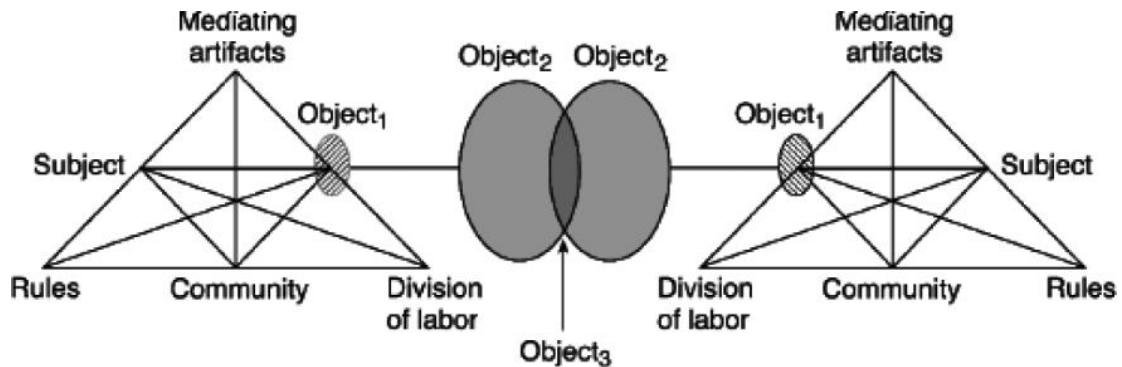
developing historically and therefore regarded as, "...distinctly human creations [that] include norms of cognition and implied ways of action" (Miettinen 2001:299). In other words, an artefact's significance in an activity system is gleaned not because of its physical form, but due to the reason for its production; for its use. This understanding ensures that when consideration is given to the use of tools in an activity, then the historicity of the tool is revealed, as Ellis et al (2011:18) have explained:

... tool-use reveals something about the cultures within which the tools have developed as well as the thinking of those who work with them and, further, highlights the relationship between these two, social and historical processes.

Object is also a central concept in CHAT and is understood as the potentially shared problem or significant goal which subjects in an activity system are working towards. Leontiev is credited by most (Ellis et al, 2011; Guile, 2010) as describing the object of activity as 'its true motive'. However, Engeström (2001:134) has explained that the oval representation of object used in Figure 2 indicates that the object-orientated actions in the activity system are, "...characterised by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense making, and potential for change". It follows then that it should not be assumed that whilst activity systems are construed as working towards their object, the motives of subjects are in alignment (Ellis et al, 2011).

A so-called third generation of CHAT can be seen as looking outwards which its focus on the relations between activity systems. In this guise, the basic model is expanded to include, minimally, two interacting activity systems (Engeström 2001). This outward-looking turn in CHAT accepts that, among other things, the object (see object 1 in the figure 3 below) can move and change from its situationally given state (or meaning) to a "...collectively meaningful object constructed by the activity system" (ibid:136). This is depicted as object 2 in Figure 3 below. Additionally, there is the potential to envisage a "shared or jointly construed object" (ibid:136) depicted as object 3 in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Two interacting activity systems as minimal model for the third generation of activity theory (adapted from Engeström 2001:136)



This overview of the development of CHAT has shown the movement from an analytical focus on the individual unit to the collective as a unit of analysis. Once the unit of analysis becomes collective and collective practices are construed as an *activity*, then it becomes possible to examine contexts and settings where subjects are engaged in a shared endeavour.

Further clarification of CHAT can be gleaned from Engeström's (2001) articulation of the five central principles of CHAT. The first principle confirmed that the prime unit of analysis was taken to be: "...a collective, artifact-mediated and object orientated activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems" (ibid: 136). This principle embeds the specific Vygotskian contribution of Leontiev. Whilst goal-directed individual and group actions are construed as relatively independent, they are seen as

subordinate units of analysis, "...eventually understandable only when interpreted against the background of entire activity systems" (ibid).

The second principle confirmed what Engeström (2001) identified as the multi-voicedness of activity systems. This referred to the way in which activity systems are seen as consisting of "multiple points of view, traditions and interests" (ibid:136). The relevance of the division of labour to CHAT (seen in Figure 2 above) is illuminated here in this second principle as it recognises the differential positions of participants who are also seen to carry their own diverse histories. Similarly, artefacts were seen as carrying their prior histories, with Engeström's (ibid) observation that, "...multiple layers and strands of history [are] engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions". Engeström signalled the complexity associated with these inter-relationships when he characterised multi-voicedness as a: "...source of trouble and a source of innovation", which in turn, he suggested, would demand "actions of translation and negotiation" (ibid).

The third principle of historicity confirmed that problems associated with activity systems and/ or any potential developments can only be understood 'against their own past', given that they take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time: History itself needs to be studied as local history of the activity and its objects, and as history of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity (Engeström 2001:136–7).

The fourth principle and fifth principles of CHAT focus on the central role of contradiction as a source of change and development. As such, they point towards the mechanisms through which activity systems transform:

An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. A full cycle of expansive transformation may be understood as a collective journey through the 'zone of proximal development' of the activity. (Engeström 2001:137)

These fourth and fifth principles have led to the development of what has become known as the 'Change Laboratory' or Developmental Work Research (DWR) and to the work that Engeström and colleagues are engaged with at the University of Helsinki. Given that this thesis does not seek to intervene in practice to bring about change, such aspects of CHAT are beyond the interest of this review. However, it is important to note that it is with the conceptualisation of contradictions and dialectics, essential to expansive transformation, that CHAT has been most commonly criticised (see inter alia Avis, 2009; Warmington 2009, 2011)

#### **5.4 System Consensus and Power Relations**

As a theoretical framework, CHAT has, of course, been subject to criticism. Here I will draw attention to three dominant themes in these critiques. These are centred on issues concerned with: system consensus; power relations; and appreciation of wider productive systems in which activity systems operate.

System consensus is the term used by Young (2001) to identify the assumptions that lead to problems for some in applying the approach taken by Engeström to workplace learning. Although Young is specifically discussing Engeström's conception of expansive learning, the point being made has equal weight in this broader consideration of CHAT. The argument is that in Engeström's concept of an activity system there is the implicit assumption of a common goal or system consensus. By this, Young is contesting the assumption that, in the end, all subjects are construed as working towards the same

outcome in a given activity system. In contrast he points out that, "...the different actors may be at odds over ends" (2001:160) and that these competing understandings cannot necessarily be overcome. Therefore, whilst CHAT does recognise multiple voices within an activity system, it can be seen to underplay the conflicted nature of relations within activity systems. This leads onto the second theme and the treatment of power relations in CHAT.

The theorisation of power relations, both within and between activity systems, is related to the criticism of system consensus, but broadens the concerns. Warmington (2011) warns against Engeström's seeming tendency to depict activity systems as self-regulating subjects, rather than systems regulated by the management and control of labour. He argues that the concept of the division of labour in CHAT, while an essential component of activity systems, weakens researchers' grasp of workplace dynamics and the structural tensions that workplaces produce, largely because it conflates two distinct divisions of labour:

In short, there is often insufficient distinction in DWR/activity theory between divisions on the horizontal plane (that is, between different professional groupings and agencies) and the vertical plane (that is, relationships between staff and their managers).  
(Warmington, 2011:144)

Another important element in relation to the theorisation of power relations in CHAT is the extent to which social divisions such as gender, social class, disability and ethnicity have been considered. Warmington (2011) agrees that there is an apparent reticence to address wider social antagonisms present in activity systems. This leads to the final area of criticism: the significance of the wider productive system.

Wardekker (2010:242) articulates the concern of others (see Avis, 2009; Warmington, 2009; Felstead et al, 2009) when he argues that whilst CHAT and, specifically,

Engeström's modelling of activity systems, facilitates understanding of well defined activity systems and how individuals operate as part of these systems, but it is less helpful in drawing attention to:

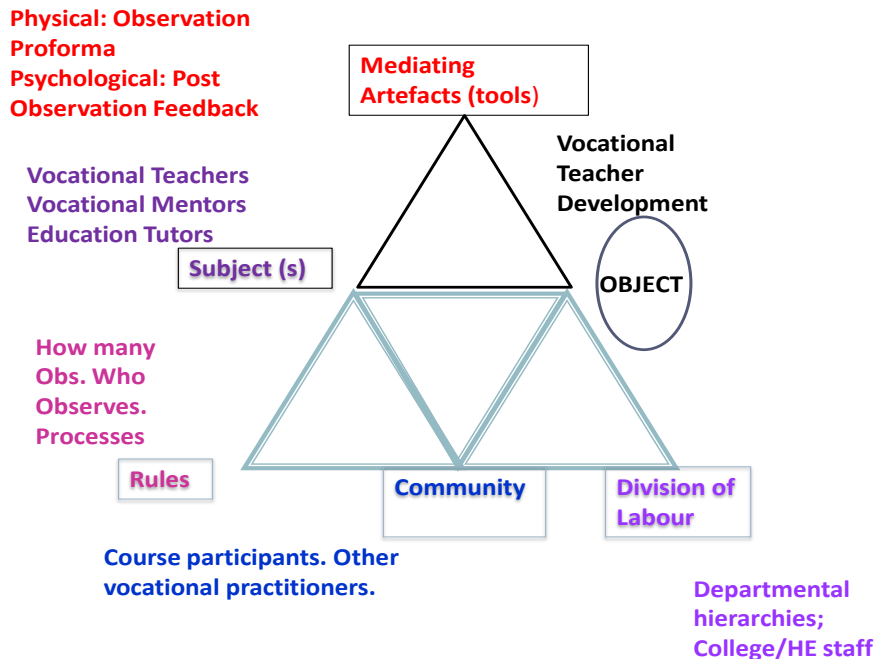
...the wider social, economical, historical and cultural force field in which such systems operate, other than in...the form of other well-defined systems having an interaction with the system under study.

### **5.5 An Activity System Heuristic**

The overview of CHAT presented in this chapter has encompassed its origins and development, its principles and has provided insight into the main criticisms of CHAT. Whilst cognisant of its shortcomings as a social theory, as a way of modelling social practice CHAT did, nevertheless, offer a helpful heuristic. I therefore began to develop a model of vocational teachers' observations as an activity system to enable me to develop a methodological approach. Crucial to this modelling were the conceptual tools the activity system heuristic provided. This meant being able to accept that whilst different people were involved in observations at different times and in different settings, they were all, in theory at least, working toward an object – the developing practice of the vocational teacher. Figure 4, below, represents the modelling of an activity system heuristic.



Figure 4: Vocational Teachers' Observations as an Activity System



As can be seen in Figure 4, the object of the activity system (ITT Teaching Observations) has been expressed as the development of vocational teachers. This descriptor has come from the literature review, which placed ITT observations firmly in a development discourse. However, it is recognised that the object may yet be understood as the product of negotiation. Subjects in the activity system reflect the division of labour and the community involved in ITT (vocational teachers, college/university tutor observers, and vocational mentor observers). Subjects utilise tools to mediate learning in the activity and the central material artefact is the ubiquitous observation proforma used in practice to record the outcome of the activity. A central psychological artefact is identified as the post-observation feedback discussion, which takes place between observer and observed after the observation of practice.

Rules and norms govern aspects of observation practice and are understood to include both aspects of the regulatory regime, as discussed in Chapter Three: for example, the number of observations required by government, and locally determined practice such as negotiations over when observations take place and the sequences that make up the observation activity.

It may be important to clarify that whilst students will also be present during the observation activity and that their learning is central to observation activity, the student's part in the teaching observation activity is not as a subject, but as part of the context or setting in which observation takes place.

### **5.6 CHAT as a methodological lens in studies of teacher development**

In arriving at the decision to use the activity system heuristic, research in teacher development (albeit schools-based), which had also used CHAT, has proved to be useful for this thesis. In an American study of teacher development by Valencia et al (2009), CHAT was used to provide a methodological lens in a four-year longitudinal study into language arts student teachers in the USA. Valencia et al (2009) followed teachers from their last year of ITT into their first three years of full-time teaching. In this study, CHAT provided a set of underpinning principles to help develop an understanding of teacher development.

Valencia et al (ibid) argued that CHAT provided a way to think about the situated nature of teacher development. Following Engeström's first principle, they argued that the entire activity system needed to be the unit of analysis, and not just the teacher. This was because the student teaching experience was a collective activity as it, of necessity, involved the supervisor (school-based mentor) and the university tutor alongside the individual student teacher. The object of student teaching was, according

to Valencia et al, to: “successfully learn to teach” (2009:306). Teaching experience was construed as culturally mediated because, as they argued, the: “the visions, expectations, cultural histories, past experiences, tools and settings construed and negotiated among all those involved” (ibid) were central to understanding the student teaching experience. Valencia et al. therefore used the central assumptions of CHAT as a framework to consider the nature of teacher development.

As a result of Valencia et al’s methodological use of CHAT, explanations regarding the shape and pace of teacher development are not reduced to the attributes of the student teacher or any other singular player in the system. Taking full account of the historicity of the programme of teacher development and recognising the contradictions endemic in a programme of teacher education, helped researchers to offer a more complex, multifaceted conception of teacher development. However, whilst having clearly set up the research using CHAT methodology, Valencia et al do not appear to use CHAT categories in any analytic sense.

In terms of the criticisms of CHAT that have been discussed earlier in the Chapter, there is indeed a real sense in which system consensus is assumed in their study, particularly in terms of the way in which the object of the system is construed. As outlined in the brief account of their research above, the ultimate object of student teaching was seen to be to *successfully learn to teach*. This is not an unreasonable assumption. However, this may not be the sole object of student teaching. The object, from the point of view of the inexperienced/novice/student teacher, might, for instance, be expressed as *survival in the classroom*, and this could be construed as a far cry from *learning to teach*. However, the possibility of differential motives in the realisation of the object, anticipated by Engeström, is not, however, drawn out in their analysis. The study therefore served as a reminder of potential tensions in utilising CHAT as a methodological lens.

The other examples of the use of CHAT come from research published in the UK subsequent to my own fieldwork research commencing in 2010. Research by Douglas (2010; 2011a and 2011b) consisted of a one-year ethnographic study of school-based ITT in England. Douglas argued that using activity theory to frame his research enabled him to focus in on the ITT activity that took place in complex subject departments in busy schools. Douglas explored the availability of learning opportunities for PGCE secondary school student teachers across different school subject departments in one school. He saw the potential of CHAT in addressing questions as to why learning opportunities were differently available to student teachers in subject departments because, he argued, it allowed him to focus attention on:

... learning as a social phenomenon, a process that takes place within social systems that have evolved culturally and historically and that offer participants in those systems certain physical or psychological tools with which to work on a shared object.

(Douglas 2011b:198)

Douglas explained (2010:33) that he used CHAT as a heuristic because it allowed for: "...an exploration of whether people share their understandings of objects and outcomes of systems by considering their use of tools". Unlike Valencia et al (2009) Douglas (2010:32) accepted that he understood the object of ITT as a: "negotiated, unfolding and often indeterminable activity".

Similarly, the analytic approach used by Ellis et al (2011) into teacher development and, specifically, the role of teacher educators and school based mentors, can also be seen an exemplar of analyses using CHAT. Researchers used observation as a form of work shadowing in gathering data concerning the teacher educators at the centre of their study and they were particularly interested in analysing artefact use. They were interested in the use of tools in the activity of teacher development: "the way in which these tools were being picked up and used (what they were mediating); and for what ends (the potential object of the activity)" (ibid:9).

Their analytic interest was to try to understand the object of the teacher education activities and how the subjects (teacher educators and trainee teachers) used the tools in the activity system. Attention was also given to the social organisation of the practical activities in which the teacher educators were engaged. They therefore focussed on the division of labour and the social rules or conventions in the activity system to examine how the work was organised and between whom.

Whilst these later studies were published after the fieldwork for this thesis commenced, they nevertheless proved useful in the analytic phase of the thesis and are therefore referenced in Chapter Nine.

### **5.7 Developing the Methodology**

Having established the activity system heuristic, methodological decisions centred on the approach taken to data collection. Given that the intention of this research was to gain an understanding of processes as well as outcomes in what are described (in research terms) as bounded systems (Burns, 2000:260; O’Leary, Z. 2004:115), in-depth, qualitative case studies were identified as instrumental in the exploration of the processes involved in conducting teaching observations with vocational practitioners *in situ*.

Yin’s (2014) two-fold definition of case studies is a helpful starting point for elaboration as he argues that it is important to consider both the scope of a case study as well as the features of a case study. In terms of the first dimension, Yin (2014:16) clarifies that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon (the ‘case’): “...in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident”.

In other words, developing an understanding of the real world case is more likely to be gained from studying it within its real world context. The second dimension confirms that case study inquiry copes well with the existence of many variables and indeed offers opportunities to consider conditions separated by time. Yin (2014:17) argues that an additional feature of case study inquiry is its reliance on multiple sources of evidence and, given this: “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data and analysis”. On both dimensions the choice of case study inquiry proved to be appropriate.

However, when adopting a case study approach, defining the case is an important step (Babbie, 2001; Burns, 2000; O’Leary, 2004; Yin 2014) and is considered in the next section on sampling. Additionally, consideration needs to be given to the type of case study approach to be taken. For the purpose of this research, a multi-case study approach is adopted. A multi-case approach involves, simply, a collection of case studies and, whilst difficult to pre-specify the number of cases (Robson, 2002:199), a rationale for the choice of cases is also provided in the discussion of sample that follows.

### **5.8 Developing an ethical approach to case study research**

Adopting a multi-case study approach requires the development of a justifiable case study sample. The size of the sample is a particularly moot point in qualitative studies. However, as Robson (2002:199) points out, conventional wisdom implies that the researcher keeps going until a saturation point is reached, and this may depend upon the: “scope of the study; the ‘nature of the topic’ and/or the ‘study design’”. There were, however, additional considerations in determining sample size in this research and these were concerned with access, location and other such practicalities.

Nevertheless, my cases were going to be vocational teachers in-training and my ideal was to identify a sample of teachers in their first year of initial training.

Ethical concerns also framed the sample size and these factors are explored at the outset of this section on sampling and in the discussion of research methods adopted that follows.

As outlined in Chapter One, I am an experienced FE teacher educator with more than 20 years of practice. In this time, I have been employed by three of the largest HEIs in London and the South-East of England. This has meant that not only have I been involved in conducting observations in colleges across London and the South East, but I have also written handbooks and course guides (cf Bloor and Lahiff, 2001; Gould and Lahiff, 2000) related to ITT for FE teachers. My ethical stance in embarking on this research was that I wanted to avoid any known association with HE/FE partnership arrangements. This not only ruled out my current workplace and its associated partner colleges where it would have been relatively easy to construct a sample of vocational teachers in training, but also a considerable number of other colleges. I also wanted vocational teachers in-training, rather than observers, to drive the sample as much as possible. This was important because, as well as studying the phenomenon of observation, the research was exploring the potential use and value of the observation experience on developing practice.

This meant that my preferred option was to access vocational teachers in-training directly. This proved to be a complex task. Eventually, access to case study teachers was initially made possible via a large London-based HE/FE partnership's ITT induction event to which I had been invited. I was given a 10-minute slot during the event to speak directly to all embarking upon their in-service training and invited anyone interested in being involved in the research to contact me. Perhaps unsurprisingly, whilst I did garner some interest, those who expressed interest were not necessarily teaching in vocational areas. I therefore turned my attention to the teacher educators

who attended the event and asked them to act in a sponsor role (Robson, 2002) to enable me to make direct contact with vocational teachers. Subsequently I then secured an invitation from two FE colleges' in-service education teams to come and speak to vocational teachers on their respective in-service awards.

From this opportunity, two case study subjects agreed to take part in the research. Further participants emerged in similar ways by contacting ITT co-ordinators on various programmes operating across London and the South East. None of these co-ordinators were previously known to me and they only acted as conduits to ease the process of making contact with vocational teachers in training. Once contact was made, agreement to participate needed to be secured from all participants in the observation process. This meant not only the vocational teacher, but also their observers in the ITT process. That is, the FE or HE Education Tutor and the vocational mentor. Whilst contacting education tutor observers was less problematic, making contact with workplace mentors through their respective vocational teachers was a lengthy process. Nevertheless, once agreement to participate was made, normally through email, research participants were provided with a participant agreement sheet (A copy is provided in Appendix 1). This explained the research and the commitment to confidentiality and the ethical approval granted by my employer, the Institute of Education (IOE).

The case study sample was therefore mainly convenience in type, with purposive features (Robson, 2002). The purposive nature of the sample was to ensure coverage, where possible, of a range of vocational traditions within FE, as well as address the gender issues raised in Chapter Three in relation to the conceptualisation of the technical and vocational teacher. An additional purposive feature was to try to ensure that the sample included both HE-led ITT provision and FE-led ITT provision. This was because I was aware that the activity system concepts of 'community', 'division of labour' and 'rules and regulations' might play out differently in these varied ITT



contexts. In the event and given limited time resources, decisions were more pragmatic and the final sample included all of the vocational teachers and their respective observers from whom I had gained agreement to participate in the time available to me.

The sample originally consisted of six case studies of vocational teachers in training in five different vocational areas that had begun their in-service training in September 2010. I began to conduct the fieldwork after piloting the research methods (see section 5.11) over a period of 18 months between September 2010 and March 2012. However, due to considerations outside my control as researcher, one case study participant had to withdraw after initial engagement with the research. Table Four, below, provides a breakdown of actual case study subjects, vocational teachers in training and their respective observers, and their college location. Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the anonymity of all the participants and participating institutions.

Table Four: Case Study Participants

## Sample, Vocational Areas and Sites

Vocational Area	Vocational Teacher	Education Tutor Vocational Mentor	College
Catering	Johnson	Denis Rachel	West College
Health and Social Care	Maria	Laura Delia	North College
Specialist Make-up (Hairdressing)	Alan	Shirley Miriam	East College
Plastering	Clive	Anna (HE) Vince	South College
Painting and decorating	Simona	Anna (HE) Julie	South College

Having identified the case studies, attention now turns to a discussion of the choice of methods used during the fieldwork stage of the case study research.

The approach taken to the case study research can be described as “multi-strategy” (Layder 1993:120). Adopting a multi-strategy approach ensures a closer alignment between the method of data collection and the research questions being addressed. Perhaps, more importantly however, given the activity system heuristic, the research methods chosen needed to be able to make visible the processes involved in the activity and provide accounts of the practices undertaken. Given these prime considerations, observation of practices that make up the activity, plus interviews with subjects in the activity system became the methods used in the research.

## 5.9 Observation, Interviews and Further Ethical Considerations

Observation, as a research method, enables the researcher to, literally, see for herself the practices of others. For this research, adopting observation as a data collection method is particularly apt given that (teaching) observation has also been modelled as an activity system to facilitate developing an understanding of the processes and practices involved in practice. To ensure all subjects in the activity were observed engaged in practice, it was planned that observations of vocational teachers were conducted twice, once with the vocational mentor as observer, and once with the education tutor as observer.

Given the focus of this research and, specifically, the conceptualisation of observation, the epistemological underpinnings of using observation as a method of social inquiry have already been discussed in Chapter Four. However, as Robson (2002) confirms, it is nevertheless important to appreciate the fundamentally different approaches to the conduct of observation that have been employed in social research. Participant observation and structured observation are normally positioned at either end of an observation spectrum. These approaches are traditionally associated with qualitative (interpretative) and quantitative (positivist) methodologies, respectively. But Robson (ibid) suggests that concentration on these two approaches has tended to eclipse a third one, described as “unobtrusive observation”: “Its defining characteristic is that it is non-participatory in the interests of being non-reactive. It can be structured but is more usually unstructured and informal” (2002:310).

Unobtrusive observation served as a useful starting point when considering the (research) observer role to be undertaken in the case studies. I was aware that in proposing to observe the teaching observation process, I would be yet another person in the vocational classroom and that I needed to ensure that my role was understood

to be different to the education tutor or the vocational mentor. As Coffey (1999:20) has described, consideration needed to be given to “the ethnographic self”.

Coffey’s discussion reminds us that the so-called conventional wisdom of ethnography has been premised on the duality of observer and observed. In this conventional dualism the ignorant outsider adopts the role of ethnographer-as-stranger as a temporal starting point. In this model, Coffey (1999:20) suggests that the ethnographer purposely divests themselves of knowledge and personhood, so that they may then be able to achieve eventual understanding:

The disorientation of strangeness and unfamiliarity is a preliminary to a more sustained period of mastery (sic). The heroic displacement of the ethnographer to the margins of the culture in question, and to the social position of an ignoramus, is a preliminary to an even more heroic achievement of knowledge and understanding at the centre of the culture.

The initial sense of strangeness is not difficult, of course, in traditional anthropological fieldwork. But irrespective of the starting point, it is argued that all fieldworkers are eventually forced to face the dilemma of familiarity. This state may be particularly noticeable in fieldwork conducted in familiar settings and, to illustrate, Coffey cites Becker (1971) commenting upon the difficulties facing researchers who see nothing going on worth noting in a context routine to their life experiences.

To resolve this dilemma, Coffey quotes the guidance of classic research methods texts, such as Delamont (1992), Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995) and Lofland and Lofland, (1995), which emphasise the need to maintain and, if necessary, re-create, a sense of strangeness during fieldwork. These debates over distance, marginality and estrangement were particularly pertinent to this research. Certainly, given my professional experience and familiarity with the context in which the vocational

teachers' observations take place, the tensions over familiarity and strangeness needed to be considered. However, given the adoption of the activity heuristic, the degree to which a sense of strangeness was deemed necessary, possible or desirable required further consideration.

Labaree (2002) approaches this issue of strangeness through the lens of insider–outsider perspectives in qualitative research in his reflection on the approach to take whilst investigating the workings of an organisation of which he was a member. In his review of what he describes as “insiderness”, Labaree is critical of the dichotomy associated with positions of insider-outsider. Labaree (ibid:102) argues that insiderness should be understood to be a result of “...the person’s biographical profile, political activities, research agenda and the relationship with the community under study”. For him, such a dichotomy ignores the fact that, “...researchers are multiple insiders and outsiders” (ibid:101). That is, on one level the researcher might be seen as an acculturated member of a community whilst on another level, they may not be.

Instead, Labaree (ibid) argues that a more helpful way of dealing with the researcher’s sense of insiderness is to suggest that, “the boundaries of insiderness are situational and defined by the perceptions of those being researched”. This perspective led to the conclusion that whilst I might have seen myself as operating as an ethnographic insider, this may well not have been shared by research participants during observations. I was, indeed, a stranger to them, often meeting them for the first time when I came to observe the activity. Given the frequency with which teachers in FE are observed by strangers in preparation for inspections, a stranger observing a class would more than likely be considered as having a purpose of inspection and judgement. With respect to the case study vocational teachers I ensured that opportunities to discuss the research aims followed the distribution of the participant information sheet (Appendix 1). With the observers in the activity, there was less of a bridge to cross. Indeed, as will be seen in the case study accounts, sharing my

biographical profile and position as teacher trainer was an important aspect in enabling *insiderness* to function as an asset to the research process.

Notwithstanding possible tensions, Labaree (ibid:104) also identifies particular benefits associated with the insiderness conferred on researchers conducting observation. These he summarised as four broad values:

...the value of shared experiences; the value of greater access; the value of cultural interpretation and the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought for the researcher.

Labaree's approach offered a refreshing take on the challenges often associated with insiderness and familiarity of setting. I therefore tried to ensure that in conducting observations, the purpose was absolutely clear to all subjects in the activity. Only in this way could I enjoy the research benefits associated with insiderness.

In terms of the instruments used to record practices observed, initially I did not propose to use any pre-constructed checklists or structured instruments at the initial stages of the inquiry. Although filming classroom practices was a possibility, gaining permission from all students to film events was considered to be an unnecessary intervention into their learning. Equally, I was not convinced by research that had used visual recordings to consider it as a viable research instrument (see Chapter Four). However, as a practising teacher-trainer, I aimed to make as transparent as possible the classroom events, circumstances and situations which demanded my attention during the observations through the use of a fieldwork diary. Whilst using the previous discussion to orientate myself during the observation of practice in the classroom, the role I undertook when observing the oral feedback discussion between the vocational teacher and observer was anticipated to be more challenging. An account of the case study pilot using observation is given in 5.11, and provides a resolution of the

anticipated challenges. This section now turns to the use of interviews in the fieldwork research.

Given the activity system heuristic adopted, the purpose of using interviews in the fieldwork was threefold. Firstly, interviews were used to place the activity subjects culturally and historically. Biographies of the subjects were therefore gleaned through interviews. Secondly, they were used to generate subjects' accounts of the purpose of the teaching observation; the object of the activity. Thirdly, they offered an opportunity for subjects to discuss practices that had been observed.

In terms of conducting the interviews, Burns (2000:424) provides a helpful introduction to the semi-structured to unstructured spectrum that is most often recounted in research literature. For Burns, where interviews take a less structured format, they act to make public the: "private interpretations of reality". This rationale was therefore used to underpin the approach taken to the interviews conducted in the case studies. One-to-one interviews with subjects in the activity were adopted. The intention was to record the interviews, subject to the participants' agreement. Initially a semi-structured interview schedule was used for these respective interviews. However, as will become clear, the schedule acted as a prompt as the interviews became more conversational in style (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for semi-structured interview schedules).

### **5.10 Triangulation**

In Yin's (2014) review of case study research and in much of the discussion of the generation of qualitative data, consideration is given to the issue of validity and Layder (1993:121) argues that "triangulation [acts] as a validity check". Meijer et al (2002:146) confirm that triangulation in social inquiry is used metaphorically and refers to a

process by which verification of a finding is set up "...by showing that independent measures of it agree with, or, at least, do not contradict it".

Denzin (1970) is often attributed (see inter alia, Layder, 1993; Robson, 2002) as initially distinguishing different types of triangulation. He described these as data; investigator; theory and methodological forms of triangulation. Later, Miles and Huberman (1994) distinguished five types of triangulation operating specifically in qualitative research. They described these as triangulation: "...by data source; by method; by researcher; by theory and by data type" (cited in Meijer et al, 2002:146). Whether triangulation is conceived as composed of four or five types, Meijer et al (ibid) argue that the choice of triangulation type depends on the purpose of the study and confirm that more than one kind of triangulation may be in evidence in any one study. Accordingly, a broadly qualitative study may collect data from different participants or different places (triangulation by data source), through the use of interviews and observations (triangulation by method), and data might be collected by different people (triangulation by researcher).

Using Miles and Huberman's (1994) categories, this case study research can be seen as adopting both multi-method and multi-source triangulation in an attempt to both assure internal validity and as the best way to address the research questions being posed. In terms of multi-method triangulation, the case studies utilise both observation and interviews as methods of data collection. Multi-source triangulation was also achieved by the collection of data from different subjects involved in the activity, the 'observed' and the 'observer'. But equally importantly, the multi-method and multi-source approach also ensures that due recognition was given to the phenomenon being investigated. That is, the approach to triangulation adopted recognised that the activity at the centre of the investigation, vocational teachers' observation of practice, is socially constructed and mediated. Data generated by multi-method and multi-source can also be construed as "complementary" data accepting that a "multiplicity of perspective" (Layder, 1993:123) is embedded into to research design. This approach



also enables the intermingling of data in the analysis of case studies. The approach taken to analysis is the subject of the next discussion before attention turns to the case study pilot.

Zina O’Leary (2004:195) points out that the “main game” of any form of analysis, whether quantitative or qualitative, is the “move from raw data to meaningful understanding”. In adopting a multi-method and multi-source approach to data collection it is important to consider the way data are analysed. However, as Robson (2002:315) has argued:

...it is difficult to separate out the data collection and analysis phases of enquiry. Analysis takes place in the middle of collection and is used to help shape its development.

Moreover, the process of analysis does not simply start with the data collection. Miles and Huberman (1994:429) point to the existence of “anticipatory analysis” of data, where research questions are formed and/or theories adopted which orientate data collection. As has been outlined in Chapter Five the adoption of an activity system heuristic based on CHAT enabled a methodological framing for the research and also assured that key conceptual tools were operationalised in analysis.

The analysis focuses, therefore, on the ways in which subjects in the activity were seen to engage with the object of activity; the extent to which the artefacts in the activity were used and/or adapted by subjects in the activity and how the rules that underpin observation practice and the division of labour were seen to impact upon the activity. The analysis was guided by subjects’ actions in the observation of practice and in responses given during interviews. As is the case in any qualitative approach to collecting data by observation and through interview, all the descriptive items need to be compressed, made manageable or reduced (Fielding, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; O’Leary 2004). Therefore in analysing data any patterns, convergent and/or

divergent, were identified and relevant themes, categories or “analytic schema” (Fielding, 1993:167) used to present patterns. Themes may of course emerge during fieldwork, given that analysis is part of an iterative process.

### **5.11 Case Study Pilot**

A case study pilot was conducted to trial the process of observing teaching observations and interviewing activity subjects. My experience, both as a teacher trainer and as an external examiner, and discussions in the literature (Chapter Three) confirmed that the teaching observation process is, in various guises, largely made up of three or four stages: the first stage can be described as negotiating the session to be observed; the second is the actual observation; the third involves the observation feedback discussion that follows; and the fourth involves, commonly, the production of a written observation proforma to provide evidence that the observation had taken place and associated outcomes. The importance or significance that each stage has in the process of teaching observations, as well as the sequencing of stages, was construed as a product of the rules and norms that govern the activity.

The case study pilot focussed on the second and third stage of the process of teaching observation outlined above. The pilot offered the opportunity to trial both methods of data collection, observation and interview. Access to one FE college where ITT for vocational practitioners took place was secured once BERA ethical guidelines and the satisfactory completion of the IOE ethical approval was received. Having secured the voluntary agreement of one observer and one vocational teacher who taught hairdressing, the case study pilot involved two observation stages and an interview with the observing tutor.

The two stages of data collection through observation were:

- i) Observation of the same session as the tutor observer, for the same amount of time.
- ii) Observation of the oral feedback session between observer and vocational tutor.

In both instances, I adopted an “unobtrusive observer” role (Robson, 2002:309) and made field notes in a field note diary to record the teaching observation. Starting with descriptive observation, I recorded key dimensions outlined by Spradley (1980), cited in Robson (2002:320), including: space; actors; events; time; and activities. The descriptive account was also annotated with interpretive ideas, which offered comment on the event or action being recorded.

An interview was arranged with the observer for the pilot study. Unfortunately, opportunity did not present itself to conduct an interview with the vocational teacher for the pilot study. The interview with the observer was guided by a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 2) and the shared experience of observation, and aimed to ascertain:

- what the observer thought guided their observation;
- what the observer saw as important in observing the vocational teacher’s lesson;
- the rationale for the structure and conduct of the feedback discussion.

Although I had planned to do so, it was not possible to record the interview. Instead I made notes, recording key words, where possible, to serve as a reminder. The circumstances of the pilot case study meant that, in the event, I actually conducted two separate interviews with the observer. The first interview centred on the observed teaching session and took place immediately after the observation, but before the feedback discussion with the vocational teacher had taken place. Then, following the

feedback discussion, I conducted a second interview. Although the two-stage interview ensured there was equal opportunity to ensure that both aspects of the observation process were given due time, whether the opportunity to discuss the observed practice before the observer fed back to the vocational teacher had any additional impact on the observer's comments is unknown. As anticipated the interview moved to more conversational style as the interview progressed.

One outcome of the pilot observation was the design of an observation proforma, which enabled a descriptive narrative of events to be recorded. The observation proforma simply enabled field notes to be recorded around four broad categories: Time; Narrative; Issues; and Observer Actions. In the time and narrative categories, a "running description" (Lofland and Lofland 1995, cited in Robson 2011:325) included comments on "space; actors; events; time; activities" as outlined by Spradley (1980), cited in Robson (ibid). This running description was then annotated with interpretive ideas, in a column entitled issues. This offered real time comment on the event or action being recorded. A separate column for observer actions enabled a record of the physical, visceral, actions of the observer in relation to both the process of observation (e.g. whether notes were being made by hand or a laptop was being used) as well as the relationship to the physical environment (e.g where the observer was located in the room; whether the observer moved around and/or spoke to students or the VT). By way of example, the proforma is reproduced in Table Five below.

Table Five: The Fieldwork Observation Proforma

Time	Narrative	Issues	Observer Actions
Event time	This describes what is happening in the class.	Comments on the lesson. This can be in relation to 'pedagogic' issues, e.g. why doesn't tutor break class into groups?	Record and commentary on the observer's practice...
A timed record of the duration of the class	Identifies stages of the class and student/tutor time and communication. e.g Student and teacher activities: exposition; group work or using IT	Other misc. issues that emerge through observing e.g <i>How does x. feel about teaching in a salon?</i> <i>I wonder whether the anecdotes and 'off subject' discussion are students are simply what is done in practice in the salon?</i>	e.g whether notes taken and how? Do they use a given proforma or make up their own schedule. Is information then transferred to given proforma? Does the observer move around class and/or talk to learners? Talk to/engage with VT?

The temporal narrative enabled the sequence of events to be captured. This narrative was accompanied by 'issues' as illustrated in Table Five, which largely comprised of a record of reflections on the teaching which were pedagogical in nature. However, there were also notes to self by way of issues that, in my professional experience, the tutor observer would consider too. The observer's actions were tied to the narrative and the issues being recorded.

Whilst ethical considerations ruled out the visual recording of the teaching space, I also decided to include sketches of the vocational context. These acted as a visual reminder of the environment in which the observations were conducted. I had not anticipated this prior to the pilot but once *in situ* a visual record of the activity was deemed central to capture the physical context.

The fieldwork observation proforma, as described, was therefore used to capture the fieldwork observations. A semi-structured interview schedule was finalised following

the pilot and was used with participants conducting observations. A mirror-image semi-structured interview schedule was designed for interviews with vocational teachers (see Appendix 3). All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Extracts from the observation field notes and extracts from the interviews have been intermingled, as anticipated, and form the basis of the case study accounts that are presented as findings in the Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. As outlined above, sketches were made of the physical environment. These were later transferred to electronic form. For each observation completed, a corresponding graphic was created and these are also included in the case study accounts that follow.

