

**The Influence of Professional Discourse on Beginner
Teachers within the English Further Education Sector**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyse and interpret the professional discourses that impact on trainee teachers working within the Further Education (FE) sector in the North of England. It identifies the predominant discourses surrounding trainee teachers and explores the factors which influence them. Discourse is defined by Gunnarsson (2009) as written or spoken communication that *“enables the creation and maintenance of organisations and institutions as groups working for common goals”* (p.3).

This small scale inductive study utilised semi-structured interviews to ascertain the views of ten ‘in-service’ trainee teachers working within diverse FE establishments across Yorkshire and Humberside during the summer of 2011. A discourse analysis approach was used to interpret the transcribed data.

The study reveals that two distinct discourse themes surround trainee teachers; the first is broadly categorised as ‘teaching and learning’, the second is ‘performativity’. Whilst trainees wish to immerse themselves in conversations around classroom experiences and the development of professional practice they are not fully prepared to acknowledge the organisational bureaucracies, regulatory frameworks and target driven agendas which often dominate professional communication. The realisation that performative pressures heavily influence FE is a shock and a disappointment to some.

The mechanics of professional discourse are regulated and filtered by two additional significant factors, one is the nature of their participation in localised

communities of practice and the other is their interaction with the dominant cultures of management.

The trainee's initial engagement and understanding of professional discourse is heavily shaped and interpreted by their close colleagues. In addition the methodologies managers use to communicate, interact and engage with their staff also has great significance, increasing use of electronic communication technologies has distanced some, leaving trainees frustrated and eager to engage in more frequent face to face communication.

Trainees who experience more supportive and collegiate professional communication and interaction at work are likely to develop teacher identities more quickly and become productive and secure in their identification with the role.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Study

The primary aim of this study is to critically analyse and interpret the professional discourses which impact upon ten trainee teachers working within the further education sector across Yorkshire and Humberside.

The thesis will identify what trainees define as the predominant discourses which currently surround their work from both a verbal and written perspective and also how such discourses impact on the working life of these inexperienced tutors as they seek to build a career within what is a very diverse, fluid and ever changing sector of education.

It will explore professional communication, language and meaning within seven different academic institutions and utilise the increasingly prevalent concept of 'communities of practice' to investigate workplace relationships, learning and identity.

Reasons for Undertaking the Study

I have taught in further education for over twelve years, initially working as a sports lecturer before developing my current specialism as a lecturer in teacher education. I am interested in exploring the professional discourses that surround beginner teachers and how this impacts on the development of their professional identity to support my own teaching and academic development.

This research experience and the subsequent findings uncovered will shape both my approach and classroom practices and therefore directly benefit the students I teach in the future. I locate this research within the context of continuing political and economic change together with an acknowledgement of the increasingly politicised, diverse and fluid nature of academic, technical and skills based curriculum. In addition the widening participation and social justice agenda also has a significant impact on the formation of learner cohorts within the sector, placing tutors under ever greater pressure. I aspire for these findings to be of sufficient quality and interest to be published in a related peer reviewed academic journal, in order to inform and develop not just my own, but also others understanding.

Background to the Further Education Sector

The further education (FE) sector in England is a complex and diverse provider of academic and skills based training and development for a wide range of learners. As Orr and Simmons (2010) confirm, these learners typically aspire to improve their life skills, prepare themselves for everyday employment or, from a more contemporary perspective, enrol on work related courses of higher education in localised and convenient settings.

Traditionally FE has a strong association with industrial skills, technical education and training, evolving as it did from the early mechanics institutes which were funded philanthropically by local industrialists hoping to raise the skill levels of their workforce. The 1944 Education Act placed a statutory duty on local education authorities (LEA's) to provide further education and the post war

period witnessed a significant growth in further education across the country. The localised and unique context of each local authority area contributed to the creation of a diverse FE landscape shaped by proximate factors such as existing school and university provision, the demands of local labour markets and the motivations and personalities of local councillors and politicians. The LEA's were a powerful managerial force who controlled the development and scope of FE for over forty years.

The 1980's saw a shift of policy towards central state control and LEA's experienced an eroding of their powers. Avis, Fisher & Thompson (2010) highlight this changing perception confirming that "*official discourse came to characterise LEA's as pedestrian, unresponsive and divorced from the real world*", (p.8). The main philosophical focus of this change was to align educational policy and curriculum towards the market forces that underpin a successful national economy. This exposure to commercialisation radically changed the management, funding and structure of colleges. Simmons (2010) summarises this stating:

"Each institution became responsible for its own affairs and its own financial and management infrastructures... colleges were required to compete against each other, schools, universities and other education and training providers in quasi-market conditions engineered and maintained by the state", (p.365).

The provision of further education became commercially competitive and this created great pressure for all concerned. The most effective institutions worked like private businesses to reduce costs and increase productivity. Workloads increased, pay and conditions declined and significantly, the professional autonomy of teachers became more and more emasculated.

Successive governments have compounded this approach, Conservative commitments to reduce public spending and state bureaucracy were followed by New Labour notions of the global marketplace and successful economy contributing to social justice and wealth distribution for all. FE learning was central to the skill acquisition deemed necessary to engage in economic and enterprising activity.