### **5.12 Fieldwork**

Following the pilot study, fieldwork commenced with the first case study vocational teachers with whom agreement had been made. Negotiations over opportunities to observe and interview commenced and proved to be particularly time consuming as I had to fit fieldwork around my own teaching and ITT commitments. Excluding the pilot study and observations completed for the vocational teacher who had to withdraw from the research, nine observations were completed out of the 10 planned (see Table Six below). The observation of each vocational teacher's teaching observation normally took place on two separate occasions, with between one and six months gap between observations. All participants were interviewed, one to one, at their respective college sites. As will be seen from the case study accounts, interviews took place at various points in the observation process.

**Table Six: Fieldwork Observations and Interviews**

Vocational Teacher	Observation with Education Tutor	Observation with Vocational Mentor	Interviews Completed
Johnson	Denis √	Rachel √	Johnson, Denis, Rachel
Maria	Laura √	Delia √	Maria, Laura, Delia
Alan	Shirley √	Miriam √	Alan, Shirley, Miriam
Clive	Anna (HE) √	Vince √	Clive, Anna, Vince
Simona	Anna (HE) √	Julie X	Simona, Anna, Julie
<b>Observations = 9</b>			<b>Interviews = 15</b>

### 5.13 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the conceptualisation of observation in Chapter Four led to CHAT in the search for an appropriate methodological framework. CHAT was seen as offering a framework which accepted that, in order to understand the process of ITT observations, they needed to be placed in the historical and cultural context in which they had emerged. CHAT's prime unit of analysis is at the level of the activity and once ITT observations were construed as an activity, the framework proved facilitative and an activity heuristic developed. The heuristic was modelled in figure 4 of this chapter.

Additionally, CHAT's conceptual toolbox (Edwards and Daniels, 2004) offered an analytic frame of reference.

The rationale behind the case study research approach to data generation was also the subject of this chapter. The generation of the sample of vocational teachers was made transparent and the research methods adopted were explained. Discussion followed on the approach that was adopted during observations of vocational teachers' practice. Adopting a non-obtrusive observation approach (Robson, 2002), coupled with Coffey's (1999) insights into the ethnographic self, was helpful in 'placing' myself as researcher during the observation of vocational teachers.

The final section of the chapter provided an overview of the observations and interviews conducted in Table 6. The findings from the fieldwork are the subject of the next chapters and correspond to the order in which I have case study subjects in Table 6 in this chapter. This does, broadly, represent the order in which observations and interviews were completed and the write-up of the cases. The presentation of case studies in this order reflects the developing realisation of issues that enabled the analysis to take shape and therefore lays testament to the iterative process of generating data and analysis.



## **Chapter Six: Case Studies 1 and 2**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The Case Study accounts are organised into three chapters, each following the same format, and reflecting the intermingling of data as described in Chapter Five. The subjects in each case study are identified as 'key players' and their respective biographies are presented first to act as an advanced organiser for the case study accounts. As outlined in Chapter Five, participants and college locations have been given pseudonyms. These have been used throughout the case study accounts.

The biographical accounts were gleaned from the one-to-one interviews with subjects, as outlined in the previous chapter. These accounts are followed by an overview of context, which includes a brief description of the FE College and department in which observations take place and the ITT course attended by the vocational teacher. A more detailed description of the location of the teaching observation (i.e. the classrooms and vocational workshops where the teaching takes place) is given in the account of the observation. Diagrams have been included to reinforce the descriptive accounts of the classroom/workshops. An account of the teaching observation is then given. This takes the form of a descriptive account of the "...space; actors; events; time; activities", as outlined by Spradley (1980), cited in Robson (2002:320), and recorded using the proforma designed for this purpose, as described in the previous chapter. A discussion of the reflections of the subjects on the observation process follows the account of the observation. The reflections of the observing tutor are given after each of the observations that they have conducted and the vocational teacher's reflections are given at the end of the case study account. These reflections have been gleaned from interviews conducted before and/or after the respective observations. This chapter discusses two case studies:

- Case Study 1: Catering
- Case Study 2: Health and Social Care

## **6.2 Case Study 1: Catering**

### **Case study 1**

#### **Catering**

#### **West College**

#### **Key Players in the Case Study Activity**

**Vocational Teacher, Catering: Johnson**

**Vocational Mentor: Rachel**

**Education Tutor: Denis**

## 6.3 Biographies

### The Catering Teacher: Johnson

Johnson was a full time catering lecturer at West College and in his third year of teaching. He became a college lecturer after a career in catering spanning more than twenty years, mainly in the UK but also in Switzerland.

Johnson left school with few qualifications except, as he said, with: '*CSE Domestic Science and I got a grade 3!*'. He then took the advice of his mother to go to sea because, as he had asthma and was very shy, she thought he was '*too sickly to work in factories and offices or whatever and she thought...well if I worked in catering on a cruise liner then it would be better for me*'. In the late 1970s, once he returned home, he gained his City and Guilds catering qualifications at a local college in the North West of England. Johnson then began his career as a commis chef in his home area. Gradually moving to the South of England in the 1980s, he became Head Chef in a London private secondary school.

In the late 1980s, Johnson had his first experience of working in a setting where the prime function was not service and catering, but teaching aspiring chefs. This was in Switzerland. As he explained:

*I got this offer to work in Switzerland...where I worked in the kitchen as a culinary chef...the school/college in Switzerland was plainly a touristic thing, touristic education, hospitality and catering orientated [and] they paid 15,000 Swiss Francs a term, so they came to learn.*

He enjoyed the work and gained Swiss and other international diplomas in hotel and restaurant management. After five years he returned to London, where he became kitchen manager of a large HE institution. But, following the move to fast-food outlets in the institution and a reluctance to employ qualified chefs, Johnson saw an advertisement for a Catering Lecturer at West College and secured the post in 2006. When asked why he decided to apply for a full-time teaching post, Johnson explained:

*Well, like, I had the experience in Switzerland for 5 years, and I did want to go back into it. I thought yes I'd go for it because it might be just the same as in Switzerland and...it wasn't. It wasn't....*

### **The Vocational Mentor: Rachel**

Rachel had been teaching at West College for 15 years and had acted as a mentor for about four years, primarily within the service industry sectors in the college, which included Hospitality and Catering, Hair and Beauty, Leisure, and Travel and Tourism. Rachel's vocational area was Hospitality, and she had many years experience in the industry. As she explained, her specific experience in the catering industry was 'front of house'\*:

*Yeah I'm front of house, although I do know how the kitchen operates. And sometimes it's nice that you see it from a different perspective, you know, and you help each other.*

\*'Front of house' is concerned with services and staff who deal directly with guests, clients and customers.

### **The Education Tutor: Denis**

Denis had originally been a teacher of English as a Foreign Language/English for Speakers of Other Languages (EFL/ESOL). He spent 15 years teaching both in the UK in FE colleges and in private language colleges and, through the British Council, overseas. He then moved into the training of tutors to teach in EFL/ESOL, which he had done for a number of years before taking on a role in staff development at West College. He was still involved in EFL teaching and acted as an examiner of EFL students in the Europe.

Denis was an experienced tutor trainer. He led a team of tutors who taught and assessed on the ITT programme, which operated at the college. He also conducted the ITT observations. At West College, Denis led the staff development unit. This unit ran short continuous professional development (CPD) courses for staff in response to demand from across the college. This meant that he was also a key player in the college's internal Quality Assurance/OFSTED preparation observations.

## 6.4 Context

### **The Hospitality Department, West College**

West College was a large, urban, ethnically diverse, FE College. It had multiple sites across a given geographical area and staff often travelled to teach at different sites. The college's hospitality department offered courses from QCF entry level through to level 3 and Johnson's teaching spanned the range of the vocational curricula. Most of Johnson's students studied at the college full time and were in the age range 16-21 years old. Johnson taught students who were working towards qualifications which gave access to the catering industry. This included front of house staff as well as aspiring chefs.

To address all aspects of the curriculum in these vocational areas, Johnson taught practical sessions in the well resourced teaching kitchens and in designated teaching areas where food preparation was conducted. He also taught in traditional classroom settings where a range of subjects, including food safety regulations and health and safety, were usually timetabled. Depending on the organisation of the timetable, Johnson often taught the same group of students in teaching kitchens as well as in classrooms.

### **The ITT Programme**

West College was part of a partnership of FE colleges offering an in-service, part-time ITT programme (PGCE) validated and led by a central London University. All new staff were enrolled onto the programme and they attended one of West College's sites one morning or evening each week over a period of two years to complete the programme. Johnson was a member of a PGCE group which included West College staff from a range of curriculum areas, including History, Computing, Construction, Hairdressing and Catering. Johnson started the PGCE in his second year of teaching at the college and at the time of this research he was in the second year of the ITT course.

## 6.5 Observations of Teaching

Two opportunities to attend settings where Johnson's teaching was being observed formed part of the research. One observation (Observation 1) was of a practical teaching session with BTEC level 3 Diploma Catering students. The session began in a food preparation area and then moved into a kitchen setting. This observation was conducted by Johnson's workplace mentor, Rachel.

The second observation (Observation 2) took place in a classroom. The session was part of a short course on Food Safety for eight level 2 students who aspired to work in the catering industry. This observation was conducted by Johnson's education tutor, Denis.

### Observation 1

Johnson was teaching a group of 16-19 year old first year catering students following a BTEC level 3 Diploma who were just at the point of completing their first term on the course. It was a practical session, which took place in two inter-connecting areas: a food preparation area, where the observation began and an industrial style kitchen, where students cook food (see Diagram 1 below). The observation covered the first hour of a three-hour teaching session where students were preparing and cooking a meal including 'Beef Tariyaki' and accompanying vegetables. Food safety regulations required that anyone entering these areas of food preparation needed to wear appropriate clothing and suitable outfits were made available to visitors to the areas.

The session began at 12.30 with eight students, all in full uniform, including hats, aprons and regulation footwear. Each student brought their own knife packs, an important and also rather symbolic artefact associated with the development of an identity as a chef. Johnson positioned himself behind a stainless steel serving table on which he began to arrange some ingredients. Students eventually gathered in front of

the table and became aware of another trolley, positioned behind them, also full of ingredients. A food technician<sup>9</sup> arrived with the meat and added it to the table of ingredients. There was a good deal of talking about food by Johnson, punctuated by many food-related anecdotes told with good humour, but with little student comment. One or two questions were raised by the students about the ingredients: e.g. *Why use spring onions as they were not in the recipe?* This led to more stories about food needing to be *'authentic'*, and about when it was appropriate to deviate from recipes. After approximately 15/20 minutes, students began to collect their ingredients. However, the placement of ingredients on the trolley did not facilitate this easily and there were also some queries about the correct identification of the ingredients. The quantities of ingredients required were not immediately known to the students and the meat provided turned out to be lamb not beef, so needed to be exchanged. Eventually, students dispersed, in pairs, to long, stainless steel preparation tables along with the ingredients which they began to sort and weigh as required.

Forty minutes after the start of the lesson (13.10) Johnson led the students (accompanied by the ingredients) into the inter-connected kitchen area, where the cooking took place. Students initially placed their ingredients on food preparation counters and Johnson gathered them around for a demonstration (see Diagram 1 below). The demonstration consisted of, firstly, cutting the meat into strips and, secondly, preparing a marinade. During the demonstration, Johnson asked a series of open questions to check knowledge of the process being demonstrated and to alert the students to the sequencing of activities which needed to be completed for the task at hand. Students then moved to their workstations to put into practice what had been demonstrated, facilitated by Johnson who moved from student to student making comments, giving feedback and alerting them to any relevant health and safety issues. After 15 minutes, students were gathered around again for another demonstration,

---

<sup>9</sup> Food technicians are employed by the college to help teaching staff with day-to-day needs of working in a kitchen. They supply ingredients and keep other provisions fully stocked in the kitchen and storage areas.

which involved the use of filo pastry sheets and vegetables, and this demonstration was supported by a series of questions and answers (Q&A). The observation ended at this point.

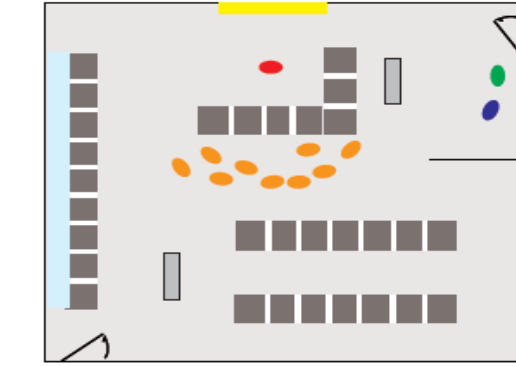
### **The vocational mentor in action**

During the observation Rachel moved around both the food preparation area and the kitchen. This enabled her to study the ingredients being used by, for example, handling parsley, smelling herbs and feeling the firmness of vegetables. To record her thoughts and act as an aide memoir during the observation, Rachel used a small clipboard, noting down points that she wanted to raise later with Johnson, during the feedback discussion. Rachel also took opportunities to speak to the students to check their knowledge and skills as well as their understanding of the aims of the lesson. For example she asked a pair of students during the food preparation stage: *'How do you know the recipe?'*, *'What time do you usually move into kitchen?'*, and later, *'How easy do you find it slice the meat for the Tariyaki?'*. She did not speak to Johnson during the observation and he did not engage, verbally, with her.

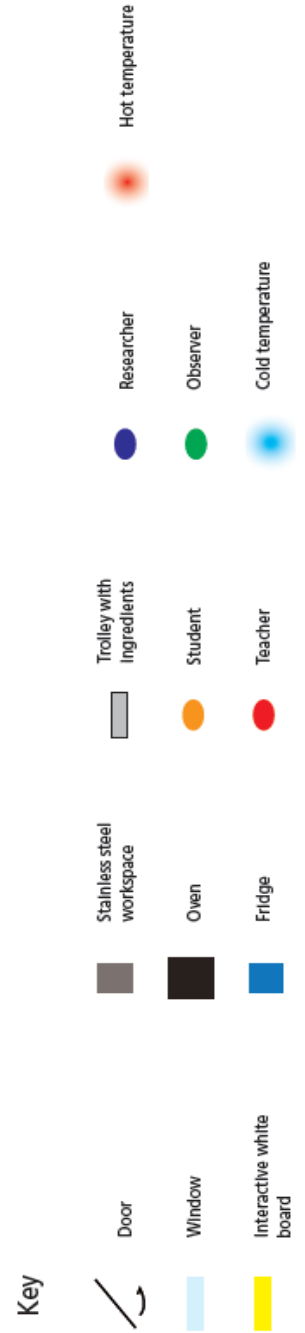
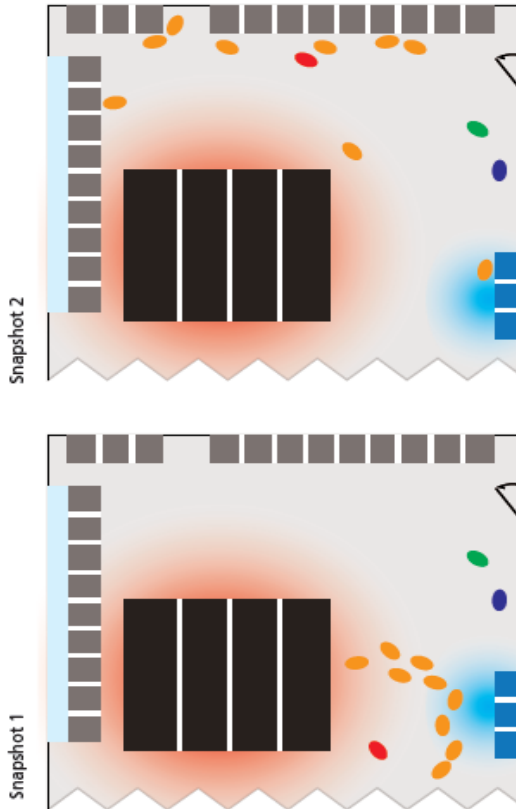


Diagram 1: Observation 1, Catering observation Kitchen

Catering Preparation Area  
Case Study 1  
Vocational Mentor Observation



Catering Kitchen  
Case Study 1  
Vocational Mentor Observation



## 6.6 The Vocational Mentor's Reflections and Feedback Discussion

The observation led Rachel to organise the feedback discussion with Johnson around two main issues: a) the range of strategies needed to develop and check student learning; and b) the extent to which Johnson's practice continued to mirror what she described as the *'real working environment'*. From Rachel's perspective, Johnson's main areas for development in the observed lesson concerned the organisation of the activities around food preparation and how Johnson might further develop a more effective use of the time he had available with the students. The following quote illustrates her view in response to a comment from me on the food preparation part of the session:

*Int: Just taking that first part, sort of getting ready...presumably that's the sort of thing that happens all the time in a kitchen?*

*Rachel: It does, but it should be a lot [quicker] even if they're first years. The whole idea is that they are doing something, rather than collecting ingredients. You know, you want them collecting the ingredients, you want to make that as quick as is possible so they can actually be doing something.*

In discussing the lesson further and, specifically, the length of time taken in sorting out and selecting the ingredients and how this might be managed better, Rachel raised the issue of the compromises that needed to be developed by Johnson between the desire to, as she said, *'let the students find their way'* (on this occasion identifying and selecting the right ingredients required for the recipe from the range available) and the demands of the vocational setting:

*Rachel: Because [when] you go into industry, we haven't got half an hour to go around and collect our ingredients, the chef would be cursing, he'd be swearing at you and he'd go "there's the door, goodbye". And really our job is to teach them the skills and the knowledge that they need, however, to industry level...It's supposed to be a real working environment, so obviously what you need to remember is that in a real kitchen they would have the skills and knowledge, they would know what spinach was like.*

*[but]..These kids probably don't know what spinach is, so...it would have been better to... say "what is this, tell me what this is, how are we going to use this in the recipe". I would have had their recipe books there, I would have had extra copies of recipe today, because they were sharing.*

In her preparation for the post observation feedback, Rachel's focus centred on exploring other ways in which the session could have been organised to meet learners' needs in the vocational context. When asked whether she was dissatisfied with the food preparation section of Johnson's session, she was adamant that she was not unhappy and explained how students' needs will vary as their experience develops and that it is this aspect of teaching and learning that Johnson will eventually grasp:

*Rachel: No I wouldn't say I'm unhappy. I would say that there are other ways it could be done better for learners, that's what I would say...When they are just beginning it's like, you know, you've got to teach them how to hold a knife, you've got to teach them to be able to recognise the right knives to use.*

She explained that she would suggest to Johnson that he thinks through the organisation of the session more. Additionally, she had some ideas and strategies to share with Johnson e.g. completing all preparation work in the first teaching area, so that once the students move into the kitchen they can just 'get going'.

With respect to other aspects of the observed session, as well as acknowledging the strength of Johnson's knowledge base, Rachel centred on the positive relationships with students and the use of humour. She said:

*Rachel: So the positive is, well he's quite humorous, he's very...he's got a lot of sound knowledge, he knows what he's talking about, there's no two ways that he doesn't...and the repartee...they love that.*

References back to the working context resonated in our discussion of the feedback, an aspect particularly noticeable in the rationale she provided for the judgements she was making about Johnson's practice. The link between the development of strategies to

improve student learning and the real work environment featured in Rachel's endorsement of Johnson's practice, particularly around the central strategy used in the kitchen, demonstration:

*Rachel: So that's good how he's doing that [demonstration] in small chunks, so that he's basically not asking too much of them, and then they can remember and he can go round and check their progress if they're unsure, you know, about cutting the meat "let's reinforce it, let me show you again", and then call them back once more.*

The issue of time/time management was, for Rachel, absolutely central to the development of vocational practice, even in the section of the lesson where students were 'getting on' and cooking. Rachel explained that she would share strategies with Johnson that had helped her in this regard too. Additionally, she talked about how these strategies had already been adopted by others in the department:

*Rachel: you need a time clock, you need a time clock ticking away. "So you've got 15 minutes, here's the clock", this is how I teach them when I'm teaching it, when they just begin. I put it on the television [in the restaurant] and say "You've got 20 minutes to do this task, at the 20 minutes we stop".*

*A couple of us do it. And a simple reason I do that in [the restaurant] is that speed is of the essence when you're serving customers, so they have to learn the speed. So when I say to them "you've only got 45 minutes in which to set up this dining room" I don't need to put a time clock on after a few lessons – they know. So [Johnson needs to think]... "right, once we get in the other room we'll give you five minutes to get your equipment, then I'll give you 15 minutes, at the end of the 15 minutes, you got the clock counting down, it will all be in the fridge and then you'll come back to the table".*

Rachel did not question nor, indeed, hardly comment on Johnson's vocational expertise. Similarly, she did not highlight the ways in which central aspects of practice (e.g. health and safety issues) are features of the learning and teaching process.

Indeed, as a researcher-observer, the ways in which health and safety reminders and practices were embedded into Johnson's practice was much more note-worthy to me, than to Rachel. When I mentioned the way in which the sharpening of knives in preparation for meat slicing had been prefaced with health and safety reminders, Rachel agreed and commented:

*Rachel: And those are really positives, excellent points...Reinforcing, that's right. And I'm going to write that down, because although I see it, I'm glad you brought that back to me [to mention] health and safety'.*

These aspects are part of Johnson's vocational practice: they are secure; they are the given aspects of his teaching. They are, arguably, also so much a part of the vocational routine that it appears they need no particular comment. From the interview with Rachel,<sup>10</sup> it became clear that the purpose of the post-observation feedback discussion with Johnson was to identify what went well in the session and also to identify strategies to facilitate learning in the vocational context.

## **Observation 2**

The second observation took place in a classroom at West College. The session was part of a short course on Food Safety, with eight Level 2 students, aged over 18. The observation lasted one hour between 11am to 12 noon and the duration of the class was one hour and 30 minutes. The classroom was a rectangular shape with 'rows' of separate desks and chairs laid out (exam-style). Along the window wall, a row of desks acted as computer workstations, and were arranged facing the interior of the classroom (See Diagram 2).

By 11am, two students had arrived and sat at the desks near the front. They were joined by a other students, completing the group of eight by 11.30. Johnson had written the aims of the session on a power point slide, which he displayed and read

---

<sup>10</sup> It was not possible to attend the feedback discussion between Johnson and Rachel

out. However, because Johnson stood in front of the screen, he obscured the text. At 11.10 (with five students in attendance) he distributed a 'spot the hazard' cartoon handout and asked students to circle the hazards. As they tried to complete the task, he talked about possible health and safety hazards, supplemented by anecdotes from his experience in the industry. Although the activity was introduced as a paired task, all students completed the task on their own and they remained scattered around the front two rows of desks. The feedback stage of the activity involved the use of the Inter-active White Board (IWB), where a copy of the cartoon had been up-loaded, and Johnson circled the potential hazards on the IWB that he had wanted the students to identify.

At 11.40, a power point slide in the form of a spider-gram was used as a backdrop to the next activity i.e. to identify potential sources of bacteria in food preparation. There was some general question-and-answer (Q&A) activity. Answers during this activity came from the same three students and their answers were interspersed with stories and anecdotes that Johnson told about finding various objects in food. This activity was followed by a short video-clip demonstrating the dangers of unsafe practices around food. Johnson led a Q&A session based on the clip and students were told the things they should have noticed from the video-clip. When students were asked at various points in the lesson whether they had understood what they had been told or what they had seen, all responded in unison: '*Yes Chef!*'. The observation finished as planned at 12.00 noon.

### **The Education Tutor in Action**

During the observation, Denis sat by the window, beside computers and behind the students. This gave him a good view of the group and meant that he was out of Johnson's direct eye line. Whilst waiting for students to arrive, Denis set up a small flip cam (a small video camera) on the desk beside him as Johnson was going to use the recording of the session to evaluate his practice. The flip cam was positioned so that it captured the whole group, with Johnson in the centre.

As the students did not move during the session and Johnson's movements were minimal, this fixed positioning served to record events, with Denis turning the camera once to sweep the whole room. At one point (10 minutes into the session) the camera battery failed and Denis left the room for 5 minutes to collect a replacement.

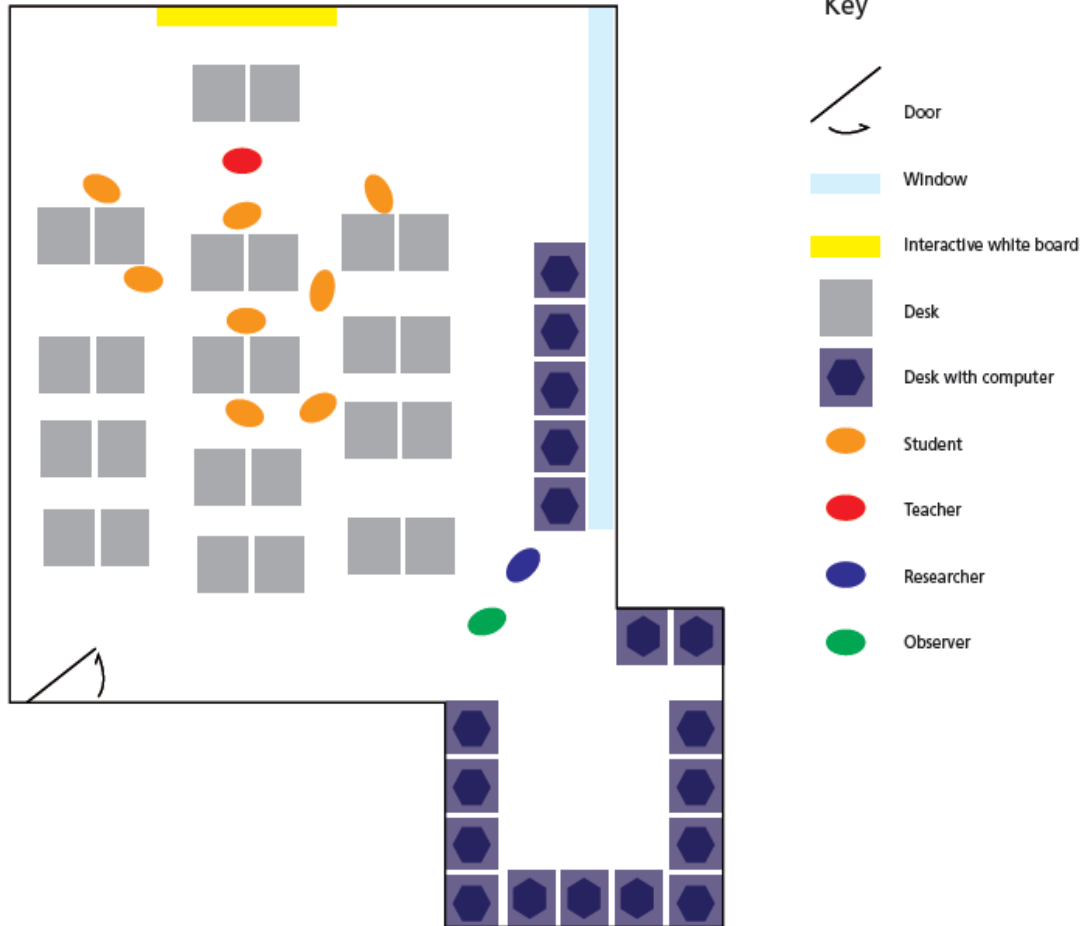
To record his thoughts during the observation, Denis made hand written notes on a pad. He also had a laptop computer in use with an observation proforma word document open. At various intervals throughout the session he composed hand written notes alternating with completion of the proforma on his laptop. Apart from leaving the room to collect the replacement flip cam, Denis did not circulate in the classroom. Additionally, he did not approach either the students or Johnson to engage, verbally, with them.

Diagram 2: Observation 2, Catering classroom observation

Catering

Case Study 1

Education Tutor Observation





## 6.7 The Education Tutor's reflections on the observation and feedback discussion

When asked what he was looking for, in general, in the observations that he conducted for ITT and why, Denis identified classroom management, varying learning strategies and language use as central to his approach to teaching observations:

*Denis: I suppose primarily I'm looking to see what the teacher is doing which facilitates learning...So I kind of tick off, I'm ticking off partly what's in the observation form and also what's in my own head about what I think needs to exist for effective learning to be taking place. So it might be things like...well initially classroom management, you know, without good classroom management then the rest...can't be as effective, so I look initially for classroom management. The quality of the teacher's language, what they're saying and how they say it.*

To explain why these aspects framed his observations, Denis identified his own practice and accumulated experience of 'what appears to work' in various learning contexts, plus his own 'belief', as he explained, in theories of learning:

*Denis: I suppose first of all I'm going to say "my own classroom practice" and noticing in my own practice what appears to work and doesn't work. Secondly, observing different curriculum areas in a variety of different levels and seeing what appears to work. And my own belief in theory and how...learning approaches can be applied to different curriculum areas and how that approach will feed down into a method, and then within that particular method what techniques can be deployed in the classroom to achieve learning in that way. I suppose it's a combination of those things.*

Turning the discussion to observation 2, Denis identified the session as a 'marginal pass', with the areas for development concerned with the organisation and management of learning activities - particularly the staging of activities and the use of language. With respect to the latter, the following quotation is illustrative:

*Denis: ...with [Johnson] when there's so much incidental language going on, the quality, the gold of what he's actually saying, is just lost and buried. And possibly coming from an ESOL, or ELT background, I think I'm very aware of the fact that too much [teacher talk] and unfocused [teacher talk] can really confuse learners.*

Whilst reflecting on the observation, described above, Denis drew a comparison between Johnson's practices in contrasting teaching contexts. In an earlier observation of Johnson's teaching by Denis, which had been of a practical session in the kitchens and conducted jointly with Rachel, Denis explained how he had observed Johnson evidencing, as he said, *'the kind of thing I would expect'*, when teaching. However, these expectations had not been met in the classroom-based session observed. In the extract that follows, Denis described how Johnson had organised learning and teaching strategies and managed the classroom to achieve the objectives of the practical session, but had not been able to do this in the theory class:

*Denis: [In the practical session Johnson] does a little demonstration and the students then follow through the demonstration...And he goes around and essentially monitors and checks what they're doing and puts them right where necessary...And that's the kind of thing I would expect to see in a theory class as well. I'd expect knowledge to be conveyed in some way and then some practice with that knowledge to help consolidate, reinforce it, to help the learning. So he does that in the practical session...If he could just apply that same, "get students doing something, monitoring, helping, building on"...And in the kitchens they're working together as well, they're collaborating. He gets students to look at each other's work, how they've cut something, how they're cooking something, and there's lots and lots of collaborative work going on!*

Using the comparative lens once more, Denis explained that the strategies so evident to him in Johnson's practical teaching were absent in his theory classes. For instance, Denis thought Johnson tried to develop what he called *'students' higher order thinking'* in the practical session, but did not do so in the classroom. To illustrate this approach, Denis gave an example of how, following a demonstration by Johnson, catering

students made Hollandaise Sauce, and how Johnson then used effective questioning to develop students' *'higher order thinking'*:

*Denis: [Another] teacher would say "you're doing it wrong, do it like this", when [Johnson] was doing it, he said: "it's not right. What happens if you do this, what happens if you do that" and actually forcing the students to think about the effect of adding more oil, or how you could change the egg, or mix it slightly differently...And so it's that kind of question(ing) that I would look for in a theory class as well, but he doesn't do it there, but he does do it in the practical, he forces the learners to think and engage with the resources.*

Denis was therefore frustrated by Johnson's apparent inability to apply what he did so well in a practical catering class to classroom-based learning, suggesting that: *'I suppose he thinks theory lessons should be done in a different way, and as a result I don't think they're very good'*.

## The Feedback Discussion

The observation feedback discussion between Johnson and Denis centred on developing an approach to learning and teaching which should, from Denis' perspective, '*maximize learner-centred activities*', '*encourage learner collaboration*' and develop learning during '*feedback stages*' in activities. The feedback discussion began with Denis asking Johnson to give a verbal review of what he thought went well, why it went well and what he would change next time. Johnson began by talking through the structure of the lesson and clarifying the content, adding more information as he progressed with his overview.

During Johnson's overview, whilst primarily listening, Denis interjected at points where he wanted Johnson to reflect more on either the various learning activities or on how Johnson was managing the activity. E.g. *how could you have made it more differentiated?* He then talked through aspects of the session that had not been covered by Johnson and identified the specific development points that had already been recorded on an observation feedback proforma, which he gave to Johnson. Very specific strategies were shared with Johnson. Examples of these are given below to illustrate the suggestions, which were woven into the feedback discussion:

*We need task, feedback, task, feedback...Otherwise they don't actually know the answers...Focussed instructions: don't forget to use 'RICH' : 'Re'-group; 'Instruct'; 'Check' instructions and 'Handout' materials[..]Develop the directed questions [to bring in all].*

Additionally, Denis addressed the number and length of anecdotal stories which emerged from Johnson's extensive catering experience and which were told to the students during the session. Given the importance Denis ascribed to language in the classroom and the frequency of what he called '*incidental language*', Denis began the discussion of language use with Johnson by commenting on the positive value of the stories and their use as a '*valuable resource*' - '*bringing to life*' the topic under discussion.

However, he also asked Johnson to consider ways in which these could be turned into more of '*...an academic advantage in teaching*'. He followed this with a number of examples of how the stories could be used as part of a more learner-centred activity, rather than just relying on students' listening. Once a couple of examples were given, Johnson joined in and indicated that he had understood what was being proposed:

*Denis : So, you tell story and then get them to fill the gaps...or make it a case study...[or a] problem solving activity..this happens, then...*

*Johnson: ...and they could say what happens next?*

*Denis: Yes...Yes...Tweaking so it is less listening and more activity.*

## 6.8 Johnson's Reflections on the Observation Process

In general, Johnson was positive about the observation process as a central element of the ITT programme and had been observed four times during the first year of the course and once in the second year by the time the interview took place. These observations had been completed by his mentor and by at least two (different) education tutors.

He saw the purpose of the ITT observations as '*putting into practice what had been taught*'. However, this did not stop him from feeling anxious prior to an observation. As he explained:

*I feel nervous, very nervous, because they want to make sure you're doing a good job, or will do a good job. So...all these things that they've taught you is going through your head, and it gets muddled up. Because you've got your students there, and you know some of them very well, you've got them down to pat... And you've got this person stood at the back looking at you...And then you're thinking "that didn't go well, that was terrible, this happened, that happened, I don't think I handled that well".*

The anxiety remained regardless of whether the observer was from his vocational area or not. However, he felt much more comfortable and positive about an observation of practical teaching. As he explained, this was because: '*I'm better off in practicals, I live in the kitchen*'.

For Johnson the judgemental element attached to the observation, that is, whether he was going to pass, was a significant feature. As he explained, the judgement was the aspect, which marked the difference between observing people in a crowd, for example, and teaching observations. Observations in practical contexts, normally in the kitchens, had produced more positive outcomes for him:

*The practical ones [observations] were fine, they said that I've got great knowledge scope, the students were comfortable with it, it was challenging and all the rest ...*

However, in explaining the contrast between teaching a practical session and teaching a session in a classroom, Johnson explained that he felt far less secure of his ground. To explain what he meant he drew on a metaphor of keys as a means of unlocking understanding:

*[In]practical [sessions] you can get by, you can have a structure, you can turn and have the same structure all the time. But with theory, it's the person that you are trying to get the information into, and not every key opens the same door, so you have to use various keys to open many doors. So if you aren't able to use many keys, you can only use one key, how many people are you reaching?*

In order for the observation process to be a helpful learning experience, Johnson expected observers to specify what could be done about an aspect of his teaching, which was seen to need development. Where this had happened, Johnson saw the feedback process as 'useful' and 'constructive'. To illustrate, Johnson contrasted two experiences that had followed observations of theory sessions, which had both been referred<sup>11</sup>. The first one had been conducted by a member of the education team he had not met previously and had, in his words, left him 'demoralised' as he felt unable to identify what he could do to develop his practice during the feedback discussion. In contrast, the feedback discussion following a theory observation that had been referred by his mentor included discussion of specific strategies and ways of organising the session. Johnson suggested that these, 'really useful suggestions', meant that he had learned from the experience and was prepared to put the ideas into action.

---

<sup>11</sup> Referred meant that he needed to repeat the observation as there had not been enough evidence that he had met the required standards

What Johnson wanted from his observers was opportunities to think about ways in which aspects of his teaching could be improved. To do this he needed guidance and specific suggestions. Indeed, he saw parallels between what he saw his students receiving from him in his practical sessions and what he felt he needed from observers, albeit in a different form:

*...when I'm doing an observation [of students' practice in the kitchen]...if they were doing an assessment and they presented a dish, I would taste it for seasoning, taste it for flavour, taste it for texture, and then I would tell them if it was too salty, or not enough seasoning. I would tell them if it was still tough or if it was not cooked, and so forth. And then I would turn and suggest to them "next time maybe you should get this on first" or whatever.*

## **6.9 Summary points Case Study 1**

Rachel's observation in the practice environment led her to focus on time-efficient practice, health and safety and preparation for the working environment. These vocational issues, reinforced by Rachel's occupational experiences, were central to her discussion of Johnson's practice.

From Denis' reflections on the observation, it was clear that teaching in classrooms was a particular challenge for Johnson. Whilst Denis had observed what he described as 'good teaching' in practical settings, this was not evident in observation 2. The transfer of what had been learned on the ITT course had not been observed in the classroom. The themes of language use and, particularly, the use of vocational anecdotes, and the organisation of learning were key issues raised in the feedback discussion with Johnson. The feedback discussion was lengthy and encouraged Johnson to engage, verbally, with areas for development. These issues reflected Denis' expertise as a language-learning specialist and teacher trainer.

Johnson had considerable expertise as a Chef and catering manager. His experiences of ITT observations were varied and he found them to be anxiety provoking, especially when conducted in classrooms. This led him to be completely clear about the conditions, which needed to be fulfilled before observations could be considered of value. Observations would only lead to developmental outcomes if there were key learning points from the activity. He drew upon his extensive experience of giving feedback in catering settings to illustrate his need for direction.

These summary points will be developed and discussed as part of the analysis and discussion in Chapter Nine.



## **6.10 Case Study 2: Health and Social Care**

### **Case Study 2**

#### **Health and Social Care**

#### **North College**

#### **Key Players in the Case Study Activity**

**Vocational Teacher of Health and Social Care: Maria**

**Education Tutor: Laura**

**Vocational Mentor: Delia**

## 6.11 Biographies

### The Health and Social Care Teacher: Maria

Qualified to degree level in Business Studies Maria was originally a bi-lingual (Greek/English) Personal Assistant. However, for four or five years whilst her own children were young, Maria worked as a childminder in her own home. As her own children grew up, Maria studied for an Early Years foundation degree and gained a BA in Early Years from a local University.

Whilst completing the degree, Maria was encouraged to complete an Assessor Award. This enabled her to assess childcare students' competence in the workplace. Although Maria had not worked in contexts other than her own child minder's setting, the students that she was assessing were working in the full range of childcare settings i.e. private and state nurseries; toddler groups and so on. The childcare students Maria assessed in workplaces also attended North College, studying on Early Years courses at levels 1-3. Through her assessor role, Maria became aware that to extend her employment opportunities in this area, she needed to be involved in teaching, as well as assessing, childcare students. She therefore negotiated voluntary teaching at the college, one day per week.

As a volunteer teacher, Maria enrolled on the two-year part time in-service ITT course offered at the college (see context). At the end of her first year of voluntary teaching, Maria was successful in gaining part-time work, one day per week, in the Health and Social Care Department at the College. This coincided with the start of her second year on ITT course. Given that Maria was qualified to degree level, she was asked to teach units on BTEC level 3 courses that included child development and, because she had a particular interest in sociology, was asked to teach sociology-related units to second year level 3 BTEC students.

At the end of her first year in teaching Maria had also become an accredited Ofsted inspector for Early Years – an achievement she was delighted with. Asked how she defined herself at this point of the course, she responded:

*'I see myself now more as a trouble shooter as an assessor ... I enjoy teaching but I can see myself going into settings [and saying] this needs to be done; this needs to be done. For now, I'm happy sticking with early years ... but I may go into other workplace setting like schools, colleges etc ... Assessing has helped me gain all the knowledge I need in all childcare settings ... this is what helped me to become an OFSTED inspector.'*

### **The Vocational Mentor: Delia**

Delia initially trained to teach children with learning difficulties in secondary schools and taught in schools and, later, in FE colleges for ten years before making a career change and working in public health. She worked in public health for a further ten years.

Once she was asked to take on more of a training role in public health, she rekindled her desire to be back in a classroom once more and moved back into teaching on a fractional post. She had been at North College for five years at the start of the research.

Delia was the programme leader for the BTEC Health and Social Care Level 3 course on which Maria taught, one day per week. Maria was the first person Delia had been asked to mentor and, unknown to me at the time, the observation of Maria's class was the first observation Delia had ever carried out.

### **The Education Tutor: Laura**

Laura's background was as an EFL/ESOL teacher and she had taught in the UK in FE colleges and in private language colleges and overseas. Laura had been at North College for more than ten years teaching initially on the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) courses. At the college, Laura progressed onto a role as a CELTA teacher training and had also been teaching on the specialist, LLUK endorsed, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) ITT award that was also offered at the college, through the English Department.

Laura described herself as a committed teacher, who had always known that she would move into training teachers:

*Laura: And I absolutely loved it, absolutely loved it ... I'm just a born teacher I think. And I think I'm quite good at getting that enthusiasm across for teaching. So I always wanted to do it. So I've never looked back and I don't really ever want to do anything else really.*

Laura was a relative newcomer to the small in-service ITT team of three at North College. At the time of the research Laura was in her first full academic year as part of the ITT team having taken an opportunity to move from her role as an ESOL specialist teacher trainer.

## 6.12 Context

### **The Health and Social Care Department**

At the time of the research, North College was a single-site FE college on the outskirts of London. The Health and Social Care (H&SC) Department had been recently established from an amalgamation of different sections of work, and had incorporated the childcare section of the college's work. Students in the department were invariably female and were either part-time, aged over 21 (with many in their 30s and 40s) working in various childcare settings whilst they gained work-based qualifications, or they were 18-21 year olds studying full time on BTEC Level 2 and 3 H&SC courses. These courses normally included 100 hours of work placement (2 weeks) in an H&SC setting. Most students in this latter group would progress into work positions as care assistants after completing their course. Some might enter an H&SC apprenticeship, while a small minority of Level 3 students might progress to HE, most often to follow nursing programmes.

### **The ITT Programme**

Maria was attending the part-time, two year, in-service ITT programme offered by North College. The programme was validated by a local University (which did not deliver the programme itself) and North College was the only centre which taught the validated course. The programme was structured to offer the CTTLS award, which was designed for teachers in the sector with limited roles, after one year of study and a DTLLS award after two years (see Chapter One).

All new staff at the college enrolled onto the DTLLS programme once they joined the college or after one year's teaching experience. Participants on the programme also came from colleges and training organisations in the vicinity of the college. Maria began the DTLLS programme when she started to teach as a volunteer, one day per week, at North College. Maria took part in the research at the end of the first year of the ITT programme and at the beginning of the second year.

### 6.13 Observations of Teaching

Two opportunities to attend settings where Maria's teaching was being observed formed part of the research. Both observations (Observation 3 and Observation 4) took place in classrooms.

Observation 3 was conducted by Maria's education tutor, Laura, towards the end of the first year of the course. Maria was teaching a group of 20 full time students on the first year of a full time two year, level 3 BTEC Health and Social Care course.

Observation 4 was conducted by Maria's workplace mentor, Delia. This observation took place at the beginning of her second year of teaching. Maria was teaching 17 full-time second year students on a unit on Sociology on the Level 3 BTEC Health and Social Care course.

#### Observation 3

Maria was teaching a group of 20 full-time students on the first year of a full-time two-year, Level 3 BTEC Health and Social Care course. The students were all female and ages ranged from 18 to 21. Some students had English as a second language and were relatively recently settled in the UK from various European countries. The session was a two-hour class which started at 9.00am and the observation took place after one hour and between 10 and 11am. The classroom was arranged so that students would sit in groups of four or five around tables (see Diagram 3).

When the observation began, students were engaged in planning an itinerary for a fictional elderly person who resided in a care home. Although students were grouped around tables, Maria asked individual students to feedback to the whole group what they were planning and various itineraries were announced. There were some comments and questions raised by Maria and some students asked her questions. Once the selected students reported back on their itineraries, the class moved onto the next activity. There were some BTEC assessment/assignment guidelines on the students' tables and Maria then directed students to them. She made her way around

asking individuals whether they could see the link between the activity and the assignment, which was going to be set. There was not much space between the tables and movement was not particularly easy for Maria. Although there was some student-to-student chatter, discussion of the topic in hand was mainly between Maria and the individual students whom she had approached.

After 20 minutes or so, Maria told the group the session was moving onto something else: the concept of 'Ego Integrity'. Through the use of questioning, Maria tried to get a definition clarified and then set up the next activity: to work in small groups to identify positive and negative influences on self-esteem. The activity lasted 10 minutes and then each group fed back to the whole group by reading out their lists, even though they had recorded ideas on flipchart paper. This was then followed by a short power point presentation covering the terms introduced in the session. The session finished with an overview of the forthcoming assignment and students began to ask a series of questions relating to the assessment criteria. The observation also finished at this point.

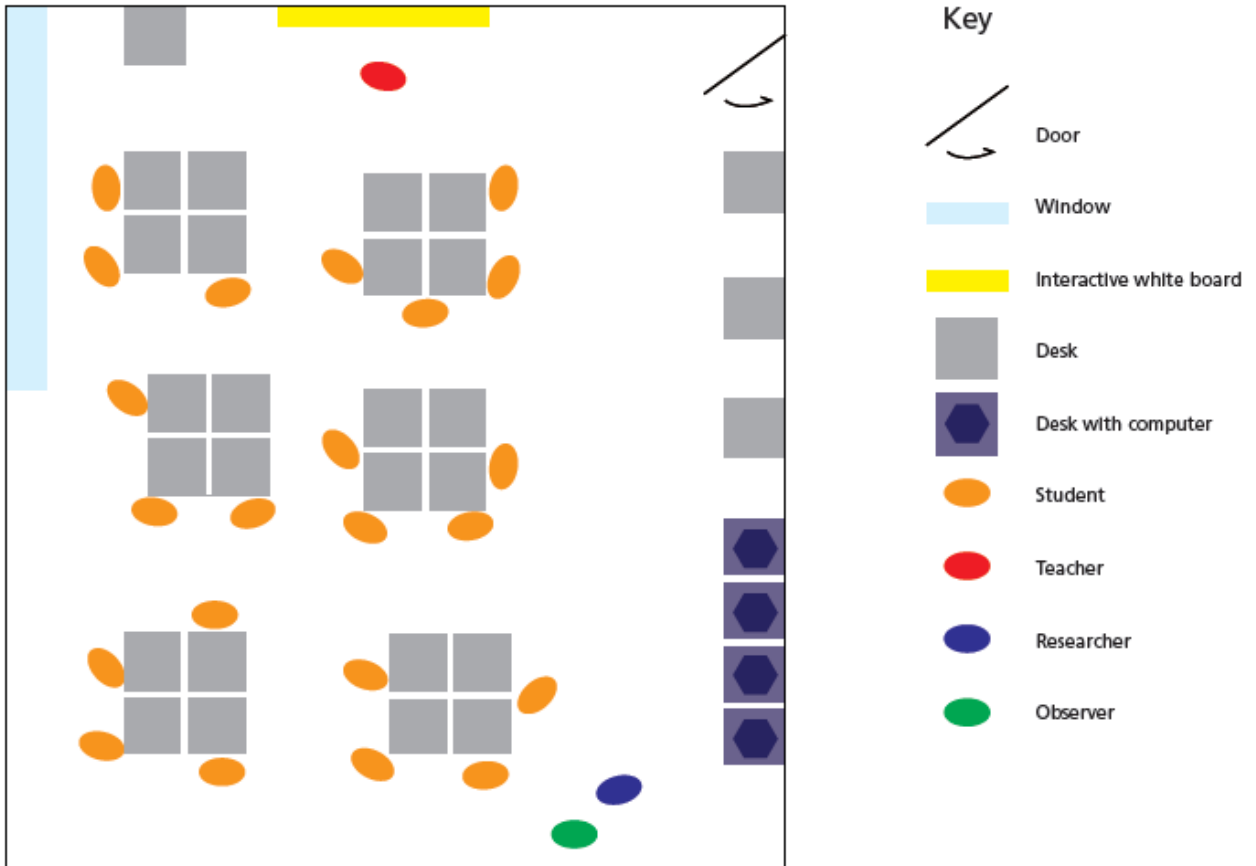
#### **The Education Tutor in Action**

During the observation Laura was positioned at the rear of the classroom (see diagram 3) and from the beginning of the observation made copious hand written notes. She had an A4 sheet of paper ruled into three columns headed: 'stage'; 'good points'; 'to consider'. She used this sheet to provide a running commentary of the session (stage) and to record what she thought had gone well (good points) as well as issues she would discuss with Maria (to consider). Forty minutes into the session, Laura had 6 full A4 pages of handwritten notes.

Laura did not circulate in the classroom and did not approach either the students or Maria to engage, verbally, with them.

Diagram 3: Observation 3, Health and Social Care classroom

Health and Social Care  
Case Study 2  
Education Tutor Observation



## 6.14 Education Tutor's Reflections and Feedback Discussion

When asked what she was looking for, in general, in observations that she conducted for the ITT award and 'why?', Laura's response was, perhaps, reflective of her emerging practice, as the following quotations indicate:

*Laura: ...what I always do, is look at the lesson plan and look at the objectives, see where we are in the lesson plan and really kind of get an idea of what's gone on before and where I am...Because I don't actually...if I'm going in I never think about what I'm looking for, I don't; I actually just go and watch the lesson and read the lesson plan and pick up things, you know. I try to record everything I think maybe.*

After a pause, she continued:

*Laura: ... I don't know, do you know, I really don't know. I just go in and watch, and try and focus on... things that I think should be happening...[Well] I don't focus on...I don't go in thinking that I'm looking at "that" unless I've observed them before and I'm looking at that specifically.*

However, when asked how she felt about undertaking observations in areas other than ESOL teacher training, Laura responded by identifying the connections between what she was confident in doing when observing ESOL teachers and how this connected to the DTTL course observations:

*Laura: I was scared in all honesty of actually not knowing what to say. How do I know what to say to a hairdresser, you know, or a numeracy teacher?...But for me there's no difference in the methodology...[I was] confident in knowing I knew what I was talking about, how we should approach teaching in terms of active learning, you know, all the approaches that we should take. So lots of pair work, group work, feedback, you know, making sure our feedback is solid, everything that we should be doing in a classroom as effective teachers.*

Laura spoke at length about the training she had received as a CELTA trainer and how this had equipped her to take on board what she described as the 'methodological' issues. She also acknowledged that she thought she could offer teachers particular insight from her own subject specialism:



*Laura :I think with my subject specialism...I feel that I can [also] give them very, very good information if they have ESOL learners in the classroom.*

Turning the discussion to observation 3, Laura clarified that the session had been a pass, with the areas for development concerned with the management of learning activities and, in particular, the strategies for feedback and assessment of student learning. Although Maria was still in the first year of the course, this had been Laura's third observation of Maria's practice and, for her, it was important that consideration was given to Maria's developing practice. For Laura, what had been observed needed to be considered in light of previous observations that she had conducted. This led to Laura identifying the journey Maria had already taken- between the first and third observation- towards a more student-centred approach. Speaking of earlier sessions where, amongst other aspects, Maria had dictated notes to students, Laura explained:

*Laura: Yeah she's amazing, she's really turned it round [After that first observation] I was looking at someone who really needed work on student centred activities and, you know, getting the students more involved. Then I know that that's what I'm working with.*

This movement towards a more student-centred learning approach was important because, for Laura, *'more learning is going to be produced'*. And this assumption, she felt, also tied in with the ethos of the DTTL course.

During the interview Laura explained the purpose of her extensive note-taking strategy during the lesson. She explained that she had always composed this narrative whilst completing CELTA observations and had continued this practice into her current role. Although she was now required to complete the DTTL proforma that was provided, she explained how she felt that the production of a running commentary was really valuable and her experience was that students loved to receive this: *'every student I've given this to has really, really appreciated this and said they found it really useful'*. She

had continued to use the strategy because, initially, she had found the given proforma unwieldy:

*I couldn't use the report first of all, I'm just getting there..., it's quite long-winded and I have to find the boxes to put things in. I'm going to simplify it a little bit over the summer. But I think it's a solid report in general, but trying to fill that in as a brand new teacher when I'm not used to it - that has been really quite difficult...what I have to do is cut back with this [narrative, because], that report takes me a good one and a half hours to put together, and with the amount of people I have to look after it's become almost impossible.*

Therefore, despite its usefulness, she was going to give up its production in the following academic year so that she could focus on the completion of the given proforma during the lesson.

#### **Observation 4**

The observed session was a one and half hour class for 17 full-time BTEC H&SC Level 3 students studying a unit on Sociology. The session took place in a classroom at North College in the first term of the students' second year of study and the observation lasted for the first hour. The students were all female, with the majority aged 21 or over. Some had English as a second language and, similar to the students in observation 3, some were relatively recently settled in the UK from various European countries. The classroom was arranged in a 'horse shoe' shape with students sitting behind the tables, facing Maria (See diagram 4).

The session began with Maria recapping on the previous week's session and reminding students of some of the key vocabulary learned. The session then progressed with a verbal gathering of views on the topic of the day: Feminism. This was followed by a definition provided on a power-point slide and the distribution of a worksheet.

Students were encouraged to complete the worksheet in groups. Most turned to their partner(s) to discuss the worksheet in pairs/threes, but none moved from their seating behind the desks. Twenty minutes into the session and after a short period of feedback from the worksheet activity, Maria went through a prepared PowerPoint presentation. Students listened to the presentation, with one or two taking notes to accompany the oral presentation, but with limited exchange between Maria and the students. The presentation was followed up with a case study activity on The Family, which was distributed to the class. Again, students were encouraged to discuss the given scenarios to arrive at their respective decisions and, after 15 minutes, were asked to compare their answers with each other. It was unclear as to how this might be done.

Following this activity there was a period of Q&A, led by Maria who directed questions to some students and open questions to the whole group. Most students responded to the questioning and some gave examples of their own differing experiences of family groupings from the wide range of cultural backgrounds represented. Given the ages of the women, with most of the 17 students in their 20s and 30s, there were some good humoured exchanges related to conjugal roles in their respective families and households. The observation finished at this point, and the class continued for a further 20 minutes.

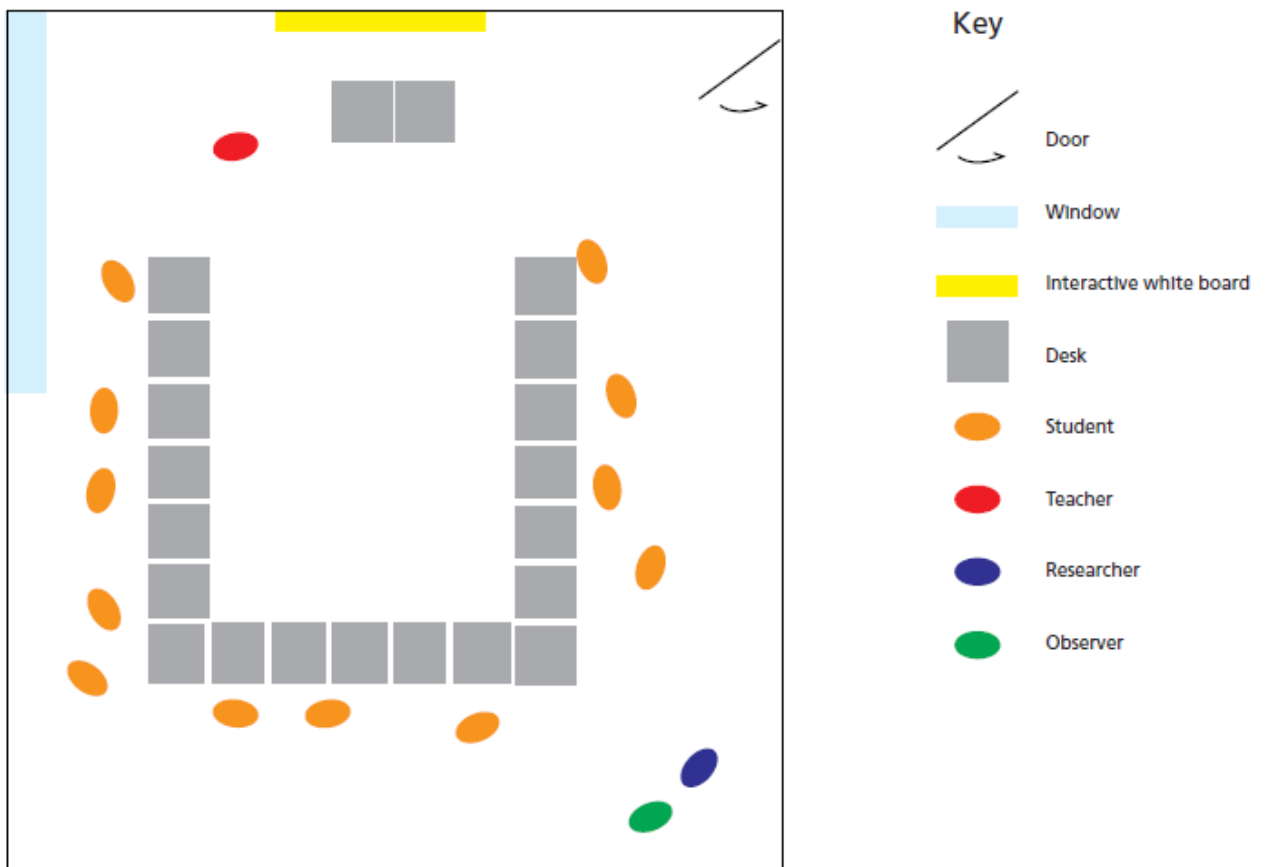
#### **Vocational Tutor's Actions**

The observation took place at the start of the lesson and whilst waiting outside the room with the students, Delia entered into conversations with students. She was one of their teachers and their programme leader, so she knew all by name. At the start of the observation, Delia was actively involved with ensuring all students had a chair and a table to rest on and had a few quiet words with latecomers. Once the session got underway, she sat at the back of the class, behind the horse-shoe arrangement of desks and apart from non-verbal exchanges (smiles and laughter, where appropriate) she did not engage with the students or with Maria.

During the session, Delia made many handwritten notes on a blank note-pad, and studied the observation proforma at various points during the session. Delia did not circulate in the classroom during the observed session.

Diagram 4: Observation 4, Health and Social Care classroom

Health and Social Care  
Case Study 2  
Vocational Mentor Observation



### 6.15 Vocational Tutor's reflection on the observation and feedback discussion

During the interview with Delia, it became apparent that this was the very first observation that she had conducted as a mentor on the programme. She was able to reflect on her preparations and execution, albeit very shortly after the event. In terms of preparation, Delia had a full discussion of the process with Laura (Maria's Education tutor), which had included an overview of the completion of the observation proforma. Delia had also been issued with a completed example of the proforma and could see the kinds of comments that had been recorded.

When asked how she had approached the observation of Maria's practice, Delia commented that she didn't think that she '*... was going in with anything very set – except with the general headings from the form...like Classroom Management...etc'*. In terms of the process of observation, Delia explained that when making notes during the session, she was keeping a running record of activities that took place, whilst also highlighting aspects that she would bring up in more detail with Maria during the feedback discussion. These aspects were not entirely driven by the proforma headings that Delia had studied prior to the observation. As she explained, the proforma influenced her at little:

*I mean, I did, half way through start to refer to the form, when students were doing group work,...but to be honest it was more getting a feel for the lesson and things that were going well and not so well...and...*

*Int: Where do you get that perspective from?*

*Delia: Oh that's personal isn't it...-that's from your own, you know,...having your own perspective on what makes a good lesson and a less good lesson.*

When asked whether there were any specific H&SC issues that framed her thoughts before conducting the observation, Delia replied:

*Delia: No..no as much as there should be perhaps?...I wasn't thinking before the session how she should be making the sociology vocationally relevant...but thinking about this now...thinking about this...it is relevant to the world of work.*

Delia confirmed that although the course was vocational there were, from her perspective, some shortcomings in this regard:

*Delia: It's a vocational course, but not as much as it probably should be...Its trying to make everything vocationally relevant, but we are not so good as we should be at getting people to come in or getting students out there...as much as we could.*

Delia clarified that the students were required to complete 100 hours of work experience and that the college arranged placements for the students, most often in a two-week block of time. Delia and the course team encouraged the students to take on additional work in the sector - '*the 100 hours not enough*' - and often they had been able to do so on a volunteer basis.

In this particular unit on Sociology, Delia explained thought it was a real '*challenge*' for the tutor to make the ideas and concepts accessible:

*Delia: It's a challenge because a lot of their [the students'] subjects are a lot more practically based and we saved this one and psychology for the second year...They are far more academic subjects with difficult language and concepts and theories that a lot of them are not familiar with at all.*

### Feedback Discussion

The observation feedback discussion between Maria and Delia took place straight after the class. The feedback discussion lasted 15 minutes and was conducted in the office space that Delia and Maria shared.

To begin the feedback Maria was asked: *How do you feel it went?* Pleased with the lesson and with what she thought was her ability to 'Get the message across', Maria began to describe the session and identify what was said by whom and how interesting it was to learn about students' experiences in countries outside the UK. Delia acknowledged this element of the lesson too as good practice and encouraged Maria to make further use of these stories by, for example, connecting to the theoretical frameworks being introduced.

Delia then moved onto sharing what she called '*tips*' to develop practice – principally around Maria's questioning technique and how she could develop and control feedback from activities, as the following extract illustrates:

*Delia: Its difficult...controlling the group when the questioning is going on. Most of them do listen [to each other] but sometimes...half the class didn't hear what individuals were saying...so...try to define strategies for the questioning...and try being quite strict about how feedback is coming back.*

After the exchange of some additional strategies for organising feedback from the group, Delia asked Maria what she might do differently next time. Immediately Maria focussed on asking direct questions to named students, but also added that she thought one slide was 'too academic' and really confused the students, so she would cut it out next time. In summing up, Delia praised Maria's '*brilliant resources*,' her rapport with the group and clarity of explanations and then stressed the areas for development as '*questioning and control of feedback*'.

## 6.16 Maria's Reflections on the Observation Process

When the interview took place, at the end of Maria's first year of teaching, Maria had been observed three times by Laura and once by a vocational mentor (not Delia) in her occupational area, childcare. When asked what happened in the observation process and how she felt about being observed, Maria admitted to getting quite anxious, particularly in the earlier parts of the course. She said:

*I felt tense, nervous and I was working around the clock to perfect it...I tried to carry on as normal...but [it's difficult]...because she sits there writing, writing writing...she doesn't interrupt. After that we have a short discussion...straight after. [We discuss] what was my strength and my weaknesses...and then we have another meeting to go through the report.*

Nevertheless, Maria was unequivocal as to the benefits of the observation process she had experienced with her education tutor, Laura, and she thought that it rested very much on being honest (with yourself):

*She [Laura] tells me where I went wrong and always starts with the positive. It helps you improve...It's not negative...It's major [the benefit]. Although I do a self evaluation after the lesson, what she [Laura] does point out I accept...She hits the nail on the head...[I'm]...learning things: how to layout the class; body language; not to have too high expectations; not to spoon feed students. I've got to challenge the learners...Immense learning...But you need to have an honest relationship...state what your own weaknesses are...You really need to be honest; not in denial.*

Turning attention to the role of the vocational mentor who had supported her during her first year (not Delia), Maria felt the experience had been less positive. According to Maria, there had, for example, been 'vagueness' in the report that was given to her following the observation that had been completed in the first year. She described the report as 'just tick, tick, tick....not much feedback at all'. Moreover, Maria doubted the contribution that could have been made by the first year mentor in relation to teaching childcare, as this extract from the interview transcript illustrates:



*Int : Did you get any ideas about the teaching of childcare [from the mentor's first year observations?]*

*Maria: with all due respect no...because I am very knowledgeable on the subject. My degree helped me...I have strong knowledge.*

Asked whether she would be looking for additional support from a vocational mentor in childcare in year two, Maria responded clearly:

*Maria: No [not with regards to] the in the knowledge aspect...My knowledge is very strong, other teachers may not have this. Also I was outstanding practitioner.*

She was, however, looking forward to support from the broader curriculum area where she had been given part-time work in Health and Social Care. She had, she conceded, 'a lot of knowledge to learn'.

### **6.17 Summary Points: Case Study 2**

Laura's background as a CELTA teacher trainer orientated her to the observation conducted for Maria. The development of the use of student-centred teaching and learning strategies and the use of language were key issues raised in the feedback discussion with Maria. Laura's use of the observation proforma illustrated artefact use in the activity. Delia brought extended experience of teaching and of public sector workplace involvement to her (new) role as a vocational mentor. Feedback discussion with Maria focussed on developments of practice related to facilitating group work and more student-centred approaches to learning. Significantly, there was no evidence of a focus on the development of practice for the vocational context.

Maria's experience as a childminder led her to completing a degree. She had moved into an assessor role and recently become an Ofsted inspector across a range of childcare settings. Maria saw her development as a teacher as a result of the feedback

from observation opportunities she had had on the ITT programme. She drew on the knowledge and understanding acquired from her undergraduate studies, rather than her vocational practice, as the basis for her teaching.

These summary points will be developed and discussed as part of the analysis and discussion in Chapter Nine.

## **Chapter Seven: Case Study 3, Wigs and Hair**

### **Case Study 3**

### **Wigs and Hair**

### **East College**

### **Key Players in the Case Study Activity**

**Vocational Teacher of Wigs and Hair: Alan**

**Education Tutor: Shirley**

**Vocational Mentor: Miriam**

## 7.1 Biographies

### Vocational Teacher of Wigs and Hair

Alan originally trained as a hairdresser and, for many years, worked in salons, eventually becoming a stylist and area manager. However he became bored with the work, so he took up an opportunity to become a partner in a floristry business. When asked how he had been able to move across into the industry, Alan explained that his business partner was: *'a really good florist, who had trained in Germany,...so he trained me'*.

After 15 years, the floristry business he decided in his early 40s to follow a life-long passion and enrolled as a student on an Higher National Diploma (HND) in Performing Arts at East College, with the intention of becoming an actor. Although he did complete the HND course, he struggled with anything involving paperwork. Learning his lines for various plays became, he said, *'almost painful'*.

Whilst he studied for the HND, Alan worked part-time in the college's hairdressing department as a receptionist. Through contacts he had maintained in the world of theatre and fashion, he also continued to work, on a contract basis, as a stylist. When his studies finished, he was employed as a technician in East College's large Performing Arts (PA) department. Due to his varied vocational background, he was asked whether he would like to teach on BTEC Level 3 Specialist Make-up courses. He explained:

*My boss called me in the office and said "we're really stuck for a teacher in hairdressing tonight, do you want to do some teaching?" I was thinking "shit" I'd never done any teaching before in my life, but I said "yeah alright then, I'll give it a go"! ...fortunately, it was the first year's practical lesson...And then it just went on from there. And then I got more and more teaching hours.*

Alan explained that his part-time teaching hours in the Performing Arts department involved teaching across specialist make-up for theatre courses, where his vocational expertise across hairdressing, styling and in theatre was particularly valued:

*In Specialist Make-up...it's not all the hair cutting, it's not the colouring, it's literally big hair, cage work, fashion hair,...get it out, get it on, which for me is [brilliant]. I've always been interested in theatre, I like shows, I like going to the theatre, I like looking into the historical context of performances...I've done some work at the ENO [English National Opera]...doing wig changes and stuff like that...so I know what the work is like.*

/continued

Alan joined the in-service ITT programme based at the college once he started teaching. When he took part in the research, he was at the start of his second year of ITT, half way through his training. During the first year of his PGCE course when tutors became aware of the discrepancy between his verbal and written abilities, Alan had a dyslexia and dyscalculia diagnosis and a learning support agreement was put in place.

Alan explained how the diagnosis provided a welcomed relief as he had spent all his adult years avoiding written work and anything that involved figures. He reflected back on his early career in hairdressing:

*I couldn't colour [hair] because I couldn't remember the numbers so I never did the colouring. I couldn't mix the colours up...but I didn't know all this was dyslexia...People would say..."but you're so thick sometimes!". And I'm thinking "but there must be something wrong here", you know...[and now I know...].*

#### **Education Tutor: Shirley**

Alan's education tutor, Shirley, had been involved in teaching for more than 30 years. Originally a Business Studies teacher in schools, she moved into teaching in FE. After several years in an FE college she taught and managed a newly established in-service ITT programme run by the college. By the time she left the college in the late 1980s/early 1990s, she had become Head of Quality and Staff Development.

Asked why she moved into the college's quality role, Shirley explained:

*I just got very interested in the whole staff development notion...because, I mean, I think the links [between teacher education and whole college staff development] are just so evident. I mean things that I was doing for two or three groups as they came in, I thought "this is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing with [all] staff".*

Having established a whole raft of quality systems in the college, including a new college observation scheme and the college's mentoring scheme, Shirley left the College and joined the newly established Learning and Skills Council (LSC). She became Head of FE for a southern region county council where she looked after 13 colleges, a role which lasted for six years. Eventually, Shirley explained, she decided to 'just go back to my roots', and started teaching, initially on a part-time basis, at East college in the Teacher Education section.

### **Vocational Mentor: Miriam**

Miriam trained as a hairdresser in South Africa and then worked as a stylist in the fashion side of the industry, which included preparing models for various fashion shows. Once she moved to London, she worked in hairdressing salons as a stylist. During this time she also trained new stylists in the salons, mainly through various hairdressing apprenticeship programmes.

Through networks of practitioners in the industry, she was made aware of an opening as a hairdressing teacher at East College. Feeling she needed more of a challenge in her working context, she applied for the post and, at the time of the observation, had been working at the College for six years. Initially, Miriam taught hairdressing, mainly on NVQ programmes. After four years, she moved across to a new curriculum area established at East College which combined hairdressing and make-up into a theatrical styling programme area: Media Make-up, Production Arts.

As a trained teacher with a Certificate in Education gained through an in-service, part-time route, Miriam was a mentor to four new teaching staff, including Alan, who worked in the theatrical styling programme area. At the time of the observation, Miriam was the curriculum lead in the area. As she explained, students on courses in the programme area for which she was responsible were studying so they could:

*...work on (fashion)shoots. They are not training to be hairdressers, neither are they training to be beauty therapists, but they are training to be stylists in the media/theatre.*

Miriam explained that students are told that:

*...to have a theatrical background in hair and makeup is so much better [than being trained as a hairdresser or beauty therapist] because you have more skills...when you look at the modern day music videos...they all have prosthetics, big hair! etc. We tell them this is a much better way to be trained for the industry.*

## 7.2 Context

### **The Performing Arts Department**

East College is a large Further and Higher Education College offering a range of programmes of study across the academic and vocational curriculum from Level 2 to Foundation Degrees. Recently rebuilt, the college housed new dance and performance studios as well as hair and beauty salons, which were central to the Performing Arts department's extensive programmes in these areas.

Alan taught on two courses: a Level 3 BTEC Extended Diploma in Production Arts and a Level 2 Media Makeup in Production Arts. Both were full-time, two-year courses and attracted students, aged 16-21, from a wide geographical area. The courses were normally over-subscribed and although work experience in media/theatre was not built into the curriculum offer, students were encouraged to take up any opportunities to obtain work experience. All students worked on the shows being produced by Performing Arts' students in the College and were taken on a number of theatre visits to develop their appreciation of working in the industry. All students had at least one class timetabled for the evening because theatre work is, generally, a late night industry. As Miriam confirmed: *'We are getting them ready...it's a taste of what's to come!'*

Alan taught both practical and theory classes. The practical sessions were conducted in the hairdressing salon areas. This was where hair fashioning, for example, was taught. Theory classes, meanwhile, were generally taught in traditional classroom settings and aimed to develop the students' understanding of the historical contexts of particular theatrical performances.

### **The ITT Programme**

East College was part of a partnership of FE colleges offering an in-service, part-time PGCE which was validated and led by a central London University and taught by East College staff. All new staff from across the College's extensive range of programmes were enrolled onto the PGCE and they attended the course on one morning or evening each week over a period of two years. Alan began the PGCE in his first year of teaching and at the time of this research he was in the final stages of the award.

### 7.3 Observations of Teaching

Two opportunities to attend settings where Alan's teaching was being observed formed part of the research. Observation 5 was conducted by Shirley, Alan's education tutor. The observation took place in a classroom at the beginning of Alan's second year of ITT.

Observation 6 was conducted by Miriam, Alan's workplace mentor. This observation, located in a hairdressing salon, took place during the second term of the second year of ITT.

#### Observation 5

Alan was teaching a group of 13 full-time students on the second year of a Level 2 Media Makeup in Production Arts course. The students were all female and their age range was 18-21. The session and the observation started at 9am. The session was a two-hour theory class, which took place in a designated ICT classroom. This meant that, initially, students sat at computer stations on swivel chairs. The computer stations were arranged in four rows and there was an IWB at the front of the room (See Diagram 5). All students arrived promptly for the session, which started a few minutes after 9am, whilst space was made available to accommodate the observers.

The session began with a lively matching, 'odd one out' exercise where, in pairs, students were identifying common elements from photographs of theatrical shows and performances. The activity created an exciting buzz in the class, despite the early hour. The teacher-student feedback on the activity created some discussion about fashion styles and historical contexts. The issues raised were connected to a theatre/performance presentation which students were being asked to prepare for assessment. To indicate the full range of performances from which students could select their subject, Alan had chosen an activity designed around a set of anagrams which represented theatrical performances. Despite some initial confusion regarding the activity (i.e. some students did not understand what an anagram was) students



worked earnestly on the activity, supported by Alan who managed to make his way around the students, despite the lack of space in the room. Once completed, students fed back their answers and sought clarification. This then generated some discussion between the students and Alan about the performances themselves and the historical contexts they represented.

In both of these activities students used 'traffic light' cards<sup>12</sup> to indicate either their level of confidence in the answers they were going to give, or whether they understood what was being asked of them.

Approximately 30 minutes into the session, Alan used the IWB and introduced the next phase of the session. A short PowerPoint presentation was used to outline core advice about preparing for a presentation. This was interactive, punctuated by open and directed questions to individual learners. Students were then given 10 minutes and asked to work in groups to consider the issue of delivering a presentation and to prepare a group flipchart capturing their thoughts. As there was no room on the computer desks, most student groups began to record their thoughts by arranging themselves and the flipchart paper on the classroom floor. Despite the increasingly limited floor space, Alan made his way around the groups to monitor their discussions, engage with the students and offer a number of humorous non-verbal cues as to the issues they could be thinking about. The last 15 minutes of the observation was taken up with each student group feeding back their thoughts in turn. There was some degree of repetition of content here and the pace of the lesson slowed somewhat despite Alan's attempts to remain up-beat. After one hour, the observation was completed and the observers left the room.