The last ten years have witnessed a continuation of this agenda and the publication of a series of significant reports have steered the development of legislation in the FE sector. New terminology and imagery has evolved placing the workplace and demand led provision at the heart of the sector. Dominant discourses advocate employability, lifelong learning and the demonstration of competencies and performance related skill acquisition. Three significant reports stand out and are worth mentioning individually.

Foster (2005) evaluated the state of FE colleges in relation to the key challenges and opportunities they faced. It proposed sixty recommendations for change and the following extract encapsulates its vision:

“There is no single magic bullet solution to FE. Rather through a comprehensive set of reforms across the whole of the FE system, its power to fuel economic achievement through helping individuals realise their personal potential will provide the basis for a progressive enhancement in FE’s standing and esteem in the nations eyes”,
(p.viii).

In essence colleges would be asked to go further than ever before to focus on developing and providing curriculum and skills based training that was

beneficial to the local and national economy and a more strategic and systematic approach to quality was proposed.

Leitch (2006) attempted to identify the optimal strategy for developing skills within the UK to maximise economic advantage and social justice. Its main recommendations centre on the vision to increase adult skills at all levels and target additional investment to meet this challenge. It also advocated the strengthening and amplification of employer influence on education and training suggesting sector skills councils were to approve vocational qualifications requiring public funding.

The combined impact of these two reports was to revitalise and raise awareness of the value and importance of skills development and qualifications with achievement in basic literacy and numeracy forming a core foundation.

Clearly change in FE is not a new or indeed unique phenomenon, Edward, Coffield, Steer, & Gregson (2008) explore the impacts on tutors and managers who describe change as *“coming at them from all directions”* (p.164).

Symptomatic of this is a broadening of accountability for staff, no longer able to focus on teaching and learning they talked about *“meeting their targets, dealing with their paperwork and complying with the demands of their managers, awarding bodies and inspectors”* (p.166).

Moving to the present day, the publication of Alison Wolf’s *Review of Vocational Education*, Wolf (2011) encapsulates the inherent strengths and weaknesses evident in vocational education, recognising that good vocational provision is highly respected and valuable with the contrasting view that large numbers of

young people cannot secure long lasting work due to low level vocational qualifications preparing them poorly for employment.

It is clear that there is a growing political commitment to re-establish a more traditional subject core for all young people's learning and English and Maths will be at the heart of this. A streamlining of vocational provision will take place and the future of many strands of FE curriculum will remain uncertain.

Goodson (2010) reports the findings from a four-year European study of educational change confirms the dangers associated with radical transformations, *"those that have pursued neo-liberal reforms in the fastest and deepest manner, such as England, perform very poorly in educational standards"* (p.775).

In summary this increasingly eclectic mix of provision has been subjected to constant tinkering by successive political thinkers and policy makers over many years. The recent emergence of a coalition government together with the near collapse of the global financial markets and the recent subsequently sombre spending review indicate that the sector will receive cuts in funding equivalent to approximately 25 per cent over the next four years according to Fazaeli (2010). It is clear that political strategic re-alignment has morphed to become dominated by austerity budgeting and the impact on the sector will be significant.

For a more comprehensive summary of major reports, Education Acts and significant developments within the FE sector see Chapter 9 of (Armitage et al., 2007).

The Demands and Context of FE Teacher Training

The traditional qualifications for those employed as teachers within the FE and post compulsory education sectors are the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed). These awards can be obtained in two ways; applicants can join either a 'pre-service' or 'in-service' pathway. The pre-service route is designed for those without teaching experience and a guaranteed teaching placement, it has a work experience programme built-in within the delivery model which allows learners to participate and reflect on real teaching with mentor support. Many studies have been undertaken which have investigated the experiences of such trainees on placement with diverse learning providers, see (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005b; Dixon, Jennings, Orr & Tummons 2010).

The in-service pathway is designed for those who have already secured a minimum number of authentic teaching hours over the duration of the programme; these are often paid but could also be agreed on a voluntary basis subject to the necessary approvals and clearances. Many candidates for this pathway are contracted teachers who have existing teaching qualifications awarded at a lower level. This is colloquially known as on the job training.

Just as the FE sector has experienced change, so too have the PGCE and Cert. Ed qualifications. It is only since 2001 that a formal teaching qualification has become a requirement for new staff, a new organisation called the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) produced occupational standards for teaching and learning and all FE teaching qualifications were required to map their learning outcomes to these standards.

It is clear to see that there is no such thing as a standard route through initial teacher training and the rigorous application process is extremely individualised in order to match learner needs with the most appropriate pathway.

From a teaching perspective historic divisions between schools, colleges and universities are being eroded as learning partnerships between organisations enable shared and fluid approaches for the provision of teaching and learning. The professional distinctions between the different sectors are being blurred at the edges and so teachers in the FE sector now face the reality of being asked to teach learners from a wider range of backgrounds and academic levels than ever before. This results in PGCE and Cert Ed cohorts being populated by highly diverse individuals who aspire to teach both within and beyond mainstream FE.