---

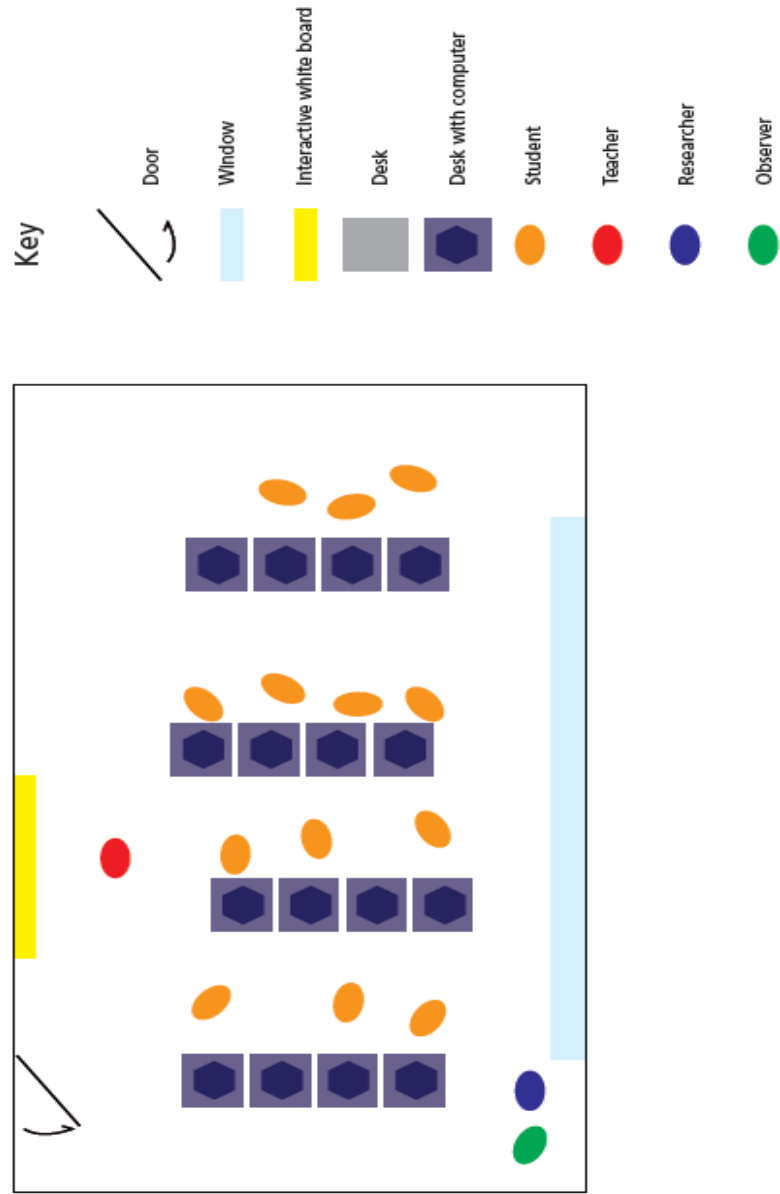
<sup>12</sup> Traffic light cards are used in learning and teaching settings to give teachers instant formative feedback. Each student is issued with a set of small laminated cards and they are encouraged to hold them up to confirm whether they a) understand something completely (green card); b) are unsure of certain aspects (amber card) or c) do not understand or have been confused by information or instructions (red card). It is assumed that, in a large group, students will feel more at ease using the cards than asking a question or indicating verbally they don't understand something in a large group.

**Education Tutor's Actions**

During the observation of Alan's teaching, Shirley was positioned at the rear of one side of the classroom. Given the lack of space in the classroom, she rested a laptop computer on her knees and was completing the tutor observation form at various points during the lesson. She did not move around the classroom and, apart from responding to instances of humour, did not engage, verbally, with Alan or with the students.

Diagram 5: Observation 5, Wigs and hair classroom

Wigs and Makeup  
Case Study 3  
Education Tutor Observation



#### 7.4 Education Tutor's Reflections on the Observation

When asked what she was looking for, in general, in observations that she conducted for the ITT and 'why?', Shirley's initial response focussed on 'Progression'. Her starting point for observations was the development and/or action plan from previous observations, where applicable. This could include anything from classroom management issues and the selection and organisation of learning activities to a more specific emphasis on the way in which specific resources had been designed and used in the session.

However even though a previous observation might offer a particular starting point, Shirley explained that the most important consideration was the extent to which students' learning was being enhanced during the observation. Irrespective of the vocational contexts in which tutors, such as Alan, were operating, enhancing students' learning was still the central focus. The following extract is illustrative of the emphasis she gave to students' learning whilst conducting teaching observations within the vocational context:

*Shirley: So the big emphasis is on "you might be brilliant...You've had years in the industry"..."you know all of this but how are you going to get it across to your learners? How are you going to enthuse them? How are you going to know that they're going away with the right stuff?"*

*Int: So, are you looking for anything [in particular]?*

*Shirley: I would be hoping to see a heavy emphasis on [the tutor] getting the information out of the learners rather than them being passive learners, so that by the very nature of what they are doing, [the tutor] is listening,...observing,...hearing whether students are talking about the right kind of things at the right kind of level...how [does the tutor] knows that, collaboratively, they can work on something and come up with the right ideas?...and how does [the tutor] know what every single person in that room has understood [about] what he's doing?*

Ultimately, then, her observation focus was whether the vocational teacher's practice facilitated or inhibited learning.

Shirley had a clear set of ideas about how learning was best facilitated. A key tenet of her approach emphasised that learning should be student-centred, whereby learners were actively engaged in their learning with others, whilst the tutor assessed learning formatively:

*I think if I wasn't looking for those issues and that wasn't the focus I'm not quite sure what I'd be there for...I'd be looking for his charisma? I'd be looking for whizzy slides? I'd be looking for fun?...but if those learners haven't gone away from the lesson knowing more than when they went in I'd be very doubtful about whether it was a successful lesson.*

Turning the discussion to observation 5, Shirley clarified that the observed session had been an informative and engaging one, which, she thought, had achieved a good balance of teacher and student centred learning. She highlighted a number of areas in which Alan's practice had developed from the last observation, particularly in relation to the organisation and management of learning activities and the introduction of formative assessment strategies. As a result, she felt that Alan's approach to teaching theory classes was evidencing more confidence. The areas for development covered a range of related issues e.g. improving the use of formative assessment strategies and thinking through how to conduct the feedback stage from group activities. Shirley also drew attention to the extent to which Alan's dyslexia impacted on his practice. This meant that he had developed a whole range of strategies to ensure that he could not only remember what he was doing, but also what the answers were to some of his own questions. The fact that Alan had decided to introduce an activity based around anagrams was singled out as evidence of his commitment to offer students a complete and varied active experience.

## Feedback Discussion

The observation feedback discussion between Alan and Shirley took place in Shirley's room a week after the observation had taken place and lasted just over 25 minutes. In the period between the observation and the meeting, Alan had composed an evaluation of the session, which he had sent to Shirley. Shirley, in turn, had written up the teaching observation report and this, she explained, would be used during the feedback to organise the discussion. Shirley had a particular purpose in mind whilst completing the form, which the following extract illustrates:

*Shirley: I phrase lots of things as questions, so I always feel I'm not absolutely making a definitive statement, I'll say "well I'm not quite sure why, can we talk about that?" So I do look to prompts to open up the discussion, but if something clearly needs to be said, there [will be] some very specific [points].*

In terms of structuring the feedback discussion, Shirley explained that the teaching team had discussed how they should approach giving feedback and had agreed a strategy, which depended on how well the observation had gone. Alan identified what he thought had gone well, first. Shirley then confirmed his evaluation and drew attention to the relevant development points that he had addressed from the previous observation – providing examples from his practice. The discussion of areas for development was mainly led by Shirley who asked a specific question of Alan, designed, it appeared, to encourage reflection on practice. The following extract, drawing upon Alan's use of traffic light cards as a formative feedback device, illustrates the approach:

*Shirley: I liked [that] you were using traffic lights, but one of the points I've got...it was good...but just sometimes students were waving amber cards, and what did you do about it?*

*Alan: Nothing!*

*Shirley: [Yes] Nothing! [they both laugh]...So if they're going to wave amber cards at you, you need to think about how you're going to follow that up. And it doesn't have to be there and then, you know, you don't have to stop the whole lesson.*

Specific teaching strategies were shared at different points in the discussion. Additionally, Shirley discussed how Alan's dyslexia coping strategies had worked, particularly in relation to the use of the anagram activity. Shirley was encouraging of the idea and argued that having put so much effort into the resource Alan could maximize on its impact by working through further support mechanisms.

The feedback ended with a roundup of development points which had been discussed, and action points for Alan's development were agreed.

## Observation 6

This one-hour observation was part of a three-hour BTEC Extended diploma Level 3 in Production Arts practical class, which took place in the evening between 16.30 and 19.30 pm. Co-incidentally, the class was also being observed by the validating university's programme leader, as part of her monitoring process. Alan was asked before the observation took place if he was happy with what might be seen as a crowd of three observers. He was unperturbed by the prospect, partly because the room was very spacious and partly because it was a practical session in a salon, a context in which he felt particularly comfortable.

The session began with 10 female students, in full salon uniform, sitting on high stools around a central work-table area in the salon (see Diagram 6). Once all were settled, Alan began with a brief Q&A activity designed to offer a recap on the last class. Alan used the traffic light system (described in observation 5) to help facilitate student feedback. He assessed areas for development through this verbal feedback activity and indicated where students could find out more about the period (18<sup>th</sup> Century hairstyles) by directing them to useful websites. He then used a short PowerPoint presentation to showcase 18<sup>th</sup> century hairstyles and students were asked, in pairs, to identify what they thought were the main technical requirements for the hairstyle.

A demonstration of the use of hair rollers to produce the required style then followed. Alan used a partially completed 'block',<sup>13</sup> which was positioned for all to see. He encouraged students to ask questions whilst he demonstrated and asked student volunteers to help complete the block. All students then moved to their own individual workstations, complete with blocks, to practice what they had seen demonstrated. With music playing in the background, Alan circulated around the room to observe each student's practice and to give feedback on their progress. Having observed some

---

<sup>13</sup> A block is a mannequin 'training head' or 'dummy' head with hair. These are used throughout the industry to try out different techniques and are used by training providers to help train stylists.

practices, Alan reminded all students of some industry-specific techniques and, particularly, the importance of developing speed in the execution of practice, for example: *'try to not put your comb down when setting : you'll save time!'*.

After approximately 15 minutes, some students had completed their blocks and Alan asked that they helped their slower peers. Once all students had completed the task, they gathered around the central table once more for a demonstration of pinning techniques. For this activity, Alan asked a student to demonstrate her understanding of the pinning process. Once completed, students returned to their workstations to practise the various pinning techniques. The observation ended at this point.

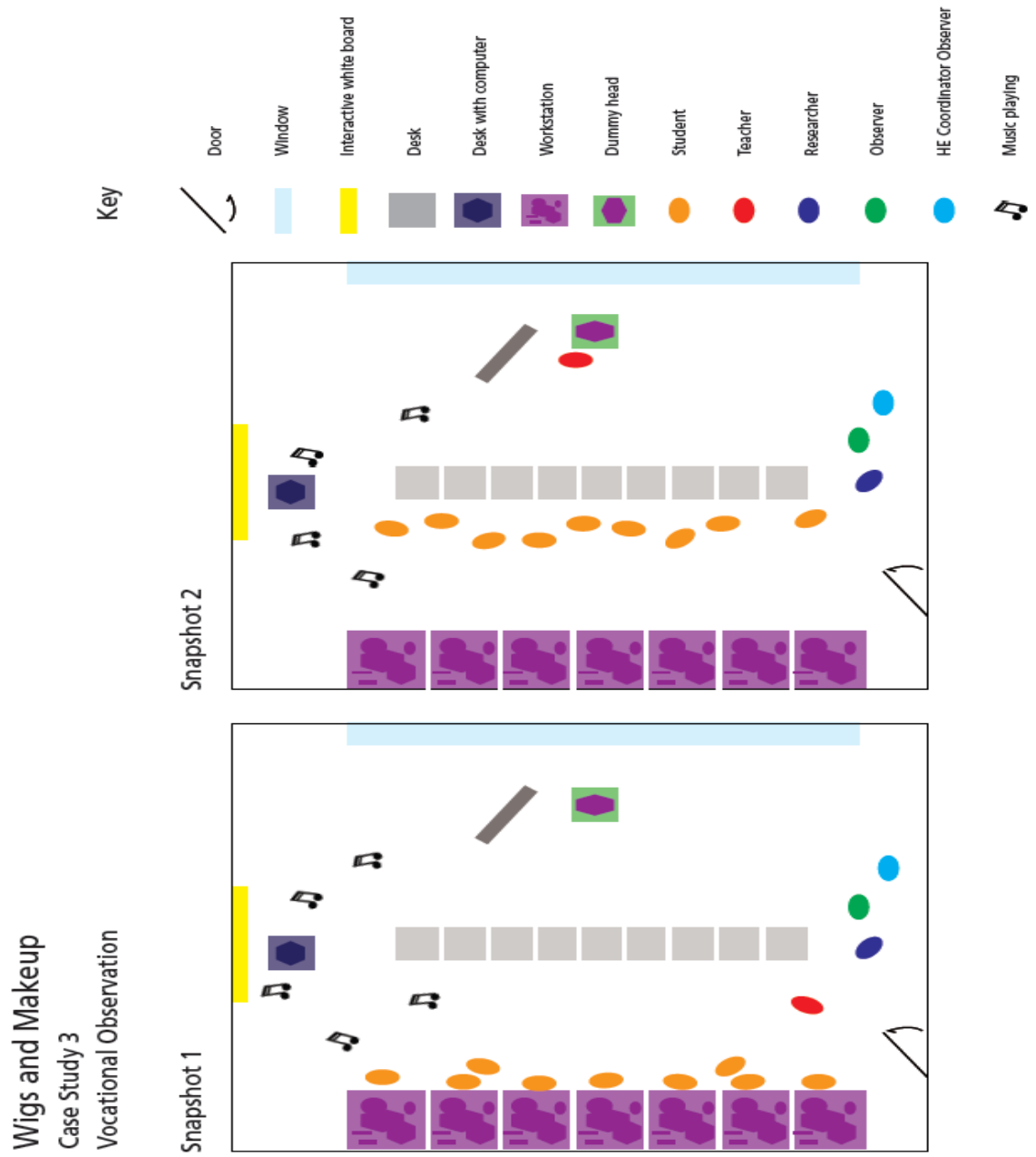
#### **Vocational Tutor's Actions**

During the observation of Alan's practice, described above, Miriam initially sat at the end of the long, central table and watched the demonstration. She then moved around the salon once the students were engaged in applying rollers to the blocks. She stood next to students to watch their practice and provided some feedback to students when she noticed they needed to alter their technique to achieve the desired effect and/or to advise on health and safety issues.

Miriam did not speak to Alan during the observation and he did not engage, verbally, with her either. Miriam made notes during the session, which acted as an aide memoir to be used later, during the feedback discussion with Alan.



Diagram 6: Observation 6, Wigs and Hair, salon



## 7.5 Vocational Mentor's reflections on the observation and feedback discussion

Miriam saw the ITT teaching observation process as one which offered new teachers, as she said, the '*opportunity to grow*', alongside an opportunity for the teacher to develop their '*teaching techniques*'. Feedback from the observer, she thought, should identify areas for development through the sharing of good practice. She outlined that she often shared what she did in her own practical lessons when faced with a particular challenge or vocational practice, giving specific examples for the teacher to consider. As programme area leader, Miriam also saw the prospect of observing new teachers as offering an opportunity to achieve a more standardised programme offer. As she explained:

*There are three different first year groups [with] three different teachers. I don't teach all of these students so it's good for me to go into observe what's going on...to check where they are in their scheme of work etc.*

Additionally, when asked what she thought she brought to the observation process, Miriam was categorical:

*'...it is the industry-specific knowledge...The teacher trainers would not always pick up issues [such as] health and safety, the use of the rollers, the divisions of sections [of hair], whether the demonstration is correct, whether [the guidance on] 18<sup>th</sup> century styling is correct.*

Turning attention to Alan's observed session, Miriam confirmed that this was the second time she had observed him for the PGCE. Describing him as a '*really open and receptive*' teacher, she could identify areas of practice that had developed from the last observation and she could evidence how he had, indeed, '*grown*' in his practice. The areas evidencing growth included his questioning techniques and the ways in which he ensured students were involved in the session, even during the demonstration.

Although it was not possible for me to attend the feedback discussion, Miriam confirmed that she would commend Alan for the developments from the last

observation and indicate how he could continue to strengthen his approach to involving learners in the demonstrations, for example. She explained that the development of approaches to demonstration was particularly important and would feature in any practical observation feedback. Demonstrations were, for Miriam: *'...our thing. Every session. Not more than 20 minutes, but every week there would be a demonstration moving on and followed by a workshop (practice)*

From the interview with Miriam, it was clear that the purpose of the post-observation feedback discussion was to identify what went well in the session, to commend development from the last observation, to share strategies to facilitate learning, and to focus on the development of students' vocational practice.

### **7.6 Alan's Reflections on the Observation Process**

Alan saw the ITT observation process as the most significant way in which he could develop his practice. Indeed, he saw the observations he had had as part of his ITT as something that all teachers might benefit from, preventing the development of what he described as *'stale habits'*:

*I think being observed and having all this should be continual all the time because it gives you a kick, it gives you a boost, it gives you a buzz, it gives you pointers.*

In terms of the ITT observation experience and, specifically, the role of the post observation feedback discussion, Alan expected feedback to be thorough and focused:

*[the observer] is not going to fluff around it because she likes you, do you know what I mean?...she's going to tell you how it is. And you want to do it for her because she's passionate about what she does. And my feedback was, well, to get that feedback from [Education tutor] in a year and a half is amazing.*

Alan admitted to being nervous at the prospect of being observed, but said he thought he was overcoming that. However, he identified differences in his disposition between

observations of practical, as opposed to theory, classes. The following extract summarises how he felt about preparing for observation 5 (a theory class) and the strategies he had developed to identify the sessions that could be observed during the first year of the PGCE:

*...that [the theory session] was going to be my worst nightmare, because I've never been observed on a theory lesson. Because everything was practical last year – [I taught] a couple of theory lessons but I didn't get observed. I always wangled it so I could get done on the practical ones. But I'm glad I got observed on a theory lesson, it won't bother me now if I have to be observed on another one.*

Nevertheless, in setting up observations of his practical classes, Alan was playing to what he thought were his strengths i.e. his knowledge and experience of the vocational context. It was in the specifically vocational context of the salon where he was sure of his role and of what he was trying to engender in his students. This can be illustrated by his focus on the development of vocational practice and exemplified by the discussion of time/speed of practice. It was also something that his vocational mentor honed in on in her preparation for feedback:

*There's no point in letting [students] take 7 hours or 2 or 3 weeks to make something, because it's impractical, you know. It's like hair styles, when they're putting rollers in, [I'm saying]... "No girls you've got 7 minutes, literally 7 minutes to get a whole head of rollers in; you've got 10 minutes to do a blow dry" ...And we try to take them outside to do photo shoots as well so they know what it's like. If it's wet, how is that hair going to stay in? How are you going to protect that hair? And that works quite well because it gives them a little bit of photo shoot industry experience as well.*

### **7.8 Summary Points: Case Study 3**

Shirley's extensive experience in ITT and college-wide staff development led her to construe ITT observations as a developmental opportunity which not only directly benefitted trainees, like Alan, but also the quality of learning and teaching in the college. The observation activity afforded opportunities to help Alan develop his

practice through reflection. Shirley's use of the observation proforma and the feedback discussion enables artefact use in the activity to be fully explored.

Miriam brought extensive occupational experience to her role as mentor and ensured that industry-specific, vocational issues, alongside strategies to develop classroom management, would be discussed with Alan following the observation in the practice setting. The vocational issues she focussed on in the observation activity concerned the ways in which students' expertise could be enhanced through safe development of speed of practice.

Alan had a varied vocational profile and a wealth of experience in the field of 'wigs and hair'. His experience, coupled with his theatrical knowledge, positioned him as a central contributor to the programme offer in the Department. He saw his role as preparing students for the industry he loved by ensuring they had the skills and vocational knowledge required. He welcomed ITT observations as providing an opportunity to develop his practice and relished the feedback the observations afforded.

These summary points will be developed and discussed as part of the analysis and discussion in Chapter Nine.

## **Chapter Eight: Case Study 4, Plastering and Case Study 5, Painting and Decorating**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the final two case studies. The vocational teachers were both based at South College and they attended the same ITT programme. They therefore had the same Education Tutor as observer (Anna). Anna's biography is presented once, with case study 4.

### **8.2 Case Study 4: Plastering**

**Case study 4**

**Plastering**

**South College**

**Key Players in the Case Study Activity**

**Vocational Teacher of Plastering: Clive**

**Vocational Mentor: Vince**

**Education Tutor: Anna**

### 8.3 Biographies

#### Vocational Teacher of Plastering: Clive

Clive had been teaching Plastering at South College for just over two years. Initially he was employed as a part-time teacher before being moved onto a fulltime contract. Shortly after his appointment as a fulltime teacher he joined the in-service ITT programme based at the college.

Clive came from a family of plasterers and joined one of his uncle's firms straight out of school at the age of 16. Although he worked with the firm as a plasterer for about 15 years, and had always been employed, he had not gained any trade qualifications. In the mid 1990s, he wanted to make an application to emigrate to New Zealand. However he realised that although he was an accomplished plasterer, he would need trade qualifications to secure his emigration application. This led him to enrol onto a Level 2 qualification at a local FE college in the South West of England, where he was based at the time. Given his prior knowledge, skills and experiences he progressed quickly onto the Level 3 courses and often helped out the lecturer with specific vocational practice.

Shortly after completing the courses the ambition to emigrate had waned and he went into partnership to set up a private training company. At the outset, contracts with the armed forces, private individuals and with various government agencies (e.g. through initiatives such as Train to Gain) were enough to ensure success of the business. However, after a while, when these sources became much more unreliable, the company was forced to close and Clive sent off his CV in response to an advertisement for building trade lecturers at South College.

Although Clive had anticipated that the students at the college would differ from those he had taught at the training centre, including, for example, their motivation to learn the trade as well as their social and economic profile, he had not anticipated what he described as the limited nature of the courses. The following extract illustrates the essence of his concerns and reflects his worries about the future of plastering in the construction industry:

*I would say that I thought that I was going to be passing on 'forgotten trades'...but realised quite quickly that most training...is basically aimed at getting people jobs, or most vocational training as I say, it's all about the end product of the job. So it's no longer an education, it's not people learning skills...They sort of come in and they go out, because that's what [is wanted]. It's fragmenting the industry - plasterers can't really call themselves plasterers anymore.*

### Vocational Mentor : Vince

Vince had worked at South College for five years. He had, within the past two years, gained his ITT qualification through the in-service route. Like Clive, he came from a family of plasterers. As he said:

*Yeah, everyone in my family's family, so they go back to...I think it was 1780 somebody's grandad's, grandad's, grandad's, grandad's have all been plasterers all the way through.*

After leaving school he trained in family firms and then, although relatively young at only 18, took up opportunities to work outside the UK. After several years in the Middle East he lived in Holland for 14 years practising as a plasterer. His working life was full of rich and varied experiences, from working with the World Monumental Trust, as one of their preferred tradesman, to running a company with 18 employees, including apprentices. Once back in the UK he finally settled in the South of England. A chance meeting led to an interview and a job offer at the college. Although unrecognised, financially, by the college, he was the longest serving member of the plastering section and was responsible for the production of all the documentation required by the college. He was de-facto, the head of section.

Vince had a critical view of the content and skill level expected of the students following the qualifications currently on offer in plastering. He thought that the expectations enshrined in the qualifications were limited and said he therefore spent much of his time teaching to his own expected level of vocational practice, which far exceeded the expectations of awarding bodies. This vision included not only what skills vocational students should be introduced to, but also the extent of their vocational knowledge. The following extract illustrates the point:

*'... because my plastering diploma [was completed] in Holland, you see that their way of teaching is completely different than here. The amount of detail that's fed into a course is much more. So then people say to me "oh you're stretching them much further than what you need to" and I say "well I'm not actually, I'm just ... making sure everything's covered". [I think]they should know the theory of the chemical formula for plastering, of lime, to be able to do the job. If you don't understand the materials you can't actually do the job.'*



### **Education Tutor: Anna**

Anna was a lecturer at a University which led a consortium arrangement for the in-service training of FE staff at colleges in the South East of England and which included South College. The partnership of colleges had grown in number and Anna had responsibility for colleges in one geographical area. The partnership arrangement between the University and the colleges was such that Anna taught 25% of the modules offered on the programme at the various colleges (approximately one module per year at each college) and observed the teaching of 25% of the students on the course.

Anna had been at the University for five years at the time of the interview. Prior to this, she had been in FE where she started as a teacher of modern foreign languages, then ESOL and then moved into teaching students on Access to HE courses. She had remained in one large London College for approximately 10 years before she moved to join a small 'HE in FE' team at another college. Here she gained experience of teaching on an ITT programme, which gave her the impetus to apply for a FE teacher training post at a University; the post she had at the time of the research. Having completed her Masters Degree in post-compulsory education she had begun Doctorate in Education programme at the time of the interview.

## 8.4 Context

### **The Construction Department**

South College was a large FE College and Training Provider with three sites serving a densely populated area. The College was one of the largest in the South East, with a strong tradition of offering vocational courses and of established relations with employers. The department had access to extensive workshops and associated facilities for the construction and building trades. Courses in the construction department included a range of apprenticeships and other work-based qualifications. Full time and part-time courses were offered from level 1 through to level 3 and a range of short courses provided skills up-dating for industry. The department had a long-established and successful tradition of opening up access to the industry to women who have been under-represented in the construction industry.

In the Plastering division, Vince encouraged staff in to *'teach beyond the requirements of the qualifications'*. Therefore, on the ceilings and walls of the various plastering workshops pieces of intricate plastering, using traditional materials, were proudly displayed, evidencing the skill development of vocational learners who were, to all intents and purposes, on level 1 and 2 courses.

### **The ITT Programme**

South College offered a two year, in-service, part-time HE accredited ITT programme as part of a partnership of colleges. The partnership arrangement between the University and the colleges meant that a member of the University staff was a link tutor /co-ordinator with a group of colleges in a region. In this role, approximately one module per year was taught by the University staff member (Anna). The staff member also conducted 25% of the education tutor teaching observations of participants on the South College course.

## 8.5 Observations of Teaching

Opportunities to attend settings where Clive's teaching was being observed formed part of the research. Observation 7 was conducted by Anna, Clive's education tutor. The observation took place in a plastering workshop towards the end of Clive's second year on the ITT programme.

Observations of practice by Clive's workplace mentor, Vince, were unannounced observations and took place over the course of a day. Some aspects of this observation were observed by me as they occurred at the same time as observation 7, but mostly the observation process was described to me by both participants, Clive and Vince. An account is given of these processes in Observation 8.

### Observation 7

Clive was teaching a group of six, male, Level 1 adult learners. The session had been running all day and the observation took place early in the afternoon in the summer term. The practical session was located in a workshop environment in the construction department of the college. Located on the ground floor, the workshop area had direct access to an exterior delivery zone where an array of building materials were stacked ready for distribution to various sections of the department. The day was hot, so the exterior doors remained open throughout the session. Various people, including teachers, students, technicians, used the area as a cut-through from the interior corridors with its various workshops, to the exterior delivery zone to collect materials. Some also appeared to use the area to exit the building. The teaching area (see Diagram 7) was, therefore, quite a busy area with various comings and goings and there was a good deal of accompanying noise with 'banter' being exchanged between passers-by and some whistling and singing. As would be expected, surfaces in the entire area were covered in plaster-dust and, to adhere to health and safety regulations, all visitors were issued with work boots and an overcoat to wear.

The workshop was divided into work bays. This meant that each student had their own dedicated area of the work bay, which they had been tasked with plastering, according to the job/task given by Clive. By the time the observation began the students were fully involved in making up their designated areas. Clive was circulating around the work bays observing their practice. He stopped at each student's area and talked to them about their practice. Whilst he asked questions about their practice (e.g. *why are you covering from left to right? What tolerance should you be working to?*), he also answered student questions about the practice being developed. The interaction was up-beat, with a general conversational air and much humour. One student was profoundly deaf and worked with a British Sign Language (BSL) communicator throughout the session. Clive's interaction with this student and the communicator was equally animated, with Clive using visual, non-verbal communication to support the communicator's BSL and to ensure the student's queries were answered satisfactorily. As the session progressed, Clive paired students for the evaluation of their practical work. This peer assessment was closely monitored by Clive and the layout of the workshop bays meant that he could satisfy himself that engagement between the students took place. After approximately one hour, the observation was completed and the observers left the workshop.

#### **Education Tutor's Action**

During the observation of Clive's teaching, and given that there were no desks in the workshop area, Anna set up her laptop computer on a stack of tiles that had been recently unloaded from a lorry, positioned just outside the workshop area. She used this position as a base from which to move into and around the workshop, following Clive as he guided individual learners in their practice, &/or asked them questions.

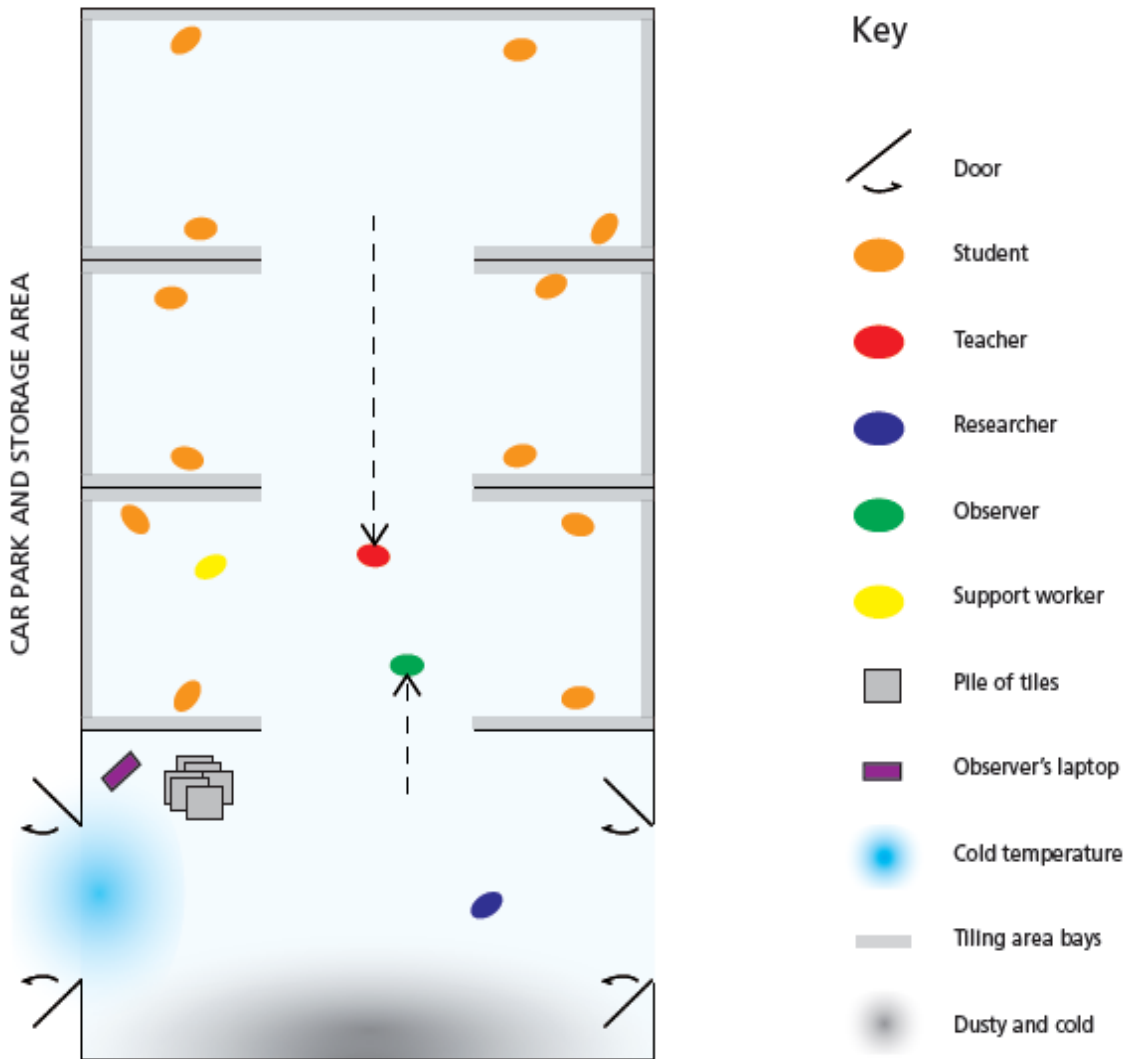
Anna stopped to talk to the students to ask what they were doing and why and talked to Clive at various points. Once one tour of the area was completed, she moved back to her base position long enough to lean over the laptop and type up comments on the observation proforma. She then moved off and circulated as before. This pattern was repeated throughout the observation.

Diagram 7: Observations 7 and 8, Plastering workshop

## Plastering

### Case Study 4

#### Educational Tutor and Vocational Mentor Observation



## 8.6 Education tutor's reflections on the observation

When asked what she was looking for, in general, in observations that she conducted for ITT and 'why?', Anna began by confirming that, due to the role she played in the HE consortium, she did not always know the students she was going to observe. Knowing the students, coupled with knowledge of their teaching contexts and their personal development objectives, were, however, important elements in the observation process as far as she was concerned. This was because she did not view the observation experience as something that just happened, as she said: '*within four walls*'. Rather, she explained that she wanted to understand the context, that is: the courses being taught; why they had organised sessions in the way they had; and what they were working on as individuals. For Anna, if these contextual issues were not known then, she said: '*We end up with a kind of quality type observation which is not any use for anyone*'. If Anna did not have any personal prior knowledge of the student that she had been asked to observe, then she tried to build a relationship with them by email. As she said:

*I try to make them understand what I am looking for when I come to observe them. We do have a form which is very structured which asks them what they are working on as trainees...but I don't think they understand its purpose very well. I try to explain they have to give me as much context as possible.*

However, from her experience of the consortium, her attempt to convey the purpose of the observation as developmental is not often successful. She explained:

*The majority of students still think it's an Ofsted inspection. They have to get everything right; they have got to show me how they can tell students off and deal with behaviour ...There is a mismatch...My role should be more developmental, more than an assessor of quality than anything else. We need to reconcile this.*

Anna then turned attention to issues related to the observation of vocational teachers and the conversations she had with some in preparation for the observation. She cited

Clive as an example of one of her 'best students' who had provided her with a complete portfolio of work, which documented his practice, including previous observation reports and his teaching action plans. Anna knew Clive's context quite well because she had taught him during one of his first year modules and she also knew his vocational mentor, Vince, who had been a previous student of hers on the ITT course. Notwithstanding this prior knowledge, Anna stated that in identifying the session to be observed Clive, like many vocational teachers, was quite dismissive of an observation of his practical class. Anna explained that Clive had said to her, '*You know, it's just a practical!*', and in her experience, she found this attitude to be reasonably widespread. Context was very important for Anna because, without it, the observer would not be able to consider what was going on and make appropriate judgements about practice. The following extract illustrates Anna's position on this and provides an insight into her views about the possible lenses used to observe vocational teachers' practice. She drew on the observation of Clive's practice as a shared experience:

*If you came in with a different lens and didn't know what was about to take place, you'd be thinking 'what's happening in this lesson?'...You would see a bunch of guys plastering walls with their tutor going round saying 'how's it going?.why are you doing this?'...You could say 'God he's not doing much'...but this is a disservice.*

Without an appreciation of context, Anna argued that the observer would be operating on a false set of assumption about practice in the vocational context. For Anna, it was important not to fit all lessons into what she called:

*...a humanities-type view of what a session should be about with lots of activities going on. Vocational Education is not like that...It's not saying it can't be exciting, It's just that a lot of the work is about the practice of skills and by directing students. If [vocational teachers] can do that well by stretching students and getting students to think about why they are putting on that plaster in that way...then it's kind of 'job done!'.*

### Observation Feedback discussion

The observation feedback discussion between Anna and Clive took place straight after Clive's teaching session had finished and was conducted in a mezzanine area above a large open-plan construction workshop. The discussion lasted 20 minutes and began with Anna asking Clive to explain his organisation of the session: e.g. Why had he decided to pair students together? Clive responded with his rationale for planning and managing the session in the way he had done so. His account was punctuated by short discussions following questions and queries raised by Anna. A discussion developed about the relationship between theory and practical sessions and Clive outlined what he felt worked better:

*I think they need to basically learn the process and then justify what they're doing. Does that make sense?...what I've discovered over the years is if I can do the practical just before the theory and reinforce it in the theory it worked better than when I tried it the other way round.*

Clive's account of his planning and management of learning also provided opportunities for Anna to focus on aspects of the session that she thought had gone particularly well. One area was the use of peer assessment and Anna remarked on the way in which Clive's use fitted in with the vocational context:

*Anna: I thought that [peer assessment] was quite well done and I quite like the way that it seemed to be quite natural in your session, it's not something out of the ordinary. [You asked a student]...“would you be satisfied as a customer with this?” [In this way peer assessment was seen as]...grabbing somebody on their way out to have a fag and just say “What do you think of this?”.*

*Clive: To be honest with you, that's one of my [approaches]. They need to train themselves to spot [errors or problems]...And I often say to them “would you pay for it?”, that is your question, “would you pay for it?”.*

Discussion of this element of the teaching led to a sharing of strategies as to how Clive might develop the peer assessment to assist recording of individual student progression and achievement.

/continued



The feedback discussion concluded with reference being made to the grading of the observation. On this ITT programme, education tutors were required to use the Ofsted criteria for assessing practice. This meant that Anna needed to allocate a grade to the observation. During the feedback discussion, she handled this in the following way:

*Anna: OK...a very good session, that's good. And in terms of grading, it's very, very difficult to grade this kind of session, I'll need to have a look at...I mean I think it's definitely at the minimum Good, but with the OFSTED I just need to see what they mean about outstanding. I think you do have limitations with this type of session as well about what can be demonstrated.*

### **Observation 8**

The critical stance held by Vince in relation to plastering students' courses was replicated in the approach he took to ITT observations. In the construction department a full day or half day's teaching with one group of students was the norm. In planning observations of Clive, Vince agreed with Clive that he would sample, through direct observation, elements of a whole day's teaching. This meant that no specific hour was attached to the observation of Clive's practice. Indeed, during the day in which observation 7 (conducted by Anna and described above) had taken place, Vince had also observed. For at least 20 minutes of the session, Vince had been in attendance but, given the busy nature of the area, whilst his presence had been noticed by me it had not been considered anything but a normal, common-day event. I only learned of his purpose after the observation during our one-to-one interview. Vince explained:

*...Yeah, I just turn up, I don't warn him. So you just stand around just looking, just whatever he's doing, just looking [using] your own criteria...is he including everyone? is he asking questions? How is his lesson structured for that?...It's a bit nasty but at the end of the day it's easier on him if he doesn't know that I'm sitting there constantly.*

Vince explained that he would join a session at the start of the day to see what is being set up and then he would return a couple of times throughout the day and finally at the end to see the rounding up. For Vince, this was the best way to conduct an observation as a vocational mentor in his area. Its purpose, he confirmed, was strictly developmental. After all, as Vince remarked:

*...if you're going into an observation...if you're observing anyone, a student, a teacher or whoever, they've all got to be developmental, there's no point in observing someone [otherwise]...because it doesn't go anywhere.*

### **8.7 Vocational Mentor's Reflections on the Observation and feedback discussion**

As confirmed above, Vince saw the ITT teaching observation process as one which offered a developmental opportunity. His rationale for observing over the course of a day fitted in with a belief that if observation can be seen as an opportunity for learning it has to be as natural as possible. For Vince the purpose of the observation was clear: it provided an opportunity to discuss aspects of Clive's teaching which would lead to development. This approach stood in direct contrast to Vince's experience of what he described as '*management observations*', where there was, as he said: '*no room for debate*'.

Vince explained that post observation discussions with Clive included all aspects his teaching, including: how he had structured the day's events; how he had monitored individual learners' progress; how peer assessment had been introduced; and the questioning approach he used. Additionally, the observation provided an opportunity to discuss the management of practical tasks. Vince explained that in the discussion after the observation, he would both ask questions and make suggestions:

*[I would say]...“why not start them on this sort of task, why not start them on that sort of task; have you ever thought of splitting it up like this?”...and so on.*

In relation to whether he discussed and/or commented on Clive’s vocational expertise, evidenced in observations by his demonstrations to students and his discussions based on vocational knowledge, Vince was, however, unequivocal. He argued very clearly that making any kind of evaluation about Clive’s practice as a plasterer was not appropriate. The following extract confirms the strength of feeling in this regard:

*Vince: I would never actually get involved with how he’s doing the job..I’ve got no position in it because I’m on the same level as him.*

*Int: So you wouldn’t comment on his practice?*

*Vince: No I wouldn’t tell him. He’s a tradesman already...No, no, no, [I wouldn’t] because it’s his job isn’t it? it’s his trade. No, no, that would be too arrogant of me and I would never overstep that border. [I might say] “that’s a funny way of doing it, I’ve never actually thought about that”...No, I wouldn’t find myself that arrogant that I’d actually tell him his job. It doesn’t mean that mine’s right and his is wrong, it’s just my theory of doing something. At the end of the day, as long as you come to the same quality of work what you’ve given to, it’s within a tolerance, then you’re laughing.*

Vince therefore made a clear distinction between commenting on or evaluating Clive’s vocational practice and commenting on the ways in which he taught the students.

## **8.8 Clive’s Reflections on the Observation Process**

Clive saw the observation process, in general, as one of the most developmental aspect of his ITT course. His experiences of these observations were in stark contrast to those that had been conducted for internal QA purposes. These latter observations were not rated highly by Clive as he felt there was no learning outcome. In contrast, he felt that right from the start he had learned from his early observations of practice on the ITT programme. He described his learning of what he thought were ‘*quite basic things*’, but fundamental to his developing practice. He provided a specific example of how he

learned that psychomotor skills development depended on dividing elements of the skill into smaller parts:

*...So what I've learnt to do is break down objects into bite size pieces, "and this is how you handle the trowel, and this is how you put it on the wall" so you're actually building, like small building blocks. Because I can remember when I first, you know, took them through plasterboard work [I just said]... "oh and you pick up a plasterboard", but then you realise that the plasterboard has to be placed right. So literally breaking everything down, almost like a script. I found myself going home and writing every single stage of what we're doing, because you just don't realise that you just do all this stuff.'*

In describing the observation process he experienced as part of ITT, Clive reflected on the nature of the feedback from the education tutors, including Anna. Clive explained that, coupled with what he was learning on the course, he said that he '*admired*' the tutors because he saw them as '*experts in what they do*'. He saw the education tutors' observation function as:

*...looking at the teaching. Am I keeping the students engaged? How am I running the course? Am I managing it well, is learning taking place? Am I keeping people involved? That sort of thing. And that's obviously that is what we're learning [about].*

However the education tutors' expertise was not intimidating for Clive. Instead he valued the opportunity to engage in the feedback discussion that followed the observation, as the following short extract illustrates:

*I can question it, there's no problem with that, you can sort of go "well what's all this about then" you know, there's no problem with that. So you can question it and it's honest in my opinion.*

For Clive, the observation process was also a meaningful learning experience when he was able to observe others. He talked about how he really enjoyed the peer

observation which was an embedded feature of the ITT course, describing the last one where he saw as maths tutor teaching as '*phenomenal!*'.

Turning discussion to the observations conducted by Vince, Clive confirmed he understood the approach taken by Vince and explained:

*That's it, he just drops in. So there's no [special] planning. That's one thing I have learnt from that. To be honest with you I think all observations should be like that. I think that they should just drop in on you....you know; just introduce them, and it's a lot different.*

From Clive's perspective, Vince's approach to observations confirmed that his focus was on student learning and how Clive might develop specific aspects of his practice.

As Clive commented:

*...I think he [Vince] is all about the learner, he don't really give a blind fig about anything else. To him it's about the learner. And realistically if I don't explain something well he'll say, "well you could have done it that way" and that sort of thing.*

In terms of his relationship with Vince, Clive described this very much as a partnership. Echoing much of Vince's comments about his practice, Clive saw their respective areas of expertise as complementary and positive for the learning experiences they could offer students. The following extract illustrates the relationship and the acknowledgement of areas of expertise:

*Clive: [Vince] loves the fibrous side of it [plastering], and is not so keen on the sort of solid side of it, and he's got a lot of expertise as well, that's the good thing about it. Most people have only seen this in colleges. So I tend to challenge the Level 1 students on the solid and actually teach them to a level 2 really, so effectively when they jump to a Level 2 they know that they do their base, prove to [Vince] that they can do their solid skills, and then he's got more time to go and get on with the fibrous.*

### **8.9 Summary points: Case Study 4**

Anna's background as a modern foreign languages teacher in FE preceded her current role as co-ordinator of a large HE-led ITT programme taught in FE. As an HE-based teacher trainer, Anna's role in the activity was positioned differently to other case study education tutor observers and provided an opportunity to consider the impact on practice. Given that the teachers observed are not always known to her, Anna saw developing her knowledge of the context of learning as an important pre-requisite to the observation activity. The rules and regulations guiding the observation activity required that she assigned a grade to the ITT observation, using Ofsted criteria.

Vince had extensive experience of and a passion for his trade, plastering. He saw his teaching role as passing on the skills and knowledge of the trade, rather ensuring students accumulated narrow vocational qualifications. In his role as mentor-observer, Vince evidenced practices which could be seen to be 'at odds' with the rules and regulations of the activity. He saw the role as observer in much the same way as he considered the collective endeavour of the plastering section in the college, i.e. as supporting a plastering colleague in the development of vocational pedagogy.

Clive had extensive experience of the industry and shared Vince's passion for plastering and for the skill and knowledge development of future practitioners. He welcomed the opportunity to engage in discussion following observations of practice and fully engaged with feedback discussion. He saw this as an opportunity to think through decisions made about planning and managing learning. These summary points will be developed and discussed as part of the analysis and discussion in Chapter Nine.

8.10 Case Study 5: Plastering

**Case Study 5**

**South College**

**Key Players in the Case Study Activity**

**Vocational Teacher of Painting and  
Decorating: Simona**

**Education Tutor: Anna**

**Vocational Mentor: Julie**

## 8.11: Biographies

### Vocational Teacher of Painting and Decorating: Simona

Simona was in her third year as a Painting and Decorating teacher at South College, the same college and construction department as Clive (Case study 4). She joined the in-service ITT programme based at the College and, at the time of the research, she was also in her final term of the same two year ITT course as Clive.

When asked how she had got into painting and decorating teaching, Simona explained that painting and decorating was something that she had always done : *'as far back as I can remember'*. She spent her childhood and early adulthood in Portugal, Spain and France and trained to be a journalist. Even whilst she studied journalism in Portugal, she explained that she also used to work in a friend's company as a painter and decorator.

Once qualified, she worked for 10 years in journalism, mainly covering political news. Once in the UK, Simona moved into freelance journalism and began to write about broader cultural aspects of politics. However the uncertainty surrounding freelance journalism meant that she needed to earn a steady income, so she decided to go back to painting and decorating to earn money, but recognised that she needed to gain an approved qualification for employment in England.

Simona therefore studied for her painter and decorator qualifications at South College and gained the required C&G qualifications and NVQs. She then worked in the trade in London for a few years, primarily for companies that had a history of employing women as painters and decorators, learning, as she explained, to *'stand her ground'* in a more male dominated industry than she had hitherto experienced in mainland Europe.

In this period she kept in contact with her previous tutors at South College and was invited to come back to the college to teach one day per week whilst working. This opportunity was not one that she had planned for or even anticipated, but she soon realised that, in her own words, it gave her: *'a lot of pleasure to pass on my knowledge'*. Although she still worked as a freelance journalist, after a year of part-time work as a painting and decorating teacher, Simona took up a full time post with South College.



### **Education Tutor: Anna**

Anna's biography has been provided in Case Study 4

### **Vocational Mentor: Julie**

Julie began working on construction sites as a painter and decorator at the age of 19. Twenty five years later, although employed full-time as a lecturer at South College, she still worked on sites whenever she was able to do so.

Her involvement with South College began as a student when she studied for her advanced vocational qualifications 20 years ago. This experience, she said, '*completely changed my life*'. Whilst still employed in the industry, Julie began to work at the College on a part-time basis. After a short time as a part-time painting and decorating teacher she described herself as '*hooked*'. She applied for a full time job as a lecturer at South College 15 years ago and has worked at the College ever since.

Once Julie completed her ITT she took on the role of an ITT construction department mentor because, as she said, she wanted to help others to '*...make the transition from working on construction sites to working at the college*'. As well as acting as a painting and decorating mentor for Simona, Julie had mentored staff in other sections of the construction department over the years, as required.

During her time at the college, Julie gained more responsibility in the painting and decorating section of the department, taking on various roles as course leader, curriculum manager and, for the last few years as head of the painting and decorating section. Three days before the interview, Julie had been appointed as Head of the Construction Department, with effect from the new academic year. This was the first time the Department would be led by a woman. Having been taught by one of the first ever woman painting and decorating lecturers in a college, the additional significance of her own appointment as Head of Department in what is generally seen as a 'male preserve' was not lost on her.

## 8.12 Context

The context provided for case study 4, in relation to South College and the ITT course Simona attended, are relevant here and have not, therefore, been reproduced. The additional context is provided for the painting and decorating section of the Construction Department.

### **The Painting and Decorating Section of the Construction Department**

The painting and decorating section of the department offered courses on a full-time and part-time basis. Course participants were varied in age – from 16 to the late 50s – and the section had an established record of encouraging women into the section to study. Most students sought progression into the industry whilst some studied to improve their own skills for home improvement. In terms of staffing, the department had an unusual gender profile of 50:50 male to female staff.

## 8.13 Observations of Teaching

Opportunities to attend settings where Simona's teaching was being observed formed part of the research. Observation 9 was conducted by Anna who, as well as being Clive's education tutor was also Simona's tutor. The observation took place in a painting and decorating workshop on the same day as Clive's observation (observation 7).

Simona's workplace mentor, Julie, conducted the ITT observations required. In the time available for the fieldwork, an observation of practice could not be arranged prior to Simona completing her ITT. Instead, Observation 10 is an account of the processes involved in observations conducted by Julie. The account is drawn from interviews with Simona and with Julie.

## **Observation 9**

Simona was teaching a group of 11, Level 1, male and female adult learners, in a practical session in the college. The observation took place towards the end of an afternoon's teaching. The practical session was held in a painting and decorating workshop environment in the construction department of the college. The painting and decorating workshops were located on the top floor of the building, rather tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the ground floor workshops, as described in case study 4. Similar in form to the layout of the plastering workshop, described in case study 4, this workshop was also divided into work bays but they were arranged either side of a long table which, effectively, cut the room in half. Each of the 9 students worked on their own dedicated area of the work bays (see Diagram 8).

In contrast to the noise and general comings and goings described in relation to Clive's workshop environment, Simona's practical class was quiet. Its location on the top floor of the construction department meant that it was less likely to be a thoroughfare and, whilst students did talk to each whilst completing their work, the pitch of voice was low with periods of silence, apart from the swish of brushes as they were passed over wallpapered surfaces. Simona circulated the working areas throughout the observation, stopping at each student's work area to observe their work, to ask questions of students and to engage in discussion regarding the various techniques being used. The engagement was largely one-to-one, even though there were two students sharing the separate decorating bays.

Simona also responded to additional calls for assistance, revisiting students according to their respective needs. At various intervals in the session she took the opportunity to address the whole group, reminding them of the time they had left to complete tasks and prompting students to begin to clean up the area. After approximately one

hour, the class finished and once the students had left the classroom, Anna began the feedback discussion with Simona.

### **The Education Tutor's Practice**

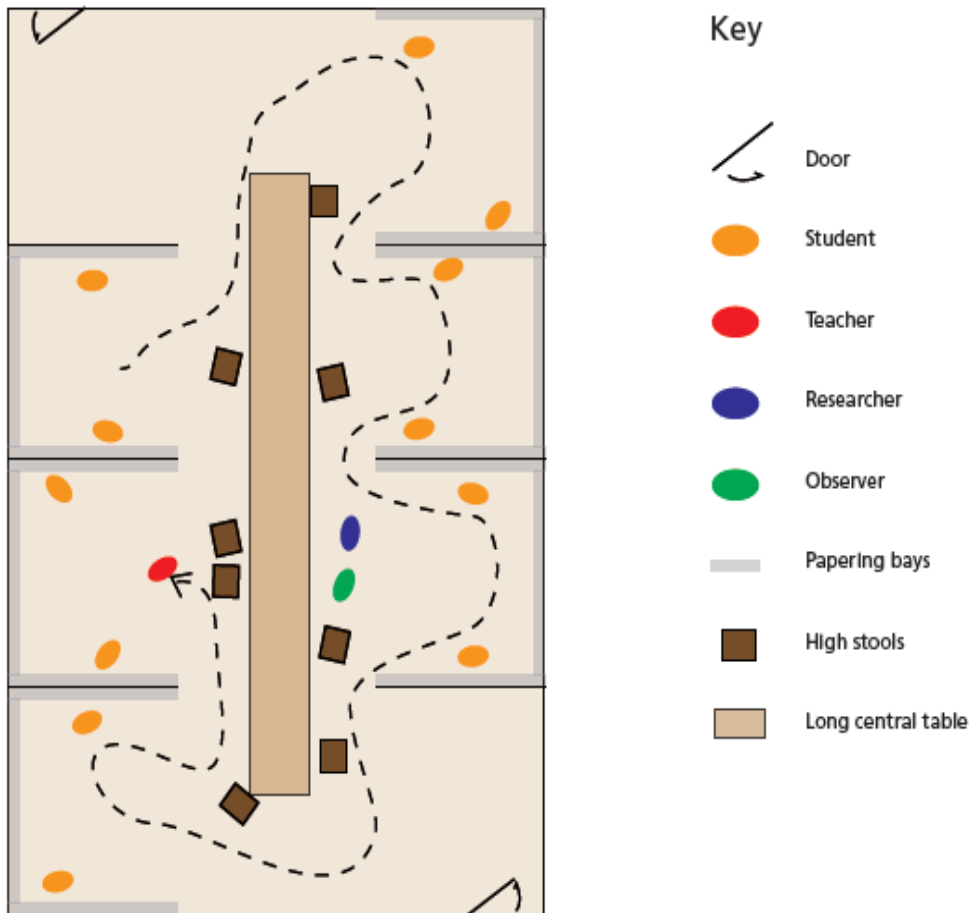
During the observation of Simona's teaching, Anna set up her laptop computer on a central table, which divided the work bays into two halves. From this position Anna could see all students' practice and could observe Simona's physical movement around the work bays.

At various times during the session, Anna stood close to Simona as she guided individual learners in their practice, &/or asked them questions. As she had done in observation 8 with Clive, Anna also stopped to talk to the students to ask what they were doing and why. At various points she also talked to Simona to clarify points that she was unsure of and to discuss the link between the practice being developed by students and the scheme of work or qualification they were working towards. Anna also moved back to her base position and to her laptop to type up comments on the observation proforma.

At the end of the class and whilst students were cleaning up their respective areas, Anna talked with Simona in general terms about the course the students were following; their access and progression routes and whether the students had already gained work experience as painters and decorators.

Diagram 8: Observation 9, Painting and Decorating workshop

Painting and Decorating  
Case Study 5  
Educational Tutor Observation



#### 8.14 Education Tutor's reflections on the observation and feedback discussion

An account of Anna's approach to conducting observations has already been provided in Case study 4. Key aspects of her approach included a reminder that as she was a HE –based tutor, she did not always know the students she was going to observe. She therefore wanted to ensure that she understood the context in which the observation was taking place. Although Anna was required by her HE procedures to assign a grade to the ITT observation, the purpose of the observation was, nevertheless, developmental.

##### **The observation feedback discussion**

The feedback discussion between Anna and Simona took place straight after Simona's teaching session had finished once the students had left the work area. The feedback discussion was relatively short in comparison with the feedback with Clive and lasted not quite 10 minutes. It began with a general discussion about the context in which the session took place. Anna asked about the students, their previous learning and/or courses completed; the scheme of work that had been given to her and the general approach Simona adopted when teaching practical classes. In response, Simona described her practice as being led by each student's starting point, which she tried to assess and up-date constantly.

This approach was achieved, she suggested, by giving individual feedback, once students begin to complete practical tasks. Where there were particular areas identified for development in students' practice or where mistakes were made, Simona said that she led the student towards self-evaluation. In other words, rather than identify the cause of the error she tried to develop a more problem-solving approach in learners, particularly when dealing with adult learners. In this response, Simona provided an underpinning rationale for the approach taken during the session that had been observed.

Without commenting verbally, Anna then moved on to feedback on the observed session by providing an account of what she thought had occurred. She began by stating that the session was a: *'Typical text book practice of supporting students in a practical setting with a balance between the support [given] and getting them to work out things about their own practice...[You also encouraged them] to use the right language'*

/continued

Anna then asked Simona whether she was aware that the atmosphere was calm and very work-focussed and wondered what it was that she had done to establish this. Simona, in response, felt:

*Simona: It happens naturally now, I can't pinpoint why...the students are adults and quite motivated. They are very good for Level 1.*

A series of questions were then asked by Anna regarding assessment, record keeping and differentiation. Although Simona responded to the direct questions, there was very little discussion, as the following edited extract illustrates:

*Anna: So, one of your action points from last time was about stretching students.*

*Simona: That came out of a theory lesson...where some students were getting what I said in a few minutes and others were taking a long time.*

*Anna: Do you try and integrate from theory to practical sessions?*

*Simona: Yes...but it is not always possible...right now there is no challenge I could give them...but with practical it is about finishing earlier than others so I can give them extra practical tasks.*

Shortly after this exchange, Anna rounded up the post-observation feedback. There was no reference made to grading by either participant.

## **Observation 10**

As outlined at the start of Case Study 5, it was not possible to arrange an observation of practice where Julie acted as Simona's observer. 'Observation 10' is therefore an account of the processes involved in observations conducted by Julie. The account is drawn from interviews with Simona and Julie.

### **8.15 Vocational Mentor's Reflections on the Observation**

Julie conducted internal QA observations as part of her role as head of section. She also undertook observations that were part of the requirements for the ITT award in her

role as ITT mentor. Julie had, therefore, observed Simona at least four times in the academic year, with two of these observations conducted as part of the ITT award. When asked whether there were any differences in the observations she undertook in these two roles she was quite clear that there were differences, not only in the paperwork required, but also in the feedback given.

Overall, Julie saw the ITT teaching observation process as one which offered a developmental opportunity. The purpose, she said, in relation to Simona, was to *'support, progress and help her move forward'*. She did this, she said, by focussing on whether:

*...every single person in that session has learned something. Are the communication skills good? What about engagement and so on.*

In contrast, the QA observations were concerned with assessing against standards. The purpose, she said, was different: *'It's about quality assurance and grading'*. This, she argued remained the case irrespective of the fact that as part of the ITT course regulations, a grade was required for the observation. The grading was, however, *'far less severe'* than the one given for internal QA observations she undertook.

For the purpose of the ITT award, Julie had completed the two observations required prior to the research interview. She confirmed that both of the observations had taken place in classroom-based theory lessons, rather than in practical workshops. This, she explained, was partly as a result of a newly adopted college policy which established that in vocational areas of the college's work, only theory /classroom-based teaching should be observed. Julie agreed with this policy and had adopted it for her ITT observations too because, as she explained:

*...when we did do both, the practical classes were always much more highly graded than theory classes, so we got to the point to say the practical classes are not the area where they need any help or the support.*



Julie argued that because the workshops in the department were modelled as '*a mini site*', vocational teachers were very comfortable in the setting. However, Julie thought there were '*particular difficulties for vocational teachers*' in classrooms where all of the theory sessions took place. As she explained: '*You get stage fright! I remember it well. You are standing there and they are all looking at you, and you are not used to it*'.

In other words, Julie felt that the physicality of the setting made a tremendous difference to the teaching. This meant that observing practice in classroom settings to draw out the development opportunities during feedback was really important for Simona's all round development. Therefore, following each of the theory observations conducted during the final year of Simona's ITT course, Julie had a full discussion with Simona regarding the changes she might make to the sequencing of the class and they had exchanged ideas regarding teaching elements of numeracy where the student group had a differentiated skills profile.

Furthermore, from Julie's perspective, issues that were of particular concern for new vocational teachers like Simona also played out differently in classroom settings, as opposed to the practical workshop. These included the significance of and amount of paperwork that had to be understood and produced in order for a teaching session to be observed. It was not as simple as being less familiar with being asked to write things down in particular ways. Rather, as she explained:

*Julie: When on site, unless you are a manager or foreman, you would be told what to do...Whereas as a teacher, you are asked to plan the year ahead; to plan every class you teach and you are in charge of the class;...everything is so different.*

When observing Simona's teaching, this had been far less of a concern because, Julie explained, Simona had been a journalist and was therefore, used to reporting and all that went with it.

Julie was a passionate advocate of teacher training programmes for vocational teachers and was shocked by the prospect that the mandatory requirement might be withdrawn.<sup>14</sup> She described how she recognised a real change in people once they had been on the ITT courses. For most, in her experience, it is something about finally understanding how it all fitted together, the lesson plans, the schemes of work, the learning theories, the changing policy framework, the qualifications. As she said: 'It's when they say "I now get it!" that's just lovely'.

#### **8.16 Simona's Reflections on the Observation Process**

Simona saw the observation process as a central developmental aspect of the ITT course and felt that she had learned a tremendous amount about different approaches to teaching, not only from the taught session of the course, but also from other trainees on the course. Like her colleague Clive, Simona commented on how the peer observation process that was embedded into the ITT programme proved to be a particularly meaningful learning experience. For example, she identified how the observation of a Maths colleague on the course had been inspiring in relation to her own developing practice and, in the extract that follows, indicates the applicability to a painting and decorating context:

*Simona: I observed a maths lesson. It was really useful because of equality and diversity. e.g [the teacher] would come up with a problem to be solved, and she would get each group to come up with solution...how they would go about it etc. I really thought that was good so I used it in my lessons.*

*Int: How was that relevant to you?*

*Simona: Well different countries have different practices in painting and decorating. In this county you paint wood like doors, skirting boards etc. but in other countries they varnish or leave bare. And the use of wallpapers different*

---

<sup>14</sup> The interview took place days after the publication of the Lingfield Review, 2012.

*too. So I started to develop these things once I observed other teachers. I could see things [in different ways].*

Turning attention to the observation of her own practice, Simona said she could account for 10 observations over the previous two years, eight for the purpose of the ITT course and two other QA observations. For Simona, the experience of the observation clearly varied according to the purpose, with a marked difference between observations conducted for her ITT and those conducted for QA purposes:

*When observed by college tutors and my mentors I found them really useful. But when official ones that were [just] graded, the feedback was not constructive [they were] penalising you not helping you: you haven't done this, this, this.*

When asked to compare her experiences of observations conducted by education tutors as opposed to vocational mentors on the ITT programme, Simona thought that whilst there were differences in emphasis, when the outcome was considered, they were 'equally helpful'. She explained:

*The take on the observation is probably slightly different. My mentor is more familiar in terms of what I'm teaching, so she probably looks at the content of what I'm teaching, whereas the education tutors probably look more at the strategies. With my mentor, she would pick up that when I was mentioning differing types sanding, for example, she might say I had left one method out.*

The discussion then turned to the strategy described by Julie, Simona's vocational mentor, of only observing theory classes rather than practical classes in painting and decorating. Asked why she thought this policy had developed, Simona explained:

*The quality of teaching of the practical is normally ok, but you need the knowledge to teach the theory. Now I'm ok about classroom teaching. It's not a problem but, in the beginning, I didn't know what to do in a classroom! I had mixed feelings about doing this. Knowing how to engage your learners and motivate in a theory class is difficult – especially in your first year. In practical, it's not a problem. Everyone expects to be doing practical and you can get them*

*engaged, but it comes as a surprise when they have to do theory. The practical comes easy because you are so used to it - to structure it, how you are going to start it. It comes naturally, .you do it every day!*

However, whilst Simona thought there were particular challenges to be overcome when learning to teach theory and she valued the feedback on the range of strategies she could use, (e.g. the organisation of groups, and the use of resources), she did not see the two areas as unconnected. For some learners, what might be construed as a real challenge or obstacle to learning in a theory class e.g. calculating material when knowledge of maths is minimal, others are able to work this out in their heads in a practical setting:

*For instance, I have a student his numeracy skills are not the best, but he has been doing this for years and he comes into the room and can tell how many rolls of paper needed.*

### **8.17 Summary points: Case Study 5**

A summary of Anna's position in the activity is given in Case Study 4. Whilst her feedback to Simona is short in length and less expansive than her discussion with Clive, Anna sees the feedback opportunity as an essential element of the observation activity. Without it, the activity would not, she argues, be developmental. In Case Study 5, Anna does not discuss grading with Simona.

Julie, Simona's vocational mentor, has extensive experience as a Painter and Decorator and has accumulated many years in teaching. She gained more curriculum responsibilities in these years and was recently promoted to Head of the Construction Department. In terms of the observation activity, Julie has welcomed the opportunity to conduct ITT observations and sees these observations as developmental. She draws contrasts between the practices involved in QA observations with those required for ITT, including the differences between grading practices. She has introduced a College

policy into her ITT observation practice and only observes vocational teachers in classroom-based theory classes as opposed to practical sessions.

Simona has professional experience as a political journalist as well as extensive practice as a Painter and Decorator. She is critical of the observations she has experienced as part of the QA agenda in the college as they do not offer opportunities to develop from the observation 'event'. She contrasts this with her experiences of ITT observations and sees these as offering development points for future practice. Simona draws attention to the learning that she has gained from observing others. These opportunities enabled her to reflect on her own developing practice, even though the observations were not in her vocational area. These summary points will be developed and discussed as part of the analysis and discussion in Chapter Nine.

## Chapter Nine: Analysis and Discussion

### 9.1 Introduction

The case studies presented in the previous chapters have provided an account of the research undertaken to investigate the use and value of teaching observations as part of ITT of vocational teachers. The observations were conducted by vocational teachers' respective education tutors and vocational mentors and were observed by me, as researcher, as part of the fieldwork for this thesis, as outlined in Chapter Five. The case study accounts also included selections from the one-to-one interviews conducted to capture participants' vocational and occupational profiles and to further develop an understanding of participants' views of the teaching observation process. In this chapter, the case studies will be referred to by their order of appearance in the previous chapters:

Case Study 1 (CS1): Johnson, Vocational Teacher 1 (VT1) Rachel, Vocational Mentor 1 (VM1) Denis, Education Tutor 1 (ET1)

Case Study 2 (CS2): Maria, Vocational Teacher 2 (VT2) Delia, Vocational Mentor 2 (VM2) Laura, Education Tutor 2(ET2)

Case Study 3 (CS3): Alan, Vocational Teacher 3 (VT3) Miriam, Vocational Mentor 3 (VM3) Shirley, Education Tutor 3(ET3)

Case Study 4 (CS4): Clive, Vocational Teacher 4 (VT4) Vince, Vocational Mentor 4 (VM4) Anna, Education Tutor 4 (ET4)

Case Study 5 (CS5): Simona, Vocational Teacher 5 (VT5) Julie, Vocational Mentor (VM5) Anna, Education Tutor 5 (ET5)

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the case studies and to present a critical discussion of the findings by drawing upon the CHAT conceptual tools adopted, as discussed in Chapter Five, the wider literature related to vocational learning (Chapter Two), ITT for

vocational teachers, and the literature discussed related to the observation of teaching in FE (Chapter Three).

The research questions identified in Chapter One will help to frame the analysis and discussion of the case study findings. The research questions were:

1. How is the concept and process of observation conceptualised in relation to the development of professional expertise?
2. How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted?
3. What use/value is attached to the observation process by the observed and the observer?
4. How might learning-in-context (situated learning) be maximized?

The first question has been addressed through discussions in Chapters Three and Four, which focussed on research into ITT teaching observations conducted in FE and which led to the conceptualisation of observation used here. This chapter begins, therefore, by addressing the research question: How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted? As a preface to this, a summary of the profile of activity subjects is provided first as this ensures that, given their respective positioning in the observation activity, their respective histories are made transparent.

## **9.2 The Subjects in the Activity**

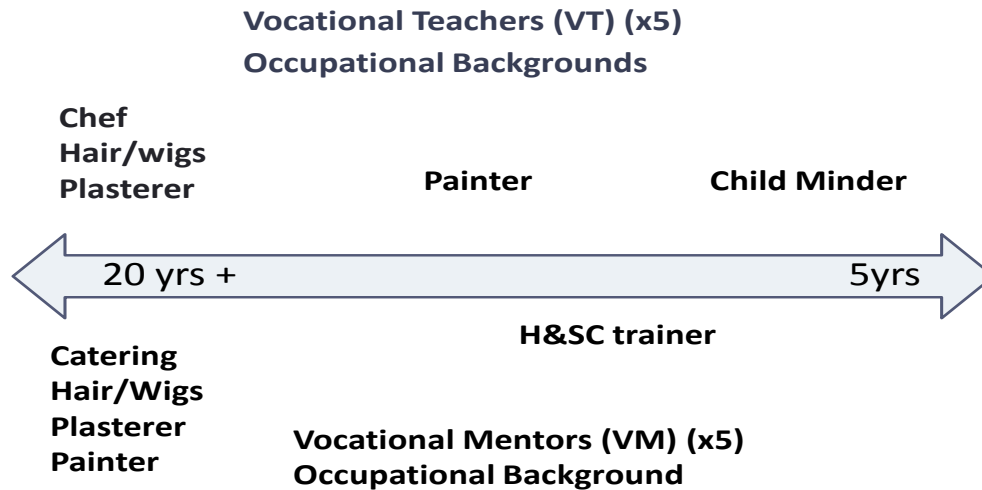
In Chapter Two, it was argued that one of the key ingredients of the development of vocational expertise was often the time spent in practice. It is no surprise then that a common feature of the profile of the vocational teachers and their mentors was the length of time they had spent in their respective vocational setting, prior to entering teaching. With the exception of the health and social care teacher, Maria VT2, all the other vocational teachers had more than 15 years occupational experience (see figure

5). Three of the pairings of vocational teachers and mentors (Alan, VT3 and Miriam, VM3; Clive, VT4 and Vince, VM4; Simona, VT5 and Julie, VM5) also spoke of maintaining their involvement with the occupation by continuing their practice outside college terms.

In terms of length of time in teaching, as Figure 5 also illustrates, all of the vocational mentors had at least five years teaching experience in a college environment and all had been working at their respective colleges for more than two years. As would be expected, vocational teachers had less than three years experience in their respective colleges, although two teachers (Johnson, VT1 and Clive, VT4) had taught in other educational institutions or training providers prior to their employment at their respective case study college. All of the vocational teachers' entry into teaching could be seen as happenstance, rather than as a planned professional journey from vocation to teaching (see James and Biesta, 2007; Lucas and Unwin, 2009; Orr and Simmons, 2010). Many had started off their teaching career as part-time staff, concurring with the FE workforce data presented in Chapter One.



**Figure 5. Vocational Teacher and Vocational Mentor Profile**



The four education tutors had different career histories before becoming involved in ITT. However, all four had been FE college teachers and could therefore be seen to have an awareness of the complexity of the student groups being taught by the teachers for whom they were responsible. Three had a Modern Foreign Language and/or ESOL background and one had taught humanities subjects. All of the college-based education tutors (Denis ET1, Laura ET2 and Shirley ET3) had known the teacher they were observing for at least a year whilst they were students on the ITT programme. In all of these cases, the vocational teacher could be seen as a college colleague, as vocational teachers and their education tutors shared the same college context and were therefore aware of college policies, management structures and culture. The only HE tutor in the sample (Anna, ET4,5) had moved into HE from various positions teaching in FE. As an HE-based tutor, she did not necessarily have prior knowledge of the vocational teacher being observed although Anna had taught Clive, VT4.

In common with others working in ITT in FE, none of the education tutors spoke of any specific training for the role they had taken on (for further discussion, see inter alia, Lawy and Tedder, 2009; Loughran, 2006; Noel, 2006). As Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) have most recently explained in their work based on teacher training in the USA, this practice is not a distinctively UK phenomenon.

### **9.3 How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted?**

Each case study highlights, in the first instance, the *staged* nature of ITT teaching observations. Vocational teachers, their education tutors and vocational mentors provided accounts of the sequences of the process differentiated by time and context. Each observation of teaching was agreed in advance by the subjects, apart from the observations conducted by Vince (VM4), Clive's vocational mentor in plastering. As outlined in the CS4 account, Vince conducted observations unannounced and intermittingly throughout a morning or afternoon teaching session. All of the case study observations featured a post-observation feedback discussion and included a written account/report of the observation provided by the observer. The staged nature of the observations is captured diagrammatically in Appendix 4.

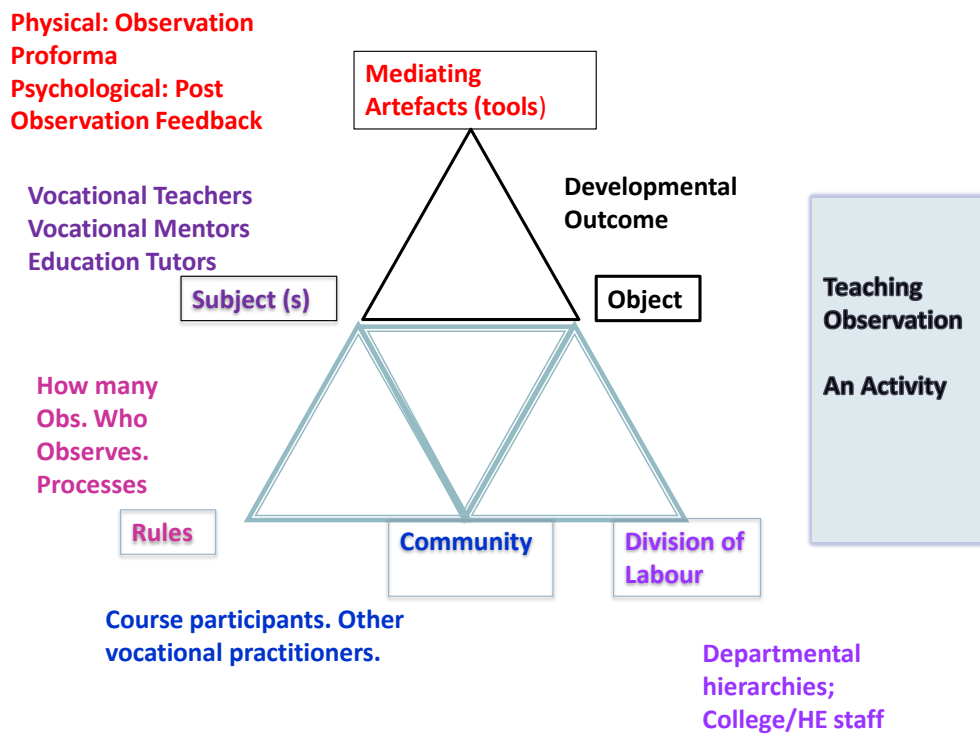
Whilst the sequences varied in order and in the intervals between the sequences (as diagrams in Appendix 4 illustrate), such sequencing is not uncommon practice for ITT observations. Although attention is drawn to the stages involved in conducting teaching observations in handbooks and 'how to' guides (referred to in Chapter Three) this aspect of teaching observation is, surprisingly, rarely documented in the research literature reviewed in Chapter Three. This would seem to be an important omission.

Rather than being construed as a one-off, time-bound event, the dynamic nature of the activity can perhaps only be realised by making visible the sequences involved. This is important as it enables a more accurate conceptual framing. From the case study

accounts, the teaching observations conducted for ITT are best construed as *activities* given that they take place in a time frame that extends beyond the teaching setting observed. Without making the process visible, teaching observations are, in contrast, more than likely to be conceptualised as *events*. This concurs with the modelling of observation as an activity in the CHAT heuristic adopted.

#### 9.4 CHAT and the Object of Activity

Informed by the literature on teaching observations which positioned observations conducted as part of ITT at the developmental end of a spectrum of teaching observations (Cockburn, 2006; Hardman, 2007 and O’Leary 2013), the Object of Activity was originally construed as ‘*teacher development*’, per se. This was presented as Figure 4 in Chapter Five and is reproduced below.



However, analysis of the case study accounts gives a much more nuanced understanding of the activity in relation to the Object of Activity. As has been explained in Chapter Five, the Object of Activity should be understood as the goal of the activity, i.e. what the activity is working towards. Rather than understanding the activity (teaching observation) as *teacher development* per se, the accounts suggest drawing a distinction between observations which included education tutors as subjects and those where vocational mentors were subjects in the activity. Two different, yet interacting, activity systems are therefore seen to be in play given that their respective purposes give rise to two different Objects of Activity.

It is important at this point to make a distinction between what is being proposed and the notion of a negotiated Object of Activity in an activity system. A negotiated Object of Activity is anticipated in analyses of activity systems. As Engeström (2009:np) explains:

An activity system is always heterogeneous and multi-voiced. Different subjects, due to their different histories and positions in the division of labor (sic) construct the object and the other components of the activity in different, partially overlapping and partially conflicting ways.

Indeed, Douglas (2011b:198), who utilised CHAT as a methodological lens to investigate school-based teacher education programmes (reviewed in Chapter Five), established that the Object of Activity should always be seen as: "...open to negotiation in an activity like ITE where participants have different opinions and intentions with regards to the activity".

However, in the cases under consideration here it is possible to differentiate the intentions and practices of the observation where subjects are positioned differently in the activity. Therefore, where the educational tutor, as opposed to the vocational

mentor, is the observer in the activity, the intentions and practices take on a distinct form. The practices of the vocational teachers and their education observers evidence working towards a shared object. This is also the case when the focus shifts to the relationship between vocational teachers and their vocational mentors in the activity. Their practice, with one exception, also evidences working towards a (different) shared object.

This insight has therefore led to a re-modelling of the activity. Rather than seeing development *per se* as the object of the activity, in the case of observations conducted by education tutors the object is more properly defined as the *development of pedagogic expertise*. Where observations are conducted by vocational mentors, the object is more properly defined as the *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*. The sections that follow develop the arguments around these categorisations and also identify the exception: the case of the health and social care vocational teacher.

### **9.5 The development of pedagogic expertise**

In the accounts of the vocational teachers and their respective education tutors, the culturally valued concepts that framed the observation process were explicit. Education tutors approached the observation by focussing on the development of (or, as they more often described it: “progression towards”) particular approaches to planning and organising learning and the use of associated learning and teaching strategies. Specifically, education tutors considered development in relation to the vocational teacher’s use of student-centred, active learning approaches to teaching including the integration of group and paired work; strategies for differentiation; clarity of communication and use of language. These strategies are generally seen as evidencing a more inductive approach to learning (Bruner, 1963) and are viewed as more likely to create a more positive learning experience for students. In CS2 Laura’s

(ET2) reflection on how far Maria (VT2) had travelled in developing such an approach to teaching is indicative of how these culturally valued concepts framed the observation of the vocational teacher's practice.

Vocational teachers accepted this approach to the development of their practice; this was what they were also working towards. Therefore in all of the accounts of the vocational teachers, there was the acceptance that a more student-centred, activity-led approach to teaching students was desired and therefore expected of them in their observed classes. These culturally valued concepts have their roots in cognitive and social constructivist theories of learning. The dominance of these theories and their associated concepts reflects an orthodoxy underpinning ITT courses, exemplified in texts commonly set for study (see, inter alia, Armitage et al, 2007; Gravells, 2012; Gray et al, 2000; Petty, 2004). They also frame much of the 2007 Professional Standards for teachers in FE (LLUK, 2007b). In CHAT terms these culturally valued concepts can be understood as part of the "historicity" (Engeström 2001:136) shaping the activity.

How these culturally valued concepts might be developed in future teaching featured heavily in the post observation feedback discussion. The accounts established that, in all cases, it was this stage in the observation process that enabled ideas to be exchanged and alternative practices generated. In CHAT terms, it was during the post-observation feedback, which is positioned as a mediating artefact in this research that learning from the observation occurred. Given the significance of the post-observation feedback discussion to vocational teachers' learning, this will be explored in more depth in section 9.8: mediating artefacts in this chapter.

However, whilst the development of practices which reflect these culturally valued concepts were discussed in the post-observation feedback and in response to questions about the focus of the observations in the accounts, there was no explicit

reference to the relationship between the adoption and development of such practices and the learning theories from which they emerge.

This absence may only be significant in relation to understanding how expertise is developed. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, discussions around the development of expertise point to development across two axes: the vertical and the horizontal. With the former, a more traditional, top-down expert to novice version of the development of expertise is envisaged. Whereas with the latter, the development of expertise is seen as being an outcome of a much broader cross over between practitioners from disciplinary and/or vocational areas (Engeström et al 1995; Engeström, 2004; Felstead et al, 2005; Fuller and Unwin, 2010).

In the case of the development of *pedagogic expertise*, the vertical dimension of the development of expertise is more immediately obvious. The 'expert' education tutor can be seen as having the knowledge that was valued. They taught on the ITT courses the vocational teachers' attended and, in the observation activity, vocational teachers were being assessed on the extent to which they were able to put this knowledge into practice. But given the absence of any explicit discussion or justification of theories that underpinned the strategies that were enacted by vocational teachers, the extent to which vocational teachers had, actually, grasped the knowledge underpinning practice is not clear. Indeed, it could be argued that in the activity under investigation the extent of the *development of pedagogic expertise* can only ever be considered partial.

However, this argument is limited in the sense that it rests on a rather more traditional view of knowledge. That is, that knowledge is fixed and static and the product of abstract theory. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, this can lead to a rather limited understanding of what counts as knowledge and, of particular importance to this thesis, it means that knowledge is rarely construed as being developed in practice.

What is required, instead, is a much more nuanced appreciation of the knowledge base of education tutors, one that would embrace both the codified knowledge of learning theory as well as the dynamic development of knowledge in practice. The extent to which education tutors in this research can be seen as knowledgeable in relation to educational theory is beyond the scope of this thesis, but research by Noel (2006) and Lawy and Tedder (2009) has explored this issue for ITT in FE. Nevertheless, the development of knowledge in practice in the activity is illustrated and discussed in section 9.8 on mediating artefacts.

The development of pedagogic expertise was not, however, solely reliant on the education tutor's knowledge and understanding of these culturally valued concepts. An additional feature of the movement towards the development of pedagogic expertise was, as anticipated by the CHAT framing of the research methodology, the part played by the education tutors' different histories and life experiences; histories and experiences that vocational teachers could not be expected to know about or share. The case study accounts therefore evidence the ways in which these histories shape practices in the activity. For instance, steeped in ESOL/EFL teaching, Denis (ET1) and Laura (ET2) both emphasised the importance of language in teaching. Denis for example, focused on how he would encourage Johnson to put his current use of '*incidental language*' to good effect. Similarly, Laura acknowledged that her subject specialism enabled her to offer more ideas when Vocational teachers '*have ESOL learners in the classroom*'.

Using CHAT as a methodological lens through which to view teaching observations has therefore enabled subjects' own histories and professional experiences to be construed as an embedded part of the activity. Rather than gloss over the influence of education tutors' personal and professional histories, which appears to have been the case in previous research on teaching observations reviewed in Chapter Three, CHAT

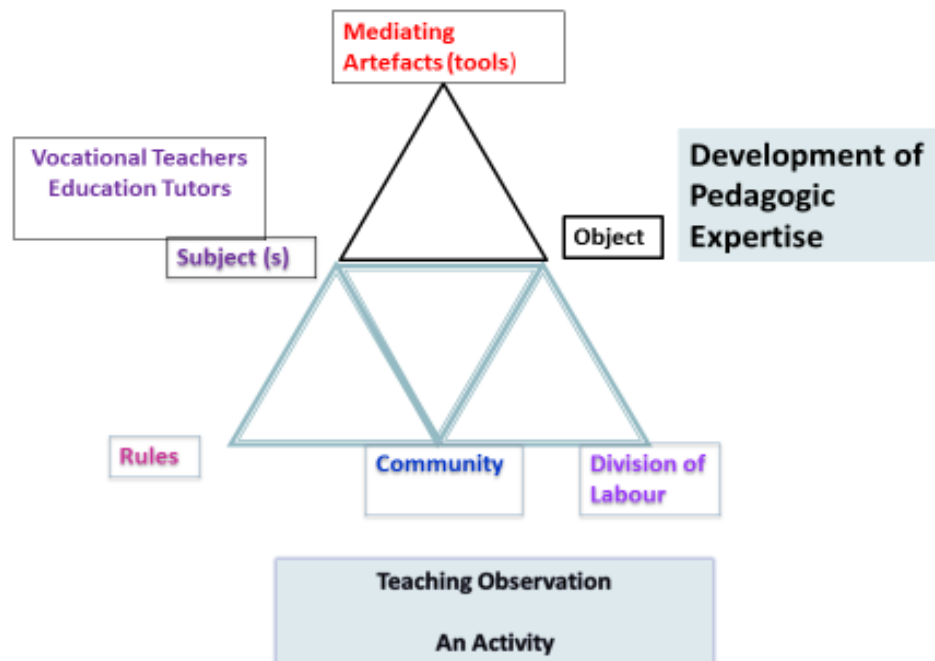


methodology makes these histories visible and helps inform our understanding of the filters observers act upon when considering vocational teachers' practice. A consideration of the observer's history ensures the activity is fully understood as an act of observation complete with its contradictions and complexities, as outlined by Angrosino (2007), Coffey (1999), Sangar (1996) and Wragg (1999) in Chapter Four. Such an appreciation also challenges the prevailing discourse, which frames discussion around the so-called unreliability of observations as assessor error or misjudgement (Ofsted, 2012). This discourse clearly constructs observation as an act that can be perfected through eliminating observer bias. In other words, what is encouraged is a disregard for the professional experiences education tutors might bring to the observation and instead a 'men in white coats' approach is encouraged i.e. a sanitised approach to teaching observation.

A reconstructed model of the activity system, which sees the object of the activity as the *development of pedagogic expertise*, is therefore produced in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6

**Education Tutor Observations**  
**The object (The development of Pedagogic Expertise) in the activity (Teaching Observation)**



### 9.6 The development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice

Working towards the development of *pedagogic expertise* also formed part of the practices where the vocational mentor acted as observer. Vocational mentors approached the observation by considering, as Delia (VM2) suggested, ‘*what makes a good lesson*’ and vocational teachers and their mentors exchanged examples of how they might develop their use of culturally valued concepts. These practices had much in common with those of education tutors and their respective vocational teachers. However, this conceptualisation alone does not satisfactorily capture the vocational dimension of observation evidenced in the activity, and it is this that leads to the identification of the Object of Activity as, specifically, the development of *pedagogic*

*expertise for vocational practice* in the case studies where vocational mentors acted as observers.

With the exception of the health and social care observation account (CS2), vocational mentors' accounts evidenced the extent to which both their vocational knowledge and awareness of the purposes of vocational learning (the "*clear line of sight*" as advocated in the *CAVTL report*, LSIS, 2013) impacted on their observation practices. As seen in CS3, Miriam, (VM3) Alan's vocational mentor in wigs and theatrical make-up, identified the specific vocational knowledge that she offered the observation process, which was additional to the knowledge offered by education tutors. This contribution with its specific vocational focus was replicated in the practices of the other vocational mentors.

To illustrate this finding further, three specific vocational concerns, irrespective of the vocational field, were evident from the accounts of vocational mentors and were also acknowledged, to varying extents, by vocational teachers. The vocational concerns focused on:

- (i) **speed of practice** and vocational students' development of more time-efficient practice;
- (ii) **health and safety** i.e. vocational students' development of safe practice; and
- (iii) **location of practice.**

With regard to the development of speed of practice, vocational mentors' concerns were exemplified by Rachel (VM1) in the catering case study (CS1). In the discussion of the points she was going to include in her feedback to Johnson (VT1), Rachel explained how '*speed is of an essence*' when preparing students for the industry. For Rachel, Johnson's progress rested on the extent to which he could juggle the need to develop

student-led activities against the real-life demands of the vocational environment. In the case study account of the observation too much time was seen to be wasted during the preparation stage of the session and, although preparation time was understood as part and parcel of the chef's practice Rachel explained that students, nevertheless, needed to be doing more than gathering ingredients. To justify her stance, Rachel referred to both the practice in the workplace and the differences between the knowledge of first year students and those working in a kitchen. Rachel's subsequent discussion with Johnson focused on the strategies she had developed to address time-awareness in catering students so that it became part of students' tacit practice.

Similarly, time/speed of practice featured in the account of Alan's wigs and theatrical make-up observation (CS3) by Miriam (VM3). As the account of Alan's practice in the salon illustrated, Alan raised the issue of speed with his students. Arguably, Alan was already cognisant of the importance of the development of time-efficient practice and therefore stressed its importance with his level 3 students. However, in relation to health and safety, Miriam (VM3) explained that Alan also needed to remind students to set up their workstations according to whether they were right or left handed. She had observed students stretching across their workstations – something she had commented upon to a student during the observed session and therefore connected this to the development of student's safe practice. She also pointed out that Alan needed to be sure to apply all health and safety regulations to the checks on the student uniform: *'big earring, they all love them, but it is a health and safety risk!'*

In some instances, however, the vocational-specific practice was so embedded into the vocational teaching context that it took a stranger to notice the familiar. This occurred in the account of the observation conducted by Rachel (VM1), Johnson's vocational mentor where, as researcher-observer, I drew attention to the frequent health and safety reminders that had punctuated Johnson's practice in the kitchen. Rachel's response confirmed that although she had seen the practice, she had not actually

noted it down, and was pleased to have it brought to her attention because it was important that Johnson received this feedback.

With the exception of CS2, the location of practice featured in all of the vocational mentors' accounts and can be seen to have framed respective observers' preparations and colour expectations. The broader and significant issue of the setting in which vocational learning should be placed is dealt with in detail later in this analysis. However, it is important at this point in the clarification of the *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice* to signal how vocational mentors were fully aware of the influence of the setting on the practice of the vocational teacher. With the exception of Delia (VM2), Maria's vocational mentor and indeed Maria herself (CS2), all the other vocational teachers and mentors spoke in some way or another about the setting. This included comments about feeling more comfortable in practical settings, as opposed to theory sessions in classrooms.

Examples also included reflections on the differences between vocational teachers in workplaces and the expectations of them as teachers-in-training. In CS5, Julie (VM5), Simona's painting and decorating vocational mentor explained why the preparation of paperwork for a teaching session can be challenging for vocational teachers. As has been seen in the account, she suggested that the reason was to do with cultural practices of workplaces where, on site, a painter and decorator would, more than likely, be told what to do rather than have to plan out a year's practice. Vocational teachers' apparent difficulty with composing a scheme of work for a year may, she argued, have little to do with vocational teachers' literacy

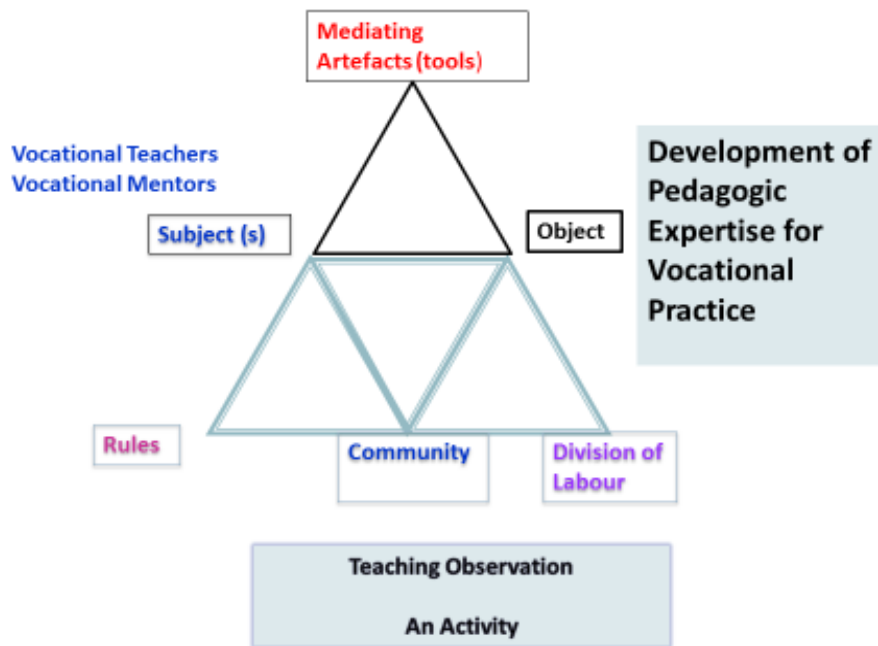
In the vocational teachers' accounts of the observations, working towards the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice* is also apparent. The accounts of Alan (VT3) Clive (VT4) and Simona (VT5) exemplify this more than either Johnson (VT1) or Maria (VT2). In Alan's account, examples of the importance of speed

of practice have been mentioned, but he also spoke about the importance of location and context to successful vocational learning. His response was to vary locations in order that students might experience different conditions on a photo-shoot. Similarly, Clive (VT4), in justifying his peer assessment strategy in a practical class spoke about how he was modelling assessments of practice that were an embedded feature of on-site working. He therefore developed peer and self-assessment to enable student to judge the quality of each others' work. The final determinant as to whether work students' produced was good enough was whether students could justify the cost of the work to a client.

A reconstructed model of the activity system, which sees the object of the activity as the *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*, is therefore produced in Figure 7.

Figure 7

**Vocational Mentor Observations**  
**The object (The development of PEDAGOGIC EXPERTISE for VOCATIONAL PRACTICE)**  
**in the activity (Teaching Observation)**



Although the observation activity evidenced vocational teachers and their mentors working towards the development of *pedagogic expertise* with similar culturally valued concepts being endorsed, no explicit reference to underpinning learning theory was evident in the observation activity involving vocational teachers and their mentors. However, the significance of this is unknown, given that observers were not asked about their educational knowledge base.

It is, nevertheless, of interest to explore whether vocational knowledge was addressed, explicitly, in the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*. This is because, as outlined in Chapter Three, the *raison d'être* for the introduction of the role of (vocational) mentors as observer following the 2007 regulations was to provide a

'subject specialist' observer who could focus on the issues of practice related to subject or vocational knowledge. Although not conceptualised as such in the regulatory framework, the anticipated relationship between the vocational teacher and their mentor might have been modelled on the expert – novice relationship. However, in Chapter Two the development of vocational expertise was understood as involving development along a horizontal plane as well as a vertical plane (Engeström, 2004; Felstead et al, 2005; Fuller and Unwin, 2010).

In the case study accounts the relationship between the mentor and vocational teacher appeared to be based, firstly, on mutual respect and team working, a much more collaborative engagement than might otherwise be expected. Clive and his plastering mentor Vince (CS4) illustrate the relationship based on mutual respect and collaboration most clearly with Clive understanding Vince's observation feedback as a *'..,more direct guttural thing...coming from someone that does the same trade'*. Meanwhile, Vince's approach to his role as mentor observer meant that whilst he might discuss ways of completing a specific plastering task with Clive, this was part of what he called an, *'unofficial professional discussion'*. He explained that their discussions were *'plasterer to plasterer'*. In relation to commenting on Clive's vocational practice, Vince had little doubt. Whilst there might be several ways to approach the same plastering technique, Vince made a clear distinction between commenting on or evaluating Clive's vocational practice and commenting on the ways in which he taught the students.

Vince reflected clearly on the awareness he had of his role and the purpose of the activity. It was to develop pedagogical expertise firmly grounded in the vocational context; it was not about developing and/or assessing Clive's vocational expertise. This is reciprocated by Clive who prefaced his discussion of Vince's observation with the comment: *'me and [Vince] work as a team'*. The observation activity, therefore, reflected this team working, with its informal professional discussions and



consideration of plastering students' developing expertise. Ordinarily, Clive and Vince worked as a team of plasterers and their working relationship was, as has been seen, underpinned by respect for each other's vocational practice and it was this that transferred so meaningfully to the mentoring role. In CS2 Clive explained the way they worked together in the department and indicated how their respective areas of expertise were valued and considered when planning the curriculum.

Clive and Vince therefore shared their passion and their interest in developing the practices of young plasterers. For them the point was to keep the wide ranges of plastering skills going by including it in their teaching irrespective of whether this was required by the qualifications being delivered. Therefore, on the ceilings and walls of the various plastering workshops pieces of intricate plastering, using traditional materials, were proudly displayed, evidencing the skill development of vocational learners who were, to all intents and purposes, on level 1 and 2 courses.

In the other case studies of Johnson (CS1) Alan (CS3) and Simona (CS5), their respective knowledge of vocational practice and experience in the field was referenced frequently by their vocational mentors. It was acknowledged as absolutely vital, not only in relation to the vocational students' learning, but also in structuring the expectations of vocational learning environment. These expectations were integrated into vocational teachers' practice and were commented upon by vocational mentors as part and parcel of learning about the real world. As the case study accounts evidence, this was the case irrespective of whether they were expressed in real-life stories told to students about kitchen codes of behaviour or the problems of preparing hair on-set, or whether practice modelled and/or challenged the banter of the construction site.

Therefore, in contrast to the modelling of the development of expertise discussed above in relation to the education tutor/vocational teacher observation activity, in the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*, the horizontal dimension of expertise is more pronounced primarily because it is much more multi-dimensional.

Subjects in the activity enter the relationship with shared knowledge of practices from a generic or specific occupational field and this creates the backdrop to all opportunities taken to develop pedagogy. How this happens is explored more fully in the section on mediation explored later in this chapter.

### **9.7 The Health and Social Care exception**

I have argued that in analysing the case studies, two overlapping activity systems have been identified and that a fuller understanding of what happens in teaching observations for vocational teachers necessitates these conceptual distinctions to be made. However, in the case study accounts, the observational practices in one case (CS2) Maria, the Health and Social Care tutor (VT2) does not evidence such a conceptual distinction. The practices of both observers and the accounts given by Maria of her observational experiences, point to all subjects working towards the development of *pedagogic expertise*. In contrast to the other vocational teacher observations which evidenced working towards *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*, there was no evidence of these practices in either the interaction between the vocational mentor, Maria (VT2) and Delia (VM2) or in the accounts they gave of their approaches to/ expectations of an observation conducted by a vocational specialist. However, I will argue that an explanation can be given of these absences and they include the framing of the curriculum as vocational; notions of vocational expertise and, more broadly, the strength of vocational identity espoused by Maria.

Despite the courses on which Maria taught being construed as vocational, the connection to the workplace was unclear. In many ways the courses epitomised the range of vocational courses criticised by the Wolf report (2011) reviewed in Chapter Two. These courses would also have difficulty, organised in their current form, of meeting the criteria for vocational courses that CAVTL proposed (LSIS, 2013). Nevertheless, having observed Maria's classroom practice with her vocational mentor,

Delia, the absence of any reference to work was readily apparent and, as has been seen in CS2, I was interested to explore, during the interview with Delia, whether the health and social care workplace context framed the vocational mentor's observation of practice. Delia's response was clear: it did not frame her thoughts. Similarly, Maria's account of her role shed little light on the vocational nature of her teaching.

Turning to Maria's vocational profile and the development of vocational expertise, Maria had spent a relatively short time working as a child minder while her own children were young. This contrasted with the other vocational teachers (and all of the mentors) who had spent in excess of 10 years in their field. Yet unlike the other vocational teachers, Maria had recent experience of HE where she had studied for an academic qualification, a BA in Early Years. Reference to this period of academic study and, specifically, the knowledge she felt she had secured and the doors it opened for her as an assessor of work-based learning, punctuated discussions about her practice. For Maria, the knowledge she was drawing upon was abstract, theoretical knowledge; this was what was needed to teach successfully. Additionally, Maria described how she felt her first year vocational mentor had '*nothing to offer*' her development. This was because her mentor did not have the theoretical knowledge she possessed.

Whilst an analysis of the development of vocational teachers' identity is beyond the scope of this thesis, it may be helpful to draw briefly upon the findings of a recent study of vocational teachers' identity formation in Sweden. Fejes and Köpsén's (2012) research illustrated how vocational teachers who had weak relations with their occupational communities as a result of an "indistinct and unclearly defined occupation", were more likely to hold what they saw as "stronger teacher identities" (ibid:12). Additionally, they argued that, like Maria, where vocational teachers had spent less time immersed in their vocational communities and more time in other learning contexts, like formal education:

...Such experience provides [them] with different tools and another language through which [they] can construe and speak about [themselves] in terms of who [they are].

(ibid)

This analysis resonates with the case of Maria. Certainly she used the language of academic study to define her expertise. However, she did not hold a strong teacher identity. Instead, as the CS2 account confirms, her sense of who she was and what she saw herself doing in the not too distant future captured her developing identity as an assessor and Ofsted inspector. The thought that these roles might require knowledge and experience of such varied settings did not feature in her aspirations.

### **9.8 Mediating Artefacts**

In Chapter Three it was established that the limited existing research which focussed on the experiences and perceptions of FE teachers on ITT teaching observations had shown that observations conducted as part of a developmental discourse were generally seen to be useful to teachers' developing practice. Although limited in scope, the research pointed to the discursive element of the observation process as affording opportunities for development. However, it was difficult to arrive at any conclusion from the existing literature as to the process of learning involved in this aspect of the observation. In contrast, the case study approach taken in this thesis has enabled insight into the discursive element of teaching observation. The adoption of an activity heuristic has positioned this discursive aspect as a mediating artefact.

In Chapter Five, the mediating role that artefacts play in CHAT has been summarised. In the modelling of the activity, represented in figures 6 and 7 in this chapter, two mediating artefacts have been identified as featuring in the practices in all of the case studies irrespective of institution or ITT context. The artefacts are the observation proforma and the post-observation feedback discussion. The first conforms to the

understanding of an artefact as a physical or material tool; the latter as psychological. As Ellis et al, (2011:18) remind us:

...tool-use reveals something about the cultures within which the tools have developed as well as the thinking of those who work with them and, further, highlights the relationship between these two, social and historical processes.

This means that artefacts in this analysis will not be considered in relation to their physical form or their content. These features are not taken to ascribe significance in activity systems. Rather, *how* these artefacts were seen to operate in the activity is the subject of consideration in the following sections.

With regard to the observation proforma, the reason for its existence is linked, specifically, to the requirement for teachers to be observed eight times teaching at threshold standards during their ITT (LLUK 2007a). The proforma acts as evidence of the observations having taken place and whilst some local discretion operates as to the form the proforma takes, its significance in the activity results from being produced for certain use. The ways in which the proforma is *used* by subjects across the case studies is therefore discussed first. This then leads onto a consideration of the extent to which subjects in the activity are able to develop its use beyond the original intentions: in CHAT terms, beyond the “layers and strands of history” (Engeström, 2001:136) with which it is engraved.

## **9.9 Observation Proforma**

All observers were actively engaged in completing a proforma during the observation, even where the environment proved to be one where sitting and writing or typing was extremely challenging, as was the case in the plastering workshop (CS4). The vocational mentors recorded their observations in hand-written note form and later

transferred these on to their respective proforma, whereas all of the education tutors with the exception of Laura (ET2) who made hand-written notes, either began the composition of or completed their respective observation proforma on laptop computers during the class. One education tutor (Denis, ET1) varied his practice between composing handwritten notes whilst also completing a proforma on his laptop.

Notwithstanding these differences, the observation proforma was therefore used during the observation of practice by the observer. The extent to which it acted to frame the observers' respective approaches to the observations is unclear. Certainly, there was an alignment between the observers' accounts of what they were looking for in the observations and the proforma in use. However, given the categories most commonly included in such proforma and against which observers recorded their assessments of practice (i.e. the teachers' planning intentions, assessment strategies, differentiation activities, management of learning, and communication strategies) this is not unsurprising. Nevertheless, as argued above, the key aspect for consideration is the *use* of the proforma in the activity. From the case study accounts, *use* appears to vary according to the extent to which the observation proforma acted solely as a tool to record an assessment outcome. In other words, use varied according to the extent to which the proforma operated as a product to record the outcome of a judgement, as opposed to the extent to which it was used as learning tool. In education discourse, this might be rephrased as the extent to which the proforma had a summative as opposed to a formative assessment intention (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

In case studies 4 and 5, for instance, where observations were conducted by Anna (ET 4,5) the proforma was not fully completed prior to the feedback discussion and was therefore used, initially at least, rather more as an *aide memoir* to guide the observer's thoughts. This practice can be seen to have emerged partly because feedback occurred immediately after the session as this was often the only workable option for observers

who, like Anna, were HE staff and who travelled some distance to colleges to conduct observations. Following the feedback discussion, the proforma was completed by Anna and acted as a record of assessment. However there was also an added dimension to the proforma use by the Anna, which did not feature in the other case study accounts. Unlike the other case study contexts, the HE-led ITT context, which framed Anna's work, required that the education tutor assigned a grade to the observation using Ofsted criteria for assessing practice. The question of assigning grades to ITT observations and the tensions this exposed have been summarised in the discussion of observations in Chapter Three (see Ollin, 2009). Anna, as the education tutor observer, articulated this tension in the feedback discussion with Clive, recorded in CS4. Irrespective of the difficulty, a grade was required and was subsequently assigned by Anna, recorded on the proforma and later sent to the vocational teacher.

In this instance then artefact use is not only a product of statutory regulation and an outcome of the productive system (Felstead et al 2009), but it also signals the decisions taken by institutions (in this case a HE institution) at the meso level to use the artefact to record an Ofsted grading.<sup>15</sup> Whilst assigning a grade was also required of the mentor observers in South College, both mentors appeared to deal with this differently. Vince (VM4) did not refer to it, whereas Julie (VM5) contrasted the strategies she used to assign a grade to ITT observations and internal QA observations.

In CS2, Laura's actions as education tutor observer sheds further light on the ways in which the proforma's genesis in a regulatory framework extends to constrain practice. From the CS2 account, Laura is seen to have constructed her own proforma which represented a much more useful artefact in mediating the development of *pedagogic expertise*. This artefact reflected a previous working practice as a CELTA tutor and included composing a running commentary of the session coupled with points to discuss with Maria (VT2). In the observed lesson, the constructed proforma totalled six

---

<sup>15</sup> Chapter Three has confirmed that at the time of the research, ITT observations were not required to be graded.

full A4 pages. The course observation proforma that she was required to use for reporting purposes did not require a running commentary. Instead she found it burdensome with its *'boxes to put things in'*. The construction of a different artefact also helped her in her transition from the observations she conducted as a CELTA teacher to the ones required for the ITT programme. Despite the fact that, as she said, *'every student I've given [the narrative] to has really, really appreciated this and said they found it really useful'*, she recognised that she simply could not continue to keep two processes going as it was taking her at least one and a half hours to finalise the (given) proforma following the observation. She was therefore proposing to amend the existing proforma to make it more *'manageable'*. In effect she was forced to compromise what she had experienced as a really useful artefact by the rules and procedures of the ITT programme and the constraints of the wider requirements to demonstrate how teaching satisfied LLUK Professional Standards.

In contrast, the use of the proforma in the activity can be seen to play out differently in other case studies whilst, nevertheless, acting as a record of assessment. For example in CS3, in the period between the observation and the post observation feedback discussion, Alan (VT3) had composed an evaluation of the session, which he had sent to his education tutor, Shirley (ET3). Shirley, in turn, had written up the teaching observation report taking Alan's evaluation into account, and this, she explained, would be used during the feedback to organise the discussion. Shirley described completing the three-page observation proforma used at the college as *'quite easy'*, as she was an experienced observer. However, the account she gave of the artefact use indicated that she had a particular purpose in mind for the proforma.

As can be seen in CS3 Shirley used the artefact to provide a summative record of the observation, but she also used it as a framework to facilitate discussion between herself and Alan in the post observation feedback. In this instance the actions of a subject in the activity puts the artefact to a much more multifaceted use. By using



*discretion* (Felstead et al, 2009:187) based on her considerable experience of working with beginning teachers, the education tutor was able to ensure the artefact was put to use in different ways.

In terms of the observations conducted by vocational mentors, the proforma featured less obviously. Whilst Rachel (VM1) Delia (VM2) and Miriam (VM3) all took notes during the observations and they produced completed proforma, the artefact appeared rather less visibly in the activity and certainly did not feature in discussions of practices. The impression left was that the proforma was, after all, simply another report that needed to be completed, one of many required by the FE college. Its completion may have been time-consuming, but its criticality was dubious. What mattered it seemed for the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice* was the post observation discussion.

The analysis now moves onto the practices that make up the post observation feedback discussion (the psychological artefact). Attention then centres on the extent to which the space provided by the feedback discussion could be seen to be used by subjects not only as a “pedagogic practice” (Felstead et al, 2009:175), but also as a site of knowledge production.

### **9.10 Observation feedback discussion**

At the start of this chapter, it was established that the observation activity was *staged* in nature but that the stages varied in order and in the intervals between the stages. Irrespective of whether it took place immediately after the observation or later, the observation feedback discussion was considered by all activity subjects as a central feature of the activity. Indeed, vocational teachers relished opportunities to discuss their observed teaching and to consider their practice in more detail. This is despite the anxiety that vocational teachers’ recorded in both preparing for and during the

observation. What turned the anxiety provoked by thinking about the observations into something that was to be relished was the conviction that the purpose of the feedback was *developmental*. This corroborates the discussions of others in the field and discussed in Chapter Three (Cockburn 2005; Hardman, 2007 and O’Leary 2013).

Although not central to the discussion here, the approach taken to the feedback differed both between and within College and ITT contexts. From a CHAT perspective, this is unsurprising. The rules of practice are recognised as situated and therefore embedded in the context in which they take place. For example, Shirley (ET3) explained that because she was part of the college’s staff development/quality team, she adopted an approach to giving feedback that had been agreed by the team. The case studies therefore captured the broad rules, norms and practices that were at play during this stage of the activity.

Although varying in approach, the case study accounts illustrated, to some extent or another, what might be seen as the construction of a verbal and development space, with the sole purpose of developing practice. In the feedback discussion between Johnson and Denis (CS1), for instance, there are examples of the inductive nature of the feedback experience, even a form of modelling of feedback practice, whereby the strengths of the session and the development needs are talked through by subjects. In the case study account it can be seen that Denis wants to draw Johnson’s attention to his use of (lengthy) anecdotes in his teaching. The anecdotes draw from his extensive experience of the catering industry. In Denis’s view these lengthy anecdotes, during which students are seen to be ‘just listening’, serve to limit student learning in the classroom as learners are seen to be passive. However, Denis does not simply say to Johnson that he should cut these down. Rather he acknowledges the potential vocational value of such anecdotes, but negotiates suggested changes in practice.

Evidence of this type of exchange, this modelling of giving feedback, punctuates the feedback discussion. This does not mean to say that specific strategies that could be used in the session were not given in a more direct way. Indeed, very specific strategies were shared with Johnson during the feedback discussion. Similarly, in the feedback discussion in CS3 between Shirley (ET3) and Alan (VT3), Shirley can also be seen as modelling a questioning approach that would generally be encouraged in any teaching and learning context.

In CHAT terms, the feedback discussions in the case study accounts illustrate how the artefact mediates learning and moves the activity towards the object. However, this is not all that is happening here. Whilst CHAT conceptual tools have framed the analysis thus far, the conceptual framework offered by researchers in the field of workplace learning and reviewed in Chapter Two, is helpful in further explaining practice during the feedback discussion. The analysis now turns to explore these contributions.

### **9.11 Learning as Participation**

In the learning as participation metaphor explored in Chapter Two, learning was understood to be dynamic; on-going; dialogical; continually reconstructed as participants engage in action and, as Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal work demonstrated, knowledge is transformed when used and produced in practice. The post-observation feedback discussion illustrates the ways in which vocational teachers and their observers can be seen to be living out this process of learning. Yet in discussions of teaching observations reviewed in Chapter Three, the learning, where it was considered at all, is almost always assumed to be one way - from the 'expert' observer to the 'novice' teacher in the classic vertical descriptor of the development of expertise (see Chapter Two). Apart from some discussions in the literature on peer observation conducted in HE (Cosh, 1998; Gosling, 2002), the potential developmental outcomes for the observer are rarely considered. This absence, it was argued,

positioned respective conceptions of learning within the dominant *learning as acquisition* metaphor.

What has been interesting to reflect upon in the case study accounts is that although the post observation feedback discussions evidence engagement with situated practice and with negotiation in relation to the strategies and activities that the vocational teacher might next employ in their practice, the observers do not, generally, talk of themselves as co-learners in the activity. There are, however, some instances of practice in the accounts of observers where learning as a result of engagement in the activity is acknowledged. For instance, Laura (ET2) talked about how she has adapted her use of the observation proforma to ensure it became a more meaningful learning tool and Vince (VM4) indicated he would research the vocational practice demonstrated by mentees with which he was unfamiliar following an observation of a teaching session. However, such reflections were limited. This may, of course, simply be an outcome of observers not being prompted by me to talk about their learning and, as such, a failing in the in-depth interviews.

In contrast, and without being prompted to do so, two of the vocational teachers spoke of the benefits of observing others teach and of the learning derived from these opportunities. Clive (VT4) described one session he observed in a subject area other than his own as a '*Phenomenal*' learning experience. Simona (VT5) also spoke about how the organisation of learning activities in a maths class that she had observed led to her re-consider how she might embed equality and diversity practice into her teaching of painting and decorating.

In CHAT terms, it may be that the respective positioning of subjects in the activity system (as trainees as opposed to tutors) influences the likelihood of adopting a learner disposition more generally. This would help explain why observers' learning was less likely to be articulated. Nevertheless, the vocational teachers' accounts reflect the importance of teachers-in-training being afforded opportunities to observe other

teachers and not necessarily teachers in shared vocational areas. Conceptually, learning from the observation of others described above sits within the horizontal dimension of the development of expertise. In some ways it is a classic exemplar of the multi-dimensional nature of expertise espoused in different ways by Engeström et al (1995), Billett (2001), and Winch (2010) and referred to in Chapter Two. Drawing upon socio-cultural explorations of expertise also provides an explanatory framework for the value given by vocational teachers to the experience of learning with others in respective ITT classes across disciplinary and vocational boundaries as found, for instance, by Avis et al (2011), Harkin (2005) and Orr and Simmonds (2010) .

Thus far, the verbal and physical space provided by the feedback discussion in the observation activity has confirmed its place at the centre of learning from the activity of observation. As Billett (2001:433), drawing on Vygotsky, reminds us, "...social situations - such as workplaces - are not just one-off sources of learning and knowing". In other words, learning and knowing take time; the outcomes are a result of development. The importance of time is confirmed by the case study observers in their discussion of how they approach observations giving due consideration to any previous observation outcomes, where appropriate.

However, additional insight into the social practice at work in the observation feedback discussion can be gleaned from researchers in workplace learning, reviewed in Chapter Two. From these contributions the learning space afforded by the observation activity can be conceptualised as a space where vocational teachers, their mentors and their education tutors collectively develop *vocational practice as teachers*.

In this conceptualisation, and in contrast to traditional deliberations, the feedback discussion cannot be understood by viewing subjects as engaged in a simple application of (educational) theory, vocational knowledge or transfer of learning from one vocational setting into another. Rather, given that knowledge has been

understood to be created in practice, subjects can be seen to be engaged in exploring new ways of practice. Billett (2001) would see this conceptualisation as subjects engaged in a process of co-construction and, whilst this may lead to additional questions (e.g. How far are subjects aware of this co-construction?), it offers a helpful conceptualisation. By focussing on the observer's practice it can be seen that in order to construct and engage in feedback with the vocational teacher, the observer needs to vary their selection of respective educational and/or vocational knowledge according to the situation. It is therefore construed as a dynamic construction, rather than a static application of knowledge

The concept of recontextualisation (Evans et al. 2009; Guile, 2010) might also be useful here in considering vocational practice and in extending the explanatory framework. Moody and Wheelahan's (2012) understanding of the vocational teacher was used in Chapter One to clarify the distinctiveness of the vocational teacher in FE. In their understanding, the vocational teacher is seen as distinctive because rather than transfer knowledge, vocational teachers were seen to be engaged in a process of recontextualisation. That is, in reassembling what is known and practiced for it to work in another context. They argued this was because the knowledge in its original form has a productive function, whereas the knowledge needed in the classroom has a teaching and learning function. For Evans et al. (2009) and Guile (2010) the concept of recontextualisation offers a conceptual challenge to the dominance of the transfer metaphor in discussions of workplace and professional learning.

To illustrate the potential significance of these respective conceptualisations to the fieldwork conducted and, in particular, from the interviews with subjects, I will draw upon one example from CS1 to illustrate. In CS1 the case study account records how Denis (ET1) is frustrated by Johnson's (VT1) apparent inability to transfer what he does so well with students in the practical setting of the kitchen to the classroom. There is a long extract in the case study account where Denis describes the different pedagogic

practices that Johnson is able to demonstrate in the kitchen but not in a classroom. Johnson is seen by Denis to be able to transfer the principles behind the organisation and management of learning (learnt on the ITT programme) to the kitchen but not to the classroom. As a consequence Denis appeared to be frustrated by Johnson's apparent inability to apply what he did so well in a practical catering class to classroom-based learning.

Using the concept of recontextualisation, there would be an acknowledgement that the learning and teaching strategies Johnson (VT1) evidences so obviously in kitchen workshops need to be recontextualised for the classroom setting. However, this recontextualisation cannot simply be assumed to occur, tacitly or otherwise. Rather, it needs to be mediated and the post observation feedback discussion could be construed as the place where such a recontextualisation could be seen to take place.

However, whilst these approaches discussed above offer insightful conceptualisations, there are additional considerations at play and these are concerned with the context of vocational learning. The next section of this analysis and discussion now turns to address the final research question: How might learning in context (situated learning) be maximized?

### **9.12 Learning in Context**

In the case study accounts all VTs, apart from Maria (VT2), speak of their comfort in the practical setting. In the case study accounts, Johnson (VT1) and Simona (VT5) spoke of their comfort in the practical environment, whilst Alan (VT3) described how he managed to ensure that each of his first year observations were in the salon: '*I always wangled it so I could get [observed] on the practical ones*'. The familiarity of the practical setting and the safety it afforded to vocational teachers was recognised by all observing tutors. In the case study observations, Anna (ET4,5) was the only education

tutor whose observations (of Clive VT4 and Simona VT5) took place in the practical setting during this research. Anna thought it was really important to observe in the practical context and bemoaned the attitude which she said normally surfaced which implied, as she said, *'it's just a practical!'* and, by implication, not important enough to warrant her observation.

However, Johnson (VT1) and Alan (VT3) had also been observed in both classroom (theory) and practical sessions by their respective education tutors (Denis (ET1) and Shirley (ET3)) and, as discussed above, this led to interesting contrasts to be made by Denis. In the case study observations, all of the vocational mentor observations were conducted in practical sessions. However, this was happenstance as all vocational mentors, with the exception of Julie (VM5), explained that they observed both theory and practical teaching sessions.

Context is central to socio-cultural learning theory and, specifically, the metaphor of learning as participation as discussed in Chapter Two. As has been seen defining what exactly is meant by context is more complex (Fenwick, 2010). However, in his explanation of the utility of socio-cultural approaches to the study of social phenomena, Wertsch (1985:125) argued that activity settings are not determined by their physical context, but created by the participants in the activity. Whilst he accepts that "...some physical contexts are more conducive to creating certain activity settings than others", he cautions against any tendency towards mechanistic determinism. Certainly context in this thesis is best understood as operating at different levels. Nevertheless, the material reality of the activity setting has, throughout this research, been significant and, apart from the health and social care case study account, the physical space in which observation of practice took place cannot be separated from the activity. The final section of this chapter will therefore explore the impact of context on vocational teachers' learning.



### 9.13 Artefacts

In this thesis, artefacts have been construed as part of the activity heuristic's conceptual toolbox and, guided by CHAT, have been understood in terms of their mediating role in moving the activity towards the object. However, artefacts in the vocational classroom have significance beyond this modelling. The artefacts under discussion here serve a purpose in so far as they position the vocational teachers in the case study accounts. Vocational teachers, metaphorically, feel at home because of these artefacts. This is because the artefacts in question are the ovens, knives and uniforms; the hairnets, hairdryers and dummy heads and the trowels and paintbrushes that represent the workplace. They are at once tools of the trade and artefacts in an activity. As tools of the trade they 'carry over' their practical and symbolic meaning. As Huddleston (2011:44) reminds us:

Donning chefs 'whites', purchasing the first set of professional cook's knives provide reinforcement not only of the skills to be learnt but about transition into a community of practice and about having an identity beyond that of learner.

In the case study accounts of teaching in practical contexts (Johnson VT1; Alan VT3; Clive VT4 and Simona VT5), the sounds and smells of the workplace can be seen to shape the experience of practice, including the verbal encounters and physical relationships with learners. In their practical contexts vocational teachers are helping learners to get to know the feel of, smell and/or sound of artefacts so that they may best develop their own vocational practice in the workplace. Yet this aspect of context is continually underplayed in some research into vocational learning (see Atkins et al, 2011; Richardson and Sing, 2011, reviewed in Chapter Two), whilst in other discussions of teaching observations it has, hitherto, not featured either.

The diagrams interspersed in the case study accounts have been included to illustrate, as far as possible, that plastering and painting and decorating workshops can be cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. As CS4 illustrates, these workshops are often used as thoroughfares to exterior parts of the college in ways that other learning contexts would never be. In CS3, the hairdressing salon creates an ambiance that reflects the workplace with music and colour, uniforms and cultural practices. These are important aspects of vocational learning as it is these work environments that learners are being prepared for. The whole point about setting up an operational kitchen or a hairdressing salon is to provide a learning environment 'as if' it were a real vocational environment.

White (2010: 12) reporting on the impact of a guide developed for vocational mentors as a result of a LONCETT<sup>16</sup> project, comes close to this realisation by quoting a specialist in beauty therapy who said she used a particular demonstration in her practice to ensure that:

...learners familiarised themselves with the **smell** of various products and appreciated any contra-indications for their use. (emphasis added)

This insight firmly grounds learning as an embodied practice. It brings the body back into the equation and sees it as an important aspect in learning. As has already been argued in Chapter Two, the importance of the body (as opposed to/as well as the mind) in the conception of vocational learning is a key element in understanding the learning as participation metaphor and in defining vocational knowledge.

However, as practices from the case study accounts demonstrate, there is an apparent separation of knowing into 'theory' and 'practice' in so far as the theory that is construed as underpinning practice is taught in classrooms and divorced from

---

<sup>16</sup> London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training.

embodied practice. The case study accounts evidence the continuing practice of separating out the vocational teacher from their vocational learning context. Indeed in the case study accounts Julie (VM5), Simona's painting and decorating mentor, spoke about a newly adopted college policy which required that, for the purpose of QA observations, vocational teachers would only be observed in theory sessions because *'observation grades were poorer in theory classrooms.'*

From the relevant case study accounts, whilst it can be seen that that vocational teachers find the *development of pedagogic expertise* and *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice* more challenging in classroom settings, some of the teachers' accounts of the observations indicate that the challenge is more about place and practice than pedagogy. In CS4, for instance, Clive's (VT4) reflections are illustrative.

The implications of this for future development of vocational teachers' practice will be discussed in the conclusion. However, the abiding significance of the occupational setting and its associated cultural practices can be illustrated by drawing on the practice of catering students recounted in CS1. At the end of the account of Johnson's (VT1) theory lesson, I recorded that when students were asked at various points in the lesson whether they had understood what they had been told or what they had seen, all responded in unison: *'Yes Chef!'* This is the language of the kitchen; the students had brought it into the alien and rather sterile classroom environment.

### **9.14 Conclusion**

Analysis of the fieldwork has established that ITT teaching observations are staged events, which include a time-bound observation followed by a post-observation feedback discussion. To understand how teaching observations are conducted it has been argued that the staged events need to be made visible. CHAT conceptual tools framed the analysis and led to the identification of two distinct activity systems, defined by their respective yet interactive objects of activity. These were identified as

the development of *pedagogic expertise* and the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*. Artefact use in the activity illustrated how the observation feedback discussion, for instance, mediates learning and moves the activity towards the object, whilst, at the same time, subjects in the activity were seen to use discretion to put artefacts to use in different ways. Finally, concepts from the discussion of vocational learning in Chapter Two offered additional insights into the conceptualisation of observation practice, particularly in relation to the development of vocational expertise along a horizontal axis and in exploring the importance of the material setting in which the observation of vocational practice takes place. The concluding chapter of this thesis will develop these insights and consider the implications for this research for future practice.

## Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the use, value and practice of teaching observations conducted as part of vocational teachers' ITT in FE Colleges in England. It was grounded in my professional experience in FE teacher training and, in particular, in my continuous involvement in ITT teaching observations with vocational teachers as they crossed boundaries from their vocational heartlands into teaching. The aim of this concluding chapter is threefold. Firstly, I will clarify the contribution this thesis makes to the research field and identify the importance of the research findings. Secondly, I will offer some reflections on the research strategy adopted and identify associated limitations. Thirdly, I will present some implications for practice to ensure that teaching observations conducted for vocational teachers-in-training continue to have both use and value.

### 10.1 Vocational Education and Training

To provide a context for the exploration of the use, value and practice of teaching observations for vocational teachers, Chapter Two explored vocational teaching and learning through an examination of how 'the vocational' has been conceptualised and understood. The argument of the chapter centred on the importance of defining vocational education *in its own terms*, and in valuing the relationship to specific occupational sectors. VET, it was argued, can only be understood when placed in the particular occupational sector(s) from which it takes shape and meaning. However, influenced by Dewey (1916), the vocational was conceptualised as combining occupational specific practices with an educational process, thus opening up opportunities for learner progression. In addition, I argued, firstly, for the centrality of the learning as participation metaphor (Sfard, 1998) which conceives learning as dynamic, as being continually produced and recast as individuals and groups interact in their workplace settings and, secondly, for the recognition that vocational learning is

embodied in particular contexts. Central to a full appreciation of vocational learning, it was also argued that a conceptualisation of expertise and the development of expertise are also required. Therefore, in Chapter Two, Billett's (2001) definition of expertise, which encompasses social and cultural aspects and not only cognitive dimensions, was used to establish an understanding of expertise in this thesis. The development of vocational expertise was, moreover, seen as occurring across two axes: the vertical and the horizontal. With the former, a more traditional, top-down, expert-to-novice version of the development of expertise was recognised. In contrast, on the horizontal axis, the development of expertise was construed, following Engeström (2004) Felstead et al (2005) and Winch (2010), as an outcome of a much broader cross-over between practitioners from different disciplinary and/or vocational areas. The conceptual distinctions made in this chapter served to frame the analysis and discussion of findings from the case studies in Chapter Nine.

The question of how experts in vocational fields develop their respective capacity to teach in colleges set up the focus for Chapter Three. Drawing upon the work of Bailey (2007), Foden (1990) and Lucas (2004a), an historical account of vocational teacher training established the origins of the training of technical and vocational teachers in the post-war era and highlighted the move away from a pre-service full time provision to an in-service, locally led provision. The discussion drew attention to the implicit relationship between the attention given to the training of technical and vocational teachers and the perceived needs of the economy. Irrespective of the move from an HEI-driven ITT curriculum for vocational teachers to the professional standards, regulation-led approach introduced in 2001, the centrality of teaching observation to the training of vocational teachers was also established as part of this review.

The review of the literature confirmed the lack of research into the phenomenon of teaching observations, despite their historic centrality to ITT programmes for FE teachers. Chapter Three confirmed that it was research by Cockburn (2005) and

O'Leary (2006) that can be seen as setting the agenda for research-based, critical studies into the process of teaching observations conducted in FE. A welcome addition to the research literature during the latter stages of this thesis was, therefore, the work of O'Leary (2012; 2013) O'Leary's focus on the contrast between graded and developmental observations confirmed my framing of ITT teaching observations as part of the developmental end of the spectrum of teaching observation. However, the argument of this thesis has been that this framing tells us little about the activity under investigation, other than confirming the broad context in which observations take place. This was seen to lead to a less than helpful consideration of the relationship between the observer, the observed and the historical and cultural context in which observation takes place. It was therefore established that very little research light had been shed on the nature of the ITT observations conducted and even less which focussed specifically on the development of vocational teachers.

Although rightly critical of the focus on teaching observations as a strategy to assess FE colleges' quality assurance and address the strengthening performativity agenda in FE (Avis, et al. 2011; Orr, 2009), studies on teaching observations had not, thus far, conceptualised observation. The absence of a conceptualisation left a void, which rendered the process of teaching observation rather mysterious, capable of being filled with assumptions and/or norms about practice. This void seemed to be particularly significant for vocational practitioners. Coupled with the generic absences identified above, the research conducted for this thesis makes a specific contribution to the literature in this regard as it set out to conceptualise observation.

The first research question (*How is the concept and process of observation conceptualised in relation to the development of professional expertise for vocational teachers?*) was therefore addressed by drawing on discussions beyond teacher education (Angrosino, 2007; Sanger, 1996). This provided the opportunity to explore what was involved in the process of observing phenomenon and led to a discussion,

which drew upon a more philosophical premise. It was argued that the social world (of vocational classrooms as much as anywhere else) is not given or taken 'as read', but involves subjective meanings and experiences and that to understand observation, an understanding of these subjective meanings and experiences are therefore required. This approach proved to be particularly valuable to the thesis as few authors (with the notable exception of Wragg, 1999, writing in a schools context) have conceptualised observation as such and drawn out the implications for teaching observation practice.

## **10.2 The methodological contribution of CHAT**

The search for an appropriate methodology and conceptual framework which build upon the conceptual insights of Chapter Four to answer the second research question, 'How is the practice of teaching observation for vocational teachers conducted?', led to CHAT. CHAT was seen as providing a framework where the relationship between the observer, the observed and the historical and cultural context in which observation takes place could be researched. Whilst Engeström's (2001) work established the activity as the prime unit of analysis, CHAT was seen as providing a conceptual toolbox to education (Edwards and Daniels 2004). The work of other educational researchers who have used CHAT (Valencia et al, 2009; Douglas, 2010; Ellis et al, 2011) served to offer helpful insights into the methodological contributions on offer. As has been seen, in this thesis CHAT has been used to develop an activity heuristic, a lens through which to view observation, rather than as an intervention to bring about change/transformation.

In developing an activity heuristic, the subsequent case study fieldwork conducted for this thesis established that teaching observation should be understood as *an activity rather than an event* in two specific regards. Firstly, teaching observation is a process composed of different stages. Stages include a time-bound observation followed by a post-observation feedback discussion. It has been argued that to understand how



teaching observations are conducted, the staged activities need to be made visible. Secondly, in conceptualising teaching observations for vocational teachers as an activity heuristic, CHAT's conceptual toolbox enabled two distinct yet overlapping activity systems to be defined by their respective yet interactive objects of activity. These were identified as the development of *pedagogic expertise* and the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*. The first related to the practice of teaching observation where activity subjects included the vocational teacher and their education tutor; the second where activity subjects included the vocational teacher and their vocational mentor. This conceptualisation makes a specific contribution to understanding the practices involved in vocational teachers' teaching observations conducted in FE. It therefore adds to the existing literature and can be used by others to position the discussion of vocational teachers' dual professionalism.

As has been seen in Chapter Five, in CHAT artefacts play a significant, embedded part in an activity. In the activity of teaching observation, two artefacts were identified as being common to all observation practices across the case studies. The case study accounts confirmed that the first artefact, the observation proforma, can be seen to be used in relation to the purpose for which it was produced i.e. as an artefact to record the outcome of a judgment. The "layers and strands of history" (Engeström, 2001:136) were therefore clearly apparent in the case studies. However, this did not mean that the proforma was put to use by subjects in uniform ways. As was discussed in Chapter Nine, the place of the proforma and its use in the activity had more in common with the accounts of artefact use by Felstead et al (2009) in their discussion of research into artefact use in a range of (non-teaching) work processes. That is, whilst the reach of productive systems was clear in the practices of subjects as they employed the artefact, subjects acted to mould or manipulate the artefact to put it to use in ways additional to the original use. These practices did not lead to a transgression of the original intention, but evidenced instead the ways in which subjects found spaces to *work with* the purpose for which it was produced rather than simply *use* as expected.

This insight is significant in two respects. Firstly, it confirms that the practices of subjects in an activity cannot be assumed to be consensual, however far-reaching the productive system might be into the daily lives of FE teachers. Secondly, it highlights the significance of the agency of individuals in a system and in so doing reminds us that even in an overly regulated system, there will not necessarily be compliance or common practice.

The observation feedback discussion was the second artefact in the observation of vocational teachers' activity. All the case study teachers ascribed value to the opportunity to discuss the observation with the observer. Whilst previous research had not focussed on vocational teachers' experiences per se, the value given to feedback opportunities following a teaching observation in FE is not unknown. Chapter Three confirmed that the limited research, which had been conducted, demonstrated that teachers saw ITT observations as valuable and useful.

The contribution of this thesis, however, has been to make visible the engagement and nature of discussion that took place during feedback as well as to conceptualise the learning from the experience. The thesis has argued that only by firstly construing learning as participation in the workplace and, secondly, by identifying the significance of the development of expertise along the horizontal plane, can the post observation feedback discussion be fully understood. Moreover, the activity heuristic focussed attention on the *use* of the feedback discussion in relation to the *object of activity*. The analysis therefore centred on the ways in which the discussion could be seen to mediate the outcome. I have argued that the post observation feedback discussion offered a verbal and development space where vocational teachers and observers use and develop the language of pedagogy. This led to the recognition, as identified earlier, that the observations of vocational teachers by education tutors were framed by the development of *pedagogic expertise*, whilst observations of vocational teachers by

vocational mentors were framed by the development of *pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*.

Whilst the activity heuristic offered the opportunity to conceptualise teaching observation so that it could be analysed in relation to its purpose and in recognition of the histories of subjects, and rules of the community engaged in the activity, CHAT conceptual tools alone could not provide complete theoretical insight into the activity. Rather, just as conceptions from the wider VET literature reviewed in Chapter Two served to frame the understanding of vocational, they also offered additional insight into the workplace practice of ITT teaching observations. For example, in analysing the contribution of the teaching observation feedback discussion, I argued that it is in this verbal space where knowledge can be seen to be created in practice. Drawing on Billett's (2001) view on co-construction and Evans et al (2009) and Guile's (2010) concept of recontextualisation, the post observation feedback discussion was understood as a space where we can see vocational teachers, their mentors and their education tutors collectively develop *vocational practice*. Understanding the feedback discussion that follows teaching observation by drawing upon a wider VET literature offers a specific contribution to the literature on teaching observations in FE.

### **10.3 Reflections on research strategy**

Reflecting on the methodological decisions made in the thesis, I have drawn three main conclusions, which also identify some of the limitations of the approach taken. The first of these concerns is more practical in nature than theoretical and derives from the process of engagement with generating qualitative data. Other conclusions focus on the approach taken to the research and the adoption of the activity heuristic to frame the case studies and analysis.

Given my professional experience as an education tutor, I was used to placing myself in classrooms to observe vocational teaching. The contexts in which case study observations took place were not therefore as unfamiliar as they might have been to other researchers entering vocational classrooms. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, the experience of being a researcher and co-observer did raise some additional challenges for me. Coffey's (1999) work helped in resolving these as I settled into the role of researcher as opposed to education tutor observer. I cannot however account for the effect of my presence on the activity, either in the classroom and/or during the feedback. However, I do not see this as a specific shortcoming of the research undertaken and any effect might need to be weighed against the insight such familiarity provided. Certainly, familiarity with the staged activity and the roles undertaken by the observation triad of vocational teacher, education tutor and vocational mentor eased the rapport which led to the lengthy one-to-one interviews that took place and enabled the rich description of the case study accounts evidenced in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. With more practical considerations in mind, it was certainly much harder to get the case studies up and running than I had anticipated. This was partly due to my decision to let the vocational teacher drive the sample group as explained in Chapter Five. The set of reflections that follow are therefore practical in nature.

The observations I undertook were arranged by education tutors, college mentors, and vocational teachers working in the same colleges. This meant that dates were arranged within a relatively short window and were also cancelled frequently due to intervening problems or cover requirements at the colleges. On some occasions, institutional arrangements also got in the way of the observations taking place; for example, the attendance of an external verifier at the college or a department based event. At times, in the early stages, I did regret taking the ethical stance I had adopted. In practical terms, it would have been much easier to arrange observations of practice through the extensive partnership networks of my current and previous workplaces. Now

completed, I am convinced that in terms of an ethical standpoint, the approach taken was correct. However, the time-rich difficulties in negotiating access meant that I was forced to limit my case studies to six and was disappointed that I was unable to include one of the six because it proved impossible to negotiate contact with the vocational mentor observer in the time available to me.

As has been argued in Chapter Five, case study research offers the potential of detailed investigation into instances, in this research, teaching observations. Case study research does not, of course, enable generalisations to be made either across other cases or to teaching observations in general (Babbie, 2001; O’Leary, Z. 2004; Yin, 2014). This thesis, in using case study research, has not therefore selected cases on the basis of representativeness with any intention of ascribing reliability to its research design. In contrast, the case study design has, however, offered a rich and valid investigation of the selected vocational teachers’ experience of the use and value of teaching observations. I am aware, nevertheless, that the case studies around which the conclusions of this thesis have been drawn do appear to present an overly ‘positive’ experience of teaching observations conducted for ITT. The reality was that it was difficult to extract any sustained criticism of the ITT teaching observation experience from the vocational teachers in the case study sample. I am aware that as the sample case studies were self-selecting this may have drawn on vocational teachers who had had positive learning experiences. However, the intention of the case study research was not to gauge in any numeric way the success of ITT observations. As has been seen, the intention was to make visible the processes involved in the observation of vocational teachers and the case study approach utilising observation of practice enabled this intention to be realised. Sample teachers were reflective of their learning as result of the observation experience and were therefore able to identify why the ITT observations they had experienced were conducive to their development.

Additionally, given that I was undertaking this research part-time whilst employed, I was limited in terms of the amount of time I could immerse myself in the research field. Therefore any longitudinal aspirations I might have had in the early days of research design were simply not possible. However, future research that is able to develop the longitudinal element would offer greater insight into the outcomes from the activity of observation. Whilst the case studies were able, to some extent, to capture elements of the scale of developing practice of vocational teachers as evidenced in the interviews with vocational teachers and observers, the opportunity to capture the activity of observation on more than one occasion with subjects would have offered much to the research design. From my own professional experience of observing vocational teachers on four occasions over the course of two years, I would relish the opportunity of capturing this practice in future research.

The adoption of the activity heuristic to frame the case studies and analysis was an unexpected venture. I had not anticipated adopting a CHAT-informed methodological approach when I embarked upon the thesis. My intention was not to replicate the interventionist approach used by Engeström and colleagues in Helsinki to bring about change; my purpose was to explore the utility of CHAT as a way of modelling social practice.

#### **10.4 Implications for practice**

The case study research undertaken for this thesis has found ITT observations for vocational teachers to be useful and valuable. Moreover, utilising an activity heuristic, the case study research has shown why the observations are considered useful and valuable. The source of the utility and value is seen to be the activity itself, once the object of activity (following Engeström, 2001) was conceptualised as either the *development of pedagogic expertise* and/or the *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*.

The final research question asked: How might learning-in-context be maximized? This question was designed to ensure that attention was given to some specific outcomes from this thesis. As I argued in the introduction, the expectation was that those involved in designing and implementing curricula for vocational teachers-in-training might find some research-based insights from its deliberations. As such this final section turns attention to some implications for those involved both in planning and in implementing ITT curricula for vocational teachers in FE and to vocational managers in FE colleges. The implications are summarised under five headings:

- i) sustaining ITT observations of vocational teachers
- ii) the importance of space and time in the development of vocational teachers' practice
- iii) making visible teaching observation practice
- iv) the vocational environment and its artefacts
- v) the significance of the horizontal axis in the development of pedagogic expertise

i) **Sustaining ITT observations of vocational teachers**

The findings of this thesis have confirmed the value of ITT teaching observations to vocational teachers' development. The case study research has established that vocational teachers' developing practice is supported by observations that focus on *the development of pedagogic expertise* and others that focus on *the development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice*. The focus of both is the development of pedagogy. To sustain the practice of the observation of vocational teachers as a central element in ITT, those involved need opportunities to develop their understanding of pedagogic practices so that they might continue to make a contribution to the development of vocational practice.

ii) **Space and time in the development of vocational teachers' practice**

It has been seen that the development of vocational practice takes time in any workplace and an FE college is no exception. New entrants into teaching need to be given both the time and opportunity to develop their practice with others who mediate their learning and development. In the current climate of financial cuts to colleges and the retraction of the 2007 regulations, this will clearly be a major challenge. However, if colleges are genuinely concerned with enhancing the learning experiences of their students, then they need to focus on their most valuable resource - their teachers. There is, however, no quick fix to vocational teacher development. Ensuring that developmental teaching observations are part of a thoughtful programme of learning from practice with others is essential.

iii) **Making teaching observation practice visible**

This thesis has shown how the processes involved in teaching observation are largely invisible in the research literature. It has also argued that observing tutors are engaged in developing knowledge in situ. Encouraging observing tutors to make their practices visible through research would offer opportunities to tutors to not only share practice and knowledge of pedagogy, but also to recognise the complexity of their practice.



iv) **The vocational environment and its artefacts**

This thesis has emphasised the importance of understanding vocational learning as an embodied practice. As has been argued in Chapter Two, the importance of the body (as opposed to/as well as the mind) in the conception of learning is a key element in understanding the learning as participation metaphor. The work of Felstead et al (2009) served as a reminder of the importance of the visceral in learning in the vocational context. Capturing the vocational contexts where observations took place in the case study narratives and associated diagrams served to endorse the point. To maximise the *development of pedagogic expertise for vocational practice* in teaching observations for ITT, placing theory in practice-settings as opposed to moving it out into classrooms would appear to be a more helpful approach. I am not arguing here for an over emphasis on the physical context in determining the activity and would agree that it is the relationships between participants that are key. However, whilst it is recognised that further research would be needed, situating vocational learning in its vocational context would enable knowledge to be developed in practice through participation with others. It also allows for the recognition that knowledge is also reconstructed in practice and is therefore dynamic. Furthermore it is embodied, firmly grounding the learning in the particular material circumstance, which, in these cases, includes the artefacts of the vocational and the smell and heat of its tools. Vocational teachers' practice cannot be divorced from its context.

v) **The significance of the horizontal axis in the development of pedagogic expertise**

Throughout this research, the importance of understanding the development of expertise along both vertical and horizontal axis has proved to be significant. In giving weight to the horizontal axis in understanding the development of vocational practice,

conceptual insight had been significant in so far as developing an understanding vocational learning per se (Chapter Two) and in the analysis and discussion of the case study accounts (Chapter Nine). As has been discussed, the case study accounts emphasised the importance vocational teachers gave to being afforded opportunities to observe other teachers and not necessarily teachers in shared vocational areas. The existing literature had captured the learning from others across discipline and vocational areas too, but this thesis has conceptualised this learning as part of the development of expertise along the horizontal axis. Given this conceptualisation, the role of mentors, beyond teaching observations, in the development of vocational teachers might also benefit from such a conceptualisation. In planning induction of vocational mentors, and particularly in considering their part in the observation process, this conceptualisation might serve to underpin practice.

Finally, I have benefitted from presenting my research at an international conference of VET practitioners. Responses confirmed the value ascribed to making the process of teaching observations visible and of focussing on vocational teachers in FE. In this concluding chapter I have indicated some areas for future research that have emerged from this exploration, which I would like to embark on. However, as a teacher trainer I continue to work with vocational teachers-in-training, alongside their non-vocational colleagues, and I estimate that during the course of the six year genesis of this thesis, I have completed approximately 200 ITT teaching observations. The research undertaken for this thesis has changed or, rather, sharpened my practice in so far as I am more consciously aware of the activity in which I am engaged and I am, for example, rigorous in protecting the verbal space allocated to the feedback discussion. That is, after all, where the vocational teachers' learning is centred and the space where I too can engage meaningfully in vocational practice.

## References

- Ainley, P. and Bailey, B. (1997) *The Business of Learning*, London: Cassell.
- Ainley, P. and Corney, M. (1990) *Training for the Future: The Rise and Fall of the MSC*, London: Cassell.
- Angrosino, M. (2007) *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*, London: Sage.
- Armitage, A., Bryant, R., Dunhill, R., Flanagan, K., Hayes, D., Hudson, A., Kent, J. and Laws, S. (2007) *Teaching and training in the Post compulsory sector*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Atkins, L., Flint, K. and Oldfield, B. (2011) *Practical Matters: What young people think about vocational education in England*, London: City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development.
- Avis, J. (2003) Re-thinking trust in a performative culture: The case of education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 8(3): 315–32.
- Avis, J. (2009) Transformation or transformism: Engeström's version of activity theory? *Educational Review*, 61(2): 151-165
- Avis, J., Canning, R., Fisher, R., Morgan-Klein, B. and Simmons, R. (2011) Vocational education teacher training in Scotland and England: policy and practice, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 63(2): 115-127.
- Babbie, E. (2001) *The Practice of Social Research*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Bailey, B. (1983) The technical education movement: a late nineteenth-century educational lobby, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 7(3): 55-68.
- Bailey, B. (1987) The development of technical education, 1934-1939, *History of Education*, 16(1): 49-65.
- Bailey, B. (2002) Further Education. In R. Aldrich (ed) *A Century of Education*, London: Routledge Falmer.
- Bailey, B. (2007) The establishment of centres for the training of teachers in technical and further education in England, 1933-1950, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59(3): 279-294

- Bailey, B. and Robson, J. (2002) Changing teachers: a critical review of recent policies affecting the professional training and qualifications of teachers in schools, colleges and universities in England, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 54(4): 325-341.
- Bailey, B. and Unwin, L. (2008) Fostering habits of reflection, independent study and fee inquiry: an analysis of the short-lived phenomenon of General/liberal Studies in English vocational education and training, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 60(1): 61-74.
- Baker, K. (2013) *14-18 A New Vision For Secondary Education*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bakhurst, D (2009) Reflections on activity theory, *Educational Review*, 61(2): 197-210.
- Bates, I., Clarke, J., Cohen, P., Finn, D., Moore, R. and Willis, P. (1984) (eds) *Schooling for the Dole: the new vocationalism*, London: Macmillan.
- Bathmaker, A-M. (2005) Hanging in or shaping a future: defining a role for vocationally related learning in a 'knowledge' society, *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(1): 81-100
- Bathmaker, A-M. and Avis, J. (2005) Becoming a lecturer in further education in England: the construction of professional identity and the role of communities of practice, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 31(1): 47 - 62.
- Bechhofer, F. and Paterson, L (2000) *Principles of Research Design in the Social Sciences*, London: Routledge.
- Bennett P. (1979) In-Service Training for FE teachers: the response to Haycocks, *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 5(3): 44-52
- Bhaskar, R. (1989) *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Billett, S. (2001) Knowing in practice: re-conceptualising vocational expertise, *Learning and Instruction*, 11(1): 431-452.
- Billett, S (2011) *Vocational Education: Purposes Traditions and Prospects*, London: Springer.

- Blake, N., Smeyers, P., Smith, R.D. and Standish, P. (2007) (eds) *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education*, London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Black, P.J. and Wiliam, D. (1998) *Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment*, London: King's College.
- Bloor, M. and Lahiff, A. (2001) *Perspectives on Learning: A Reader*, London: University of Greenwich Press.
- Bruner, J. (1963) *The Process of Education*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Burns, R.B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*, London: Sage.
- Burrows, J. (2008) *Trainee perceptions of observation*, Huddersfield: Huddersfield Consortium.
- Bynner, J. (2011) Youth transitions and apprenticeships: A broader view of skill. In T. Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds) *Rethinking Apprenticeships*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Canning, R (2013) Liberal, Academic and Vocational Knowledge Education. In T.G.K. Bryce, W.M. Humes, D. Gillies and Kennedy, A. (eds) *Scottish Education, Referendum*, 4th edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Carter, B. and New, C. (2004) (eds) *Making Realism Work: Realist Social Theory and Empirical Research*, London: Routledge.
- Clarke, L (2007) The emergence and reinforcement of class and gender divisions through vocational education in England. In L. Clarke and C. Winch (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.
- Clarke, L. and Winch, C. (2007) (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.
- Clow, R. (2001) Further Education Teachers' Constructions of Professionalism, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 53(3): 407-419.
- Cockburn, J. (2005) Perspectives and politics of classroom observation, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 10(3): 373-388.

- Coffey, A. (1999) *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*, London: Sage.
- Coffey, D. (1989) Vocational education: the way forward?, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 37(4): 358-368.
- Coffield, F., Sheila, E., Finlay, I., Hodgson, A., Spours, K. and Steer, R. (2008) *Improving learning, skills and inclusion: the impact of policy on post-compulsory education*, London: Routledge.
- Colley, H., James, D., Tedder, M. and Diment, K. (2003) Learning as becoming in vocational education and training: class, gender and the role of vocational habitus. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 55(4): 471-496.
- Cosh, J. (1998) Peer Observation in Higher Education: a reflective approach, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 35(2): 171-6.
- Cullen, J., Hadjivassiliou, K., Hamilton, E., Kelleher, J., Sommerlad, E. and Stern, E. (2002) *Review of current pedagogic research and practice in the fields of post-compulsory education and lifelong learning: final report*, London: ESRC/Tavistock Institute.
- Daniels, H. (2004) Activity Theory, Discourse and Bernstein, *Educational Review*, 56(2): 121-132.
- Darrah, C.N. (1996) *Learning and work: an exploration in industrial ethnography*, London: Garland.
- Davies, J. and Biesta, G. (2007) Coming to college or getting out of school? The experience of vocational learning of 14- to 16-year-olds in a further education college, *Research Papers in Education*, 22(1): 23-41.
- DBIS (2011) *New Challenges, New Chances. Next Steps in Implementing the Further Education Reform Plan*, London: The Stationery Office.
- DBIS (2012a) *Evaluation of FE Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007*, London: The Stationery Office.

DBIS (2012b) *The Lingfield Report Professionalism in Further Education, Final Report of the Independent Review Panel*, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Delamont, S. (1992) *Fieldwork in Educational Settings, Methods, Pitfalls and Perspectives*, London: The Falmer Press.

DBIS (2012) *New Challenges, New Chances. Further Education and Skills Challenges Reform Plan: Building a World Class System*, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Denzin, N. K. (1970) *The Research Act in Sociology*, Chicago: Aldine.

DfEE (1999) *Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Learning*. Cm. 4392. London: The Stationery Office.

DfES (2004) *Equipping our Teachers for the Future. Reforming Initial Teacher Training for the Learning and Skills Sector*, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) (2007) *A Guide to the Further Education Teachers' Continuing Professional Development and Registration (England) Regulations*, England

Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education: An introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: The Macmillan Company.

Dolphin, T. and Lanning, T. (2011) (Eds) *Rethinking Apprenticeships*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Douglas, A. S. (2010) What and how do student teachers learn from working in different social situations of development in the same school? In V. Ellis, A. Edwards and P. Smagorinsky (eds) , *Cultural historical perspectives on teacher education and development*, Oxon: Routledge.

Douglas, A. S. (2011a) The different learning opportunities afforded student teachers in four secondary school subject departments in an initial teacher education school–university partnership in England, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, 37(1): 93-106.

Douglas, A. S. (2011b) Learning on the job: a Cultural Historical Activity Theory approach to initial teacher education across four secondary school subject departments, *Ethnography and Education*, 6(2): 195-211.

Duckworth, V. Wood, J. Bostock, J. Dickenson, J. (2010) *Successful Teaching Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector (Achieving QTLS Series)*, Exeter : Learning Matters Ltd.

Dyke, M., Harding, A. and Liddon, S. (2008) How can online observation support the assessment and feedback, on classroom performance, to trainee teachers at a distance and in real time?, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32(1): 37-46.

Edwards, A. and Daniels, H. (2004) Using Sociocultural and Activity Theory in Educational Research, *Educational Review*, 56(2): 107-111.

Edwards, R. and Miller, K. (2007) Putting the context into learning, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 15(3): 263-274.

Ellis, V., Edwards, A. and Smagorinsky, P. (2010) (eds) *Cultural historical perspectives on teacher education and development*, London: Routledge.

Ellis, V., Blake, A., McNicholl, J. and McNally, J. (2011) *The work of Teacher Education, the final research report*, Higher Education Academy, Subject Centre for Education Escalate. Available at: <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/WoTE-Phase-2-Final-Report-10062011.pdf> [last accessed 19.2.2014]

Engeström, Y. (2001) Expansive Learning at Work: toward an activity theoretical reconceptualisation, *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1): 133-156.

Engeström, Y. (2004) The New Generation of Expertise: seven theses. In H. Rainbird, A. Fuller and A. Munro, (eds) *Workplace Learning in Context*, London: Routledge.

Engeström, Y. (2009) *Two layers of Expansive Learning: Building Collaborative Agency in Home Care for the Elderly*, A presentation to the *Activity Theory and Practice Learning Conference*, Milton Keynes: Practice-based Professional Learning Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Open University.



- Engeström, Y., Engeström, R. and Karkkainen, M. (1995) Polycontextuality and boundary crossing in expert cognition: learning and problem solving in complex work activities, *Learning and Instruction*, 5(4): 319-336.
- Evans, K., Kersh, N. and Sakamoto, A. (2004) Learner Biographies: Exploring Tacit Dimensions of Learning and Skills. In H. Rainbird, A. Fuller and A. Munro, (eds) *Workplace Learning in Context*, London: Routledge.
- Evans, K., Hodkinson, P., Rainbird, H. and Unwin, L. (2006) *Improving Workplace Learning*, London: Routledge.
- Evans, K., Guile, D. and Harris, J. (2009) *Putting Knowledge to Work*, London: Institute of Education (WLE Centre).
- Fejes, A. and Köpsén, S. (2012) Vocational teachers' identity formation through boundary crossing, *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(3): 265-283.
- At: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2012.742181> [accessed 10 October 2013]
- Felstead, A., Fuller, A., Unwin, L., Ashton, D., Butler, P. and Lee, T. (2005) Surveying the scene: learning metaphors, survey design and the workplace context, *Journal of Education and Work*, 18(4): 359-383.
- Felstead, A., Fuller, A., Jewson, N. and Unwin, L. (2009) *Improving Working as Learning*, London: Routledge.
- Fenwick, T. (2010) Workplace Learning and Adult Education: messy objects, blurry maps and making difference, *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 1(1-2): 79-95.
- Fielding, N. (1993) Ethnography. In N. Gilbert, N (ed) *Researching Social Life*, London: Sage.
- Finn, D. (1987) *Training without jobs: new deals and broken promises*, Macmillan: London.
- Foden, F. (1992) *The Education and Training of Part-Time Teachers in Further and Adult Education: a retrospective study*, Leeds: University of Leeds.

Fuller, A. (2007) Critiquing theories of learning and communities of practice. In J. Hughes, N. Jewson and L. Unwin, L. (eds), *Communities of Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P. and Unwin, L. (2005) Learning as peripheral participation in communities of practice: a reassessment of key concepts in workplace learning, *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(1): 49-68.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2004) Expansive learning environments: integrating organizational and personal development. In H. Rainbird, H., A. Fuller and A. Munro (eds) *Workplace Learning in Context*, London: Routledge.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2010) Change and continuity in apprenticeship: the resilience of a model of learning, *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(5): 405-416.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2011a) Vocational education and training in the spotlight: back to the future for the UK's Coalition Government?, *London Review of Education*, 9(2): 191-204.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2011b) The content of apprenticeships; In T. Dolphin, T. and T. Lanning (eds) *Rethinking Apprenticeships*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Fuller, A and Unwin, L. (2013) *Gender Segregation, Apprenticeship, and the Raising of the Participation Age in England: are Young Women at a Disadvantage?*, LLAKES Research Report 44, London: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies.

Gamble, J. (2006) Theory and Practice in the Vocational Curriculum. In M. Young and J. Gamble (eds) *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*, Pretoria: Human Science Research Council Press.

Gleeson, D., Davies A. and Wheeler, E. (2005) On the making and taking of professionalism in the further education workplace, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(4): 445-460.

Gleeson, D. and Keep, E. (2004) Voice without accountability: the changing relationship between employers, the state and education in England, *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(1): 37-63.

- Gomoluch, K. and Bailey, B. (2010) Training teachers for further and technical education: staff perceptions of changing demands and policies at Bolton from 1950 to 1988, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 62(2): 139-152.
- Gonon, P (2009) *The Quest for Modern Vocational Education - Georg Kerschensteiner between Dewey, Weber and Simmel*, Bern: Peter Lang AG.
- Goodwin A. L. and Kosnik, C. (2013) Quality teacher educators = quality teachers? Conceptualizing essential domains of knowledge for those who teach teachers, *Teacher Development: An international journal of teachers' professional development*, 17(3): 334-346.
- Gosling, D. (2002) *Models of Peer Observation and Teaching*. London: LTSN Generic Centre
- Gould, M. and Lahiff, A. (2000) *Equality, Participation and Inclusive Learning: A Reader*, London: University of Greenwich Press.
- Graham, T.B., Daines, J.M., Sullivan, T., Harris, P. and Baum, F.E. (1982) *The Training of Part-time Teachers of Adults*, Nottingham: University of Nottingham.
- Gravells, A. (2012) *Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector*, London: Sage/Learning Matters.
- Gray, D., Griffin, C. and Nasta, T. (2000) *Training to teach in further and adult education*, Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.
- Green, A. and Preston, J. (2008) The role of vocational education and training in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion. In CEDEFOP (ed) *Modernising vocational education and training, Fourth report on vocational education and training research in Europe: background report, Volume 1*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Guile, D. (2002) Skill and work experience in the European knowledge economy, *Journal of Education and Work*, 15(3): 251–276.
- Guile, D. (2010) *The Learning Challenge of the Knowledge Economy*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

- Hager, P. (1990) Vocational education/general education: a false dichotomy?, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 12(1): 13-23.
- Hager, P (2004) The competence affair, or why vocational education and training urgently needs a new understanding of learning, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 56(3): 409-433.
- Hager, P. (2007) Towards a new paradigm of vocational learning. In L. Clarke and C. Winch (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.
- Hager, P. and Hodkinson, P. (2009) Moving beyond the metaphor of transfer of learning, *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(4): 619-638.
- Hager, P. and Hyland, T. (2007) Vocational Education and Training. In N. Blake, N., P. Smeyers, R.D. Smith and P. Standish, P. (eds) *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education*, London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: principles in practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, London: Routledge.
- Hardman, J. (2007) *The use of teaching observation in Higher Education: An exploration of the relationship between teacher observation for quality assurance and quality improvement in teaching in higher education, in the light of further education sector experience*. Report produced for ESCALATE at :  
<http://escalate.ac.uk/downloads/6477.pdf> [Last accessed 20.06.14]
- Harkin, J., Clow, R. and Hillier, Y. (2003) Recollected in Tranquillity? FE Teachers' Perceptions of their Initial Teacher Training, London: Learning and Skills Development Agency.
- Harkin, J. (2005) Fragments stored against my ruin: The place of educational theory in the professional development of teachers in further education, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 57(2): 165–79.
- Harper, H. (2013) *Outstanding Teaching in Lifelong Learning*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Harvey, P. (2006) *Improving Teaching Observation Practice in the Learning and Skills Sector: A Literature Review*, Norwich: The Research Centre, City College Norwich. Available at: <http://theresearchcentre.co.uk/files/docs/publications/rs3906.pdf> [last accessed 30/1/14]

Hatzipanagos, S. and Lygo-Baker, S. (2007) Teaching Observations: Promoting Development through Critical Reflection, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 30(4): 421 – 431.

Hayward, G. (2004) Foreword: a century of vocationalism, *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(1): 3-12.

Hayward, G. and James, S (2004) Producing skills: conundrums and possibilities. In G. Hayward and S. James (eds) *Balancing the Skills Equation: key issues and challenges for policy and practice*, Bristol: Polity Press.

Hillier, Y and Jameson, J. (2006) *Managing 'ragged-trousered philanthropy': the part-time staffing dilemma in the learning and skills sector*, London: Learning and Skills Development Agency.

Hodgson, A., Edward, S. and Gregson, M. (2007) Riding the waves of policy? The case of basic skills in adult and community learning in England, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59(2): 213–229.

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2008) *Education and Training 14-19: Curriculum, Qualifications and Organization*, London: Sage.

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2010) Vocational qualifications and progression to higher education: the case of the 14-19 Diplomas in the English system, *Journal of Education and Work* 23(2): 95-110.

Hodgson, A., Spours, K. and Steer R. (2007) All change for the learning and skills sector?, *Journal of Education and Work*, 21(2): 115–31.

Hodkinson, P. (1991) Liberal education and the new vocationalism: a progressive partnership?, *Oxford Review of Education*, 17(1): 73-88.

- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G. James, D. (2008) Understanding Learning Culturally: Overcoming the Dualism Between Social and Individual Views of Learning, *Vocations and Learning*, 1(1): 27-47.
- Hodkinson, H., and Hodkinson, P. (2004) Rethinking the Concept of Community of Practice in relation to Schoolteachers' Workplace Learning, *International Journal of Training and Development*, 8(1): 21–31.
- Hodkinson P., Hodkinson H., Evans K., Kersh N., Fuller A., Unwin, L. and Senker P. (2004) The Significance of Personal Biography in Workplace Learning, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 36(1): 6-24.
- Holt, M. (1987) (ed) *Skills and Vocationalism. The easy answer*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Huddleston, P. (2011) Vocational pedagogy: bringing it all together? In *National Skills Forum/Associate Parliamentary Skills Group Open to Ideas: Essays on Education and Skills*, London: Policy Connect.
- Huddleston, P. and Oh, S. (2004) The magic roundabout: work-related learning within the 14–19 curriculum, *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(1): 83-103.
- Huddleston, P. and Unwin, L. (2013) *Teaching and learning in further education: diversity and change*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, London: Routledge.
- Hulin, P. and Lahiff, A. (2009) *Access Issues and Training Needs of Teachers in the Adult and Community Sector*, London: LONCETT, Learning and Skills Improvement Service, Available at: [http://www.loncett.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_235.pdf](http://www.loncett.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_235.pdf) [Last accessed 10/3/2014]
- Hughes, J. Jewson, N. and Unwin, L. (2007) Introduction. Communities of practice: a contested concept in flux. In J. Hughes, N. Jewson and L. Unwin, (Eds), *Communities of Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hyland, T. (1993) Vocational reconstruction and Dewey's instrumentalism, *Oxford Review of Education*, 19(1):89-100.

- Hyland, T. and Merrill, B. (2003) *The Changing Face of FE: Lifelong Learning, Inclusion and Community Values in Further Education*, London: Routledge.
- James, D and Biesta, G (2007) *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jameson, J. and Hillier, Y. (2008) Nothing will prevent me from doing a good job: the professionalism of part-time teaching staff in further and adult education, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 13(1):39-53.
- Jarvis, P. and Chadwick, A. (1991) (eds) *Training Adult Educators in Western Europe*, London: Routledge.
- Keep, E. and Payne, J. (2004) I can't believe it's not skill: the changing meaning of skill in the UK context and some implications. In G. Hayward and S. James (eds) *Balancing the Skills Equation – Key issues and challenges for policy and practice*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Labaree, R. (2002) The risk of 'going observationalist', *Qualitative Research*, 2(1):97-122.
- Lahiff, A. (2005) Developing academic writing: A case study of post-compulsory practitioners' personal and professional development, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 57(3) 275 – 292.
- Lahiff, A. and Fenner, C. (2000) The Accreditation of Life Experience. In S. Bailie and C. O'Hagan (eds) *APEL and Lifelong Learning*, Belfast: University of Ulster/FACE.
- Lave, J. (1988) *Cognition in practice: mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawson, T. (2011) Sustained classroom observation: what does it reveal about changing teaching practices?, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 35(3):317-337.

Lawy, R. and Tedder, M. (2009) Meeting standards: teacher education in the further education sector. What of the agency of teacher educators?, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 41(1): 53-67

Layder (1993) *New Strategies in Social Research: An introduction and Guide*, London: Polity Press.

LSIS (2012) Further Education College Workforce Data For England: An analysis of the Staff Individualised Record (SIR) 2010-11, LSIS, available at:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/21550> [last accessed 30/6/14]

LSIS (2013) *It's about work: Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning: the summary report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning*, LSIS with support from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Available at : <http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/eg:5937/datastreams/DOC/content> [last accessed 30/6/14]

Leathwood, C. (2000) Happy families? Pedagogy, management and parental discourses of control in the corporatised further education college, *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 24(2): 163–82.

Lewis, T. (1994) Bridging the Liberal/Vocational Divide: an examination of recent British and American versions of an old debate, *Oxford Review of Education*, 20(2):199-217.

Lewis, T. (2007) School reform in America: can Dewey's ideas save high school vocational education? In L. Clarke and C. Winch (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.

LLUK (2007a) *Guidance for awarding institutions on teacher roles and initial teaching qualifications*, London: Lifelong Learning UK.

LLUK (2007b) *New overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector*, London: Lifelong Learning UK

Lofland, J and Lofland, L.H. (1995) *Analyzing social settings: a guide to qualitative observation and analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, London: Wadsworth.



- Loftus, S. and Higgs, J. (2010) Researching the individual in workplace research, *Journal of Education and Work*, 23(4): 377-388.
- Loughran, J. (2006) *Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education: Understanding Teaching and Learning about Teaching*, New York: Routledge.
- Lucas, N. (2004a) *Teaching in Further Education: new perspectives for a changing context*, London: Institute of Education.
- Lucas, N. (2004b) The 'FENTO fandango': National standards, compulsory teaching qualifications and the growing regulation of FE college teachers, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(1):35-51.
- Lucas, N. (2007) Rethinking initial teacher education for further education teachers: From a standards-led to a knowledge-based approach, *Teaching Education*, 18(2): 93-106.
- Lucas, N. and Nasta, T. (2010) State regulation and the professionalisation of further education teachers: a comparison with schools and HE, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 62(4): 441-454.
- Lucas, N. and Unwin, L. (2009) Developing teacher expertise at work: in-service trainee teachers in colleges of further education in England, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33(4):423-433.
- Mackinnon, M. (2001) Using observational feedback to promote academic development, *International Journal for Academic Development*, 6(1): 21-28.
- Martin, D. and Peim, N (2009) Critical perspectives on activity theory, *Educational Review*, 61(2): 131-138.
- Maxwell, B. (2009) Becoming a teacher: conceptual and practice development in the learning and skills sector, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 14(4): 459-478.
- Maxwell, B. (2010) In-service Initial Teacher Education in the Learning and Skills Sector in England: Integrating Course and Workplace Learning, *Vocations and Learning*, 3(3):185-202.
- Maxwell, B (2014) Improving workplace learning of lifelong learning sector trainee teachers in the UK, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 38(3): 377-399.

McMahon, T. Barrett, T. and O'Neill, G. (2007) Using observation of teaching to improve quality: finding your way through the muddle of competing conceptions, confusion of practice and mutually exclusive intentions, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(4):499-511.

Meijer, P.C. Verloop, N. and Beijaard, D. (2002) Multi-method Triangulation in a Qualitative Study on Teachers' Practical Knowledge: An Attempt to Increase Internal Validity, *Quality and Quantity*, 36(2):145-167.

Miettinen, R. (2000) The concept of experiential learning and John Dewey's theory of reflective thought and action, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 19(1):54-72.

Miettinen, R. (2001) Artifact Mediation in Dewey and in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 8(4): 297-308.

Miles, M. and Huberman, A.M. (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis, an expanded sourcebook*, London: Sage.

Moodie, G. & Wheelahan, L. (2012) Integration and fragmentation of post compulsory teacher education, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 64(3): 317-331.

Nasta, T. A. (2007) Translating national standards into practice for the initial training of further education (FE) teachers in England, *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, 12(1): 1–17.

Nasta, T. A. (2009) *The knowledge that you do every day – easing the transition of those who enter teaching from vocational backgrounds*, London: Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training/ Learning and Skills Improvement Service.

Noel, P. (2006) The secret life of teacher educators: Becoming a teacher educator in the learning and skills sector. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 58(2): 151–170.

ONS (2014) Available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=wages+by+occupations>

[last accessed June 10th 2014].

Ofsted (2003) *The Initial Training of Further Education Teachers: a survey*, London: Ofsted Publications Centre

- Ofsted (2004a) *Why Colleges Fail*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted (2004b) *Why Colleges Succeed*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted, (2007) *Initial Teacher Training in Vocational Subjects*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted, (2008) *How Colleges Improve*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted, (2009) *Initial Training of Further Education Teachers*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted (2012) *Handbook for the Inspection of Further Education and Skills*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- Ofsted (2013) *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Further education and skills*. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).
- O'Leary, M. (2006) Can inspectors really improve the quality of teaching in the PCE sector? Classroom observations under the microscope, *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, 11(2): 191–8.
- O'Leary, M. (2012): Exploring the role of lesson observation in the English education system: a review of methods, models and meanings, *Professional Development in Education*, 38(5): 791-810.
- O'Leary, M. (2013): Surveillance, performativity and normalised practice: the use and impact of graded lesson observations in Further Education colleges, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 37(5): 694-714.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004) *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*, London: Sage.
- Ollin, R. (2009) *The grading of teaching observations: Implications for teacher educators in higher education partnerships*, Huddersfield: Huddersfield Consortium.
- Orr, K. (2008) Room for improvement? The impact of compulsory professional development for teachers in England's further education sector, *Journal of In-Service Education*, 34(1): 97–108.
- Orr, K. (2009) Coping, confidence and alienation: the early experience of trainee teachers in English further education, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 38(1): 51-65.

- Orr, K. (2010) The entry of 14–16-year-old students into colleges: implications for further education initial teacher training in England, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 34(1): 47-57.
- Orr, K. and Simmons, R. (2010) Dual identities: the in-service teacher trainee experience in the English further education sector, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 62(1): 75-88.
- OED (2007) Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Parker, J. Mars, L. Ransome, P. and Stanworth, H. (2003) *Social Theory: a basic tool kit*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peake, G. (2006) Observation of the practice of teaching, Huddersfield: Huddersfield Consortium.
- Petty, G. (2004) *Teaching Today, a Practical Guide*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.
- Pring, R. (1993) Liberal Education and Vocational Preparation. In R. Barrow and P. White (eds) *Beyond Liberal Education: Essays in honour of Paul. H. Hirst*, London: Routledge.
- Pring, R (2007) 14-19 and lifelong learning: distinguishing between academic and vocational learning. In L. Clarke and C. Winch (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.
- Richardson, W. and Sing, S. (2011) *The impact of practical and 'vocational' learning on academically-able young people aged 11–16*, London: Edge Foundation.
- Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Robson, J. (1998) A Profession in Crisis: status, culture and identity in the further education college, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(4):, 585 - 607.
- Robson, J. (2006) *Teacher Professionalism in Further and Higher Education*, London: Routledge.

- Robson, J. Bailey, B. and Larkin, S. (2004) Adding value: investigating the discourse of professionalism adopted by vocational teachers in further education colleges, *Journal of Education and Work*, 17(2): 183-195.
- Rogers, L. (2011) Teachers and teaching in upper secondary education: a comparison of systems in place across secondary and FE sectors, *London Review of Education*, 9(2): 231-243.
- Sanger, J (1996) *The Compleat (sic) Observer? A field research guide to observation*, London: Falmer Press.
- Scott, D and Usher, R (1996) (eds) *Understanding Educational Research*, London: Routledge.
- Sfard, A. (1998) On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one, *Educational Researcher*, 27(2): 4-13.
- Simmons, R. (2008) Gender, work and identity: a case study from the English further education sector, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 13(3): 267-279.
- Simmons, R. and Thompson, R. (2007) Teacher educators in post-compulsory education: gender, discourse and power, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59(4): 517-33.
- Skills Commission (2010) *Teacher training in Vocational Education*, London: The Skills Commission.
- Stanton, G (2008) *Learning Matters: Making the 14-19 reforms work for learners: by emphasizing learning programmes as well as qualifications; by learning from previous initiatives*, London: CfBT Education Trust.
- Stanton, G. and Bailey, B. (2001) VET under Review in England: trends and developments, *European Journal of Education*, 36(1): 7-22.
- Stanton, G. and Bailey, B. (2004) Fit for Purpose? Sixty years of VET policy in England. In G. Hayward and S. James (eds) *Balancing the Skills Equation: key issues and challenges for policy and practice*, Bristol: Polity Press.

- Star, J.R and Strickland, S.K. (2008) Learning to observe: using video to improve pre-service mathematics teachers' ability to notice, *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, 11(2): 107-125
- Steer, R., Spours, K., Hodgson, A., Finlay, I., Coffield, F., Edward, S. and Gregson M. (2007) 'Modernisation' and the role of policy levers in the learning and skills sector, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59(2): 175–92.
- Thompson, R. and Robinson, D. (2008) Changing step or marking time? Teacher education reforms for the learning and skills sector in England, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32(2): 161-173.
- Tuomi-Grohn, T. and Engeström, Y. (2003) (eds) *Between School and Work: New perspectives on Transfer and Boundary-Crossing*, Oxford: Pergamon/EARLI.
- Unwin, L. (2004) Growing beans with Thoreau: rescuing skills and vocational education from the UK's deficit approach, *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(1): 147-160.
- Unwin, L. (1997) Reforming the work-based route: problems and potential for change. In A. Hodgson and K. Spours (eds) *Dearing and Beyond*, London: Kogan Page.
- Unwin, L (2009) *Sensuality, sustainability and social justice: vocational education in changing times*, London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Unwin, L. (2010) Learning and working from the MSC to New Labour: young people, skills and employment, *National Institute Economic Review*, No.212: 49-60.
- Usher, R. (1996) A critique of the neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. In D. Scott and R. Usher (1996) *Understanding Educational Research*, London: Routledge.
- Valencia, S., Martin, S., Place, N. and Grossman, P. (2009) Complex Interactions in Student Teaching: lost opportunities for learning, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(3): 304-322.
- Wardekker, W. (2010) CHAT and good teacher education, In V. Ellis, A. Edwards and P. Smagorinsky (eds), *Cultural historical perspectives on teacher education and development*, London: Routledge.

- Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (2004) (eds) *The Skills That Matter*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Warmington, P. (2009) From 'activity' to 'labour': Commodification, labour-power and contradiction in Engeström's activity theory, *Critical Social Studies: Outlines*, 10(2): 4–19.
- Warmington, P. (2011) Divisions of labour: activity theory, multi-professional working and intervention research, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 63(2): 143–157.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch J. V. (1985) *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1998) *Mind As Action*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wheelahan, L., and Moodie, G. (2011) *The quality of teaching in VET: final report and recommendations*, Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- White, F. (2010) *Easing the journey from occupation to teaching: a guide for new teachers and their mentors in the Further Education section. Impact Report*. London: LONCETT/LSIS.
- Winch, C. (1998) Two Rival Conceptions of Vocational Education: Adam Smith and Friedrich List, *Oxford Review of Education*, 24(3): 365-378.
- Winch, C. (2000) *Education, Work and Social Capital*, London: Routledge.
- Winch, C. (2000) Two rival conceptions of vocational education, in Winch, C. (Ed), *Education, Work and Social Capital*, London, Routledge.
- Winch, C. (2006) Georg Kerschensteiner - founding the dual system in Germany, *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(3): 381-396.

- Winch, C. (2007) Vocational education, work and the aims of economic activity. In L. Clarke and C. Winch (eds) *Vocational Education: international approaches, developments and systems*, London: Routledge.
- Winch, C. (2010) *Dimensions of Expertise: a conceptual exploration of vocational knowledge*, London: Continuum.
- Winch, C. and Gingell, J. (2004) *Philosophy and Education Policy: a critical introduction*, London: Routledge Falmer.
- Wolf, A. (2011) *Review of 14-19 Vocational Education*, London: Department of Education.
- Wragg, E.C (1999) *An Introduction to Classroom Observation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Routledge.
- Yin, R.K. (2014) *Case Study Research: design and methods*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Young, M. (2001) Contextualising a New Approach to Learning: some comments on Yrjö Engeström's theory of expansive learning, *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1): 157-161.
- Young, M. (2006) Conceptualising Vocational Knowledge: some theoretical considerations. In M. Young and J. Gamble (eds) *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*, Pretoria: Human Science Research Council Press.
- Young, M. (2008) *Bringing knowledge Back In: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*, London: Routledge.
- Young, M. (2009) Education, globalisation and the 'voice of knowledge', *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(3): 193-204.
- Young, M. (2011) The Return to Subjects: A sociological perspective on the UK Coalition Government's approach to the 14-19 curriculum, *Curriculum Journal*, 22(2): 265-278.



## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule, education tutors and vocational mentors

Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview schedule, vocational teachers

Appendix 4: Observation Process



### Participant Information Sheet

I work at the Institute of Education (IOE) teaching on the part-time in-service DTLLS/PGCE post compulsory education programme. Originally from FE, I have been involved in teacher education for post compulsory teachers for the best part of 20 years.

I am researching the ways in which the observation of practice is conducted as part of the training and development of vocational teachers. The research is part of a part-time PhD I am undertaking at the IOE. A key aim of the research is to develop ideas to improve practice and, ultimately, to enhance the learning experiences of our students. The research strategy has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee at the IOE and is conducted according to strict ethical guidelines. All the information that is collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential. As required by the Data Protection Act, I will not pass on any person-identifiable data to any external agency. Any references to interviews and observations in written research reports and articles will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, I am not funded by any external agency for this research.

I am more than happy to respond to any queries you may have. Just contact me by email : [a.Lahiff@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:a.Lahiff@ioe.ac.uk)

Many thanks for your co-operation and participation

Ann Lahiff, October 2010

- 
- I have read the participant information sheet concerning the proposed research into teaching observations being conducted by Ann Lahiff as part of her PhD.
  - I have agreed that, following consultation with me, Ann can observe selected 'teaching observations' that take place as part of the DTLLS/PGCE award.
  - I recognise that any data collected through observation field notes will be anonymised and that interview recordings will be recorded and then transcribed into anonymised extracts.
  - I recognise that I have the right to withdraw from participation in the research at any time

Name :

Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 2

### Semi-structured Interview Schedule Education Tutors and Vocational Mentors

#### 1. Biography

Can we start with you telling me something about your background?

Prompt questions :

(Education Tutors) What do you/did you teach? What role do you have in the college?

How you became involved in teacher training?

(Vocational Mentors) Can you tell me about your vocational experience? How long have you been teaching and how/when did you become a mentor?

#### 2. Process of Observation

Prompt questions (all):

Can you tell me something about how you prepare for an observation?

What would you say was the point of the observation ?

#### 3. Feedback

Prompt questions (all):

How do you arrange the oral feedback from the observation?

What do you discuss with the trainee and why? What is the point of the feedback?

Does the discussion make any difference to your thinking about the observed teaching?

What happens after the discussion?

What is the relationship between the oral feedback and the report that gets written?

**Open**

## **Semi-structured Interview Schedule Vocational Teachers**

### **1. Biography**

Can we start with you telling me something about your background?

Prompt questions:

Perhaps you could start with describing:

- How you became a (Chef/childcare worker/ wigs and theatrical make-up specialist/plasterer/ painter and decorator)
- Telling me about your vocational experience
- What made you move into teaching and how did you make that move?

### **2. Teaching and Teacher Training**

How long have you been at the college?

When did you start the ITT programme?

### **3. Observation**

What part does the observation play in the ITT programme?

Prompt Questions:

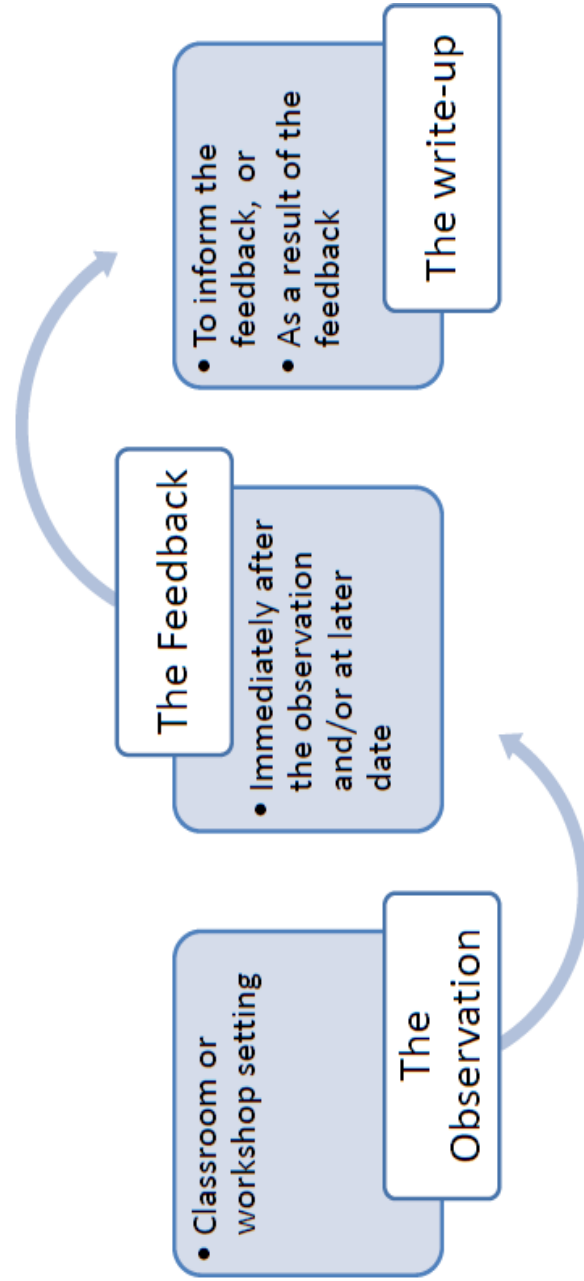
- How do you feel about being observed by your Education tutor and by your Mentor
- What is the point of the observation?
- How you prepare for an observation?

Feedback: What form does the feedback take? What is the point of the feedback?

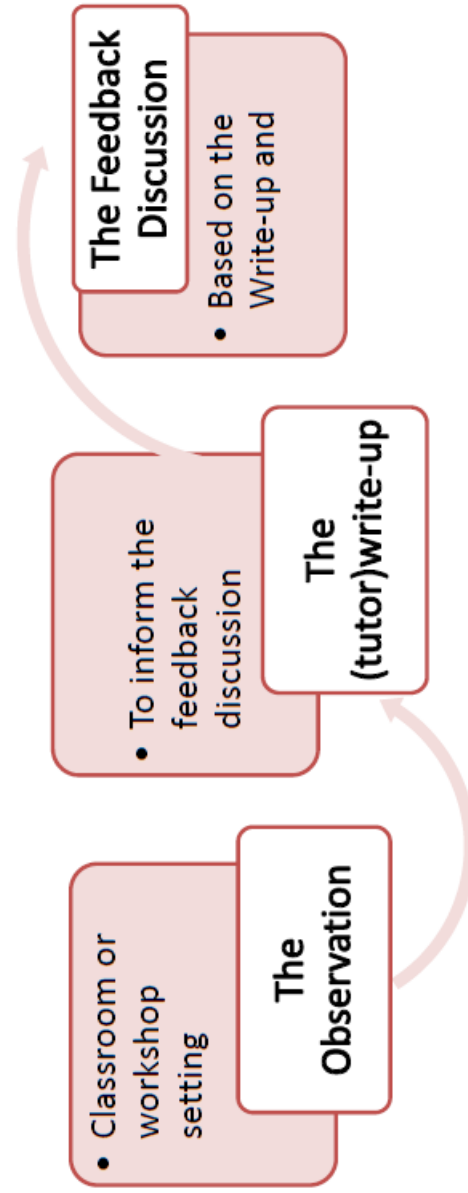
How useful has the observation process been to you? Can you explain?

## Appendix 4

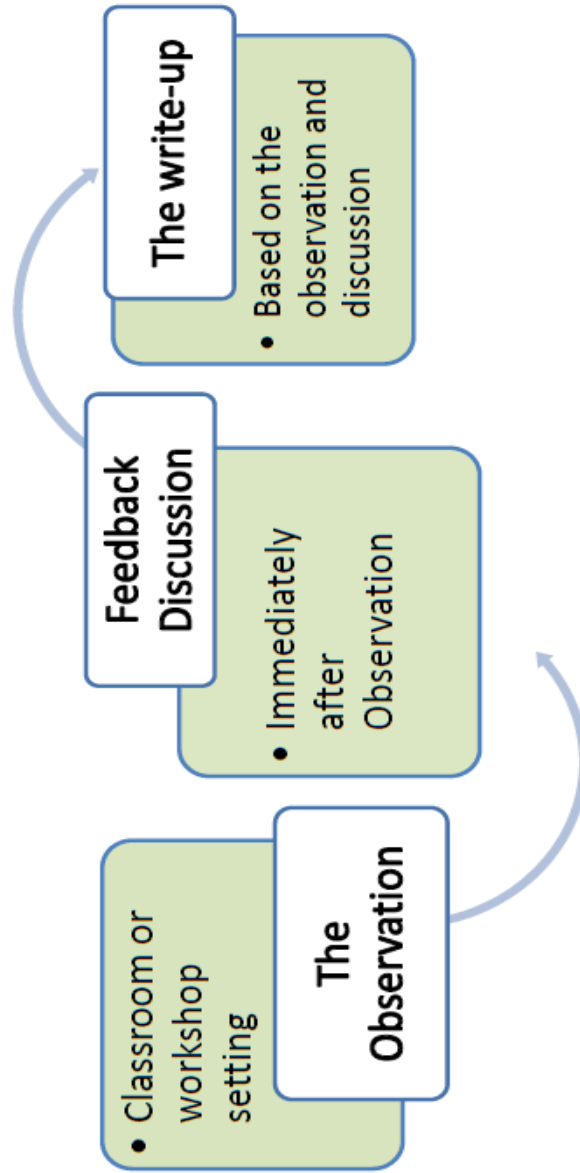
### The Observation Process Diagrams



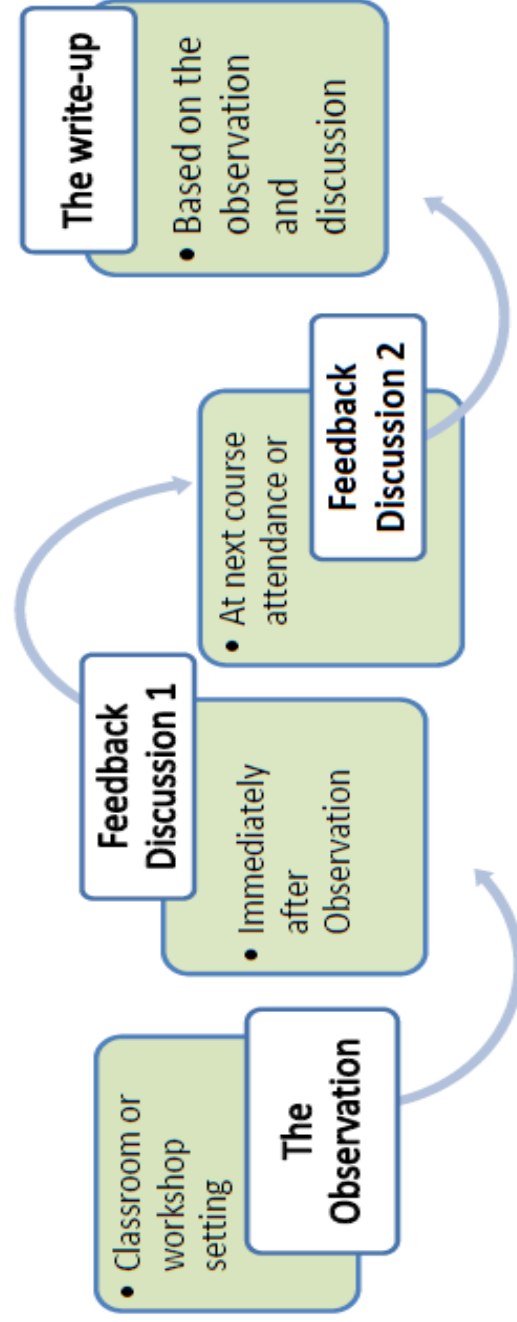
## The Activity : Observation of Teaching Process (1)



## The Activity : Observation of Teaching Process (2)







## The Activity : Observation of Teaching Process (4)