The topic of change has been selected for investigation in relation to social and situated learning as the economic recession presents itself as an opportune and potentially significant future paradigm within the FE sector. It represents a specific and timely focus for study as organisations seek to adjust and re-align

provision in line with what Fazaeli (2010) describes as the “£1.1 billion reduction in the further education resource budget” (p.1).

This financial reality check for education comes at a time when the profile and discourse of skill based education and training is high and has been declared a central pillar of the UK drive for future prosperity and economic success. As our country strives for a world class economy the reality of the current skills gap is a key barrier and it seems clear that the gap will not close unless, according to UKCES (2009) “we can achieve a culture in which employers and individuals place a high value on skills and continued learning” (p.5). The FE sector will be expected to line up strategically to support this vision and offer targeted qualifications which contribute to this ambitious challenge whilst simultaneously improving efficiencies and commercial performance.

Teaching places different demands on individuals and in order to be professional it is critical that teachers have a secure understanding of the profession and of their role within it. Professional discourses surround teachers with academic terminology and language. Often abbreviated phrases and nuanced language contribute to make deciphering meaning a skilful act. In order to make sense of the profession trainees must begin to interpret and engage in professional communication, this situated and often social practice contributes to their development and as language acquisition develops so their understanding increases and their self-concept and professional identity as a teacher deepens.

Sachs (2001) identifies two fundamental but polarised discourses of professionalism. The first of these is a democratic and trusting construct of identity. The individual possesses expertise and knowledge that enable them to think freely and speak independently, where teachers are self-aware and possess a strong moral sense of who they are and what their role demands. The second concept is based on a managerialist discourse and assertive culture where professional definitions and behaviours are constructed and imposed. These descriptions mirror what Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark & Warn (2002) refer to as “inside out an *outside-in trajectories*” (p.113).

There is a significant body of research surrounding the construction of FE teachers professional identities, see (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005a; Gleeson & James 2007; Orr & Simmons 2010; Robson & Bailey 2009; Robson, Bailey & Larkin 2004). This work endorses the notion of two conflicting professional perspectives as either the agent or recipient of change forces.

Current culture dictates that the teacher’s roles are indeed defined by lists of functional competencies, some of which contrast and generate tensions. As well as being a subject and learning experts teachers are asked to focus on increasingly wide ranging organisationally relevant competencies to support the functions of management and to develop a number of social or paraprofessional capabilities. These increasingly diverse drivers can lead to a sense of uncertainty and volatility for experienced teachers; they provide an even greater challenge for new teachers to come to terms with.

In acknowledging these dualities this dissertation will examine how external change forces and challenges beginner teacher's notions of professionalism and self. It will do this from within the context of a small scale narrative study by interpreting what Goodson (2010) describes as "*work life narratives*" (p.767) of their professional identity and working relationships with other lecturers and within curriculum teams at a time of impending financial and structural transformation. All participants are active students following the 'in-service' pathway of either the PGCE or Cert Ed at locations across Yorkshire and Humberside.

A key focus for the study is to examine the social and situational learning experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of the trainees as this is a key philosophy within post compulsory initial teacher training.

Beginning teachers learn and practice in-situ alongside experienced teachers, this model of professional development is, in many ways, similar to an apprenticeship; knowledge, skills and professional identities develop and transform as trainees participate in the 'doing' and the 'becoming' of teaching.

This reliance on social and situated learning within communities of professional practice locates beginner teachers within a culture and expectation of supportive action spanning individual, team and corporate levels within organisations. The experience lived and gained together with the reflective critiques that emerge are critical as highly personalised constructions of professional identity evolve.

Bathmaker & Avis (2005b) confirm that further education has “*never constituted a stable and easily definable sector*” (p.4) and significant change forces have taken hold and reduce the time and space available for democratic professional development. Any disruption to this widely supportive holistic approach to beginner teachers will have profound impacts on the individuals concerned. As significant change forces grip the sector these nurturing and cultivating interactions will come under increasing pressure. Experienced professionals and beginners alike will encounter what Forde, McMahon, McPhee & Patrick (2009) call the “*discourse of crisis*” (p.56), these negative and destabilising pressures will further compound what Wallace (2002) calls the “*disillusionment*” (p.82) beginning teachers face as they struggle to become a professional teacher within the FE sector.

In summary the FE sector has been subject to progressive re-alignment with successive political decision makers using broad economic performance criteria as the catalyst for change. This performative culture has grown with the result that teachers must now define their professional identity using criteria which are beyond the classroom. The ability to focus solely on teaching, learning and subject specialisms has long gone and tutors must contribute in a much more administrative and managerial capacity.

This enlarged role is challenging for newcomers to the profession who are focussed on developing their skills as classroom practitioners. Those following the ‘on the job’ training pathway rely on social and situated learning opportunities to make sense of these challenges as they build experience and confidence in the sector. This small scale study seeks to explore those social

and situated learning experiences by analysing the professional discourses which surround 'in-service' trainees as they complete their initial teacher training.

Structure of the Thesis

This study is divided into five chapters organised in line with the academic guidance provided within the University of York, MA Education (by research) Programme Handbook.

Chapter one, the introduction, begins by establishing the study context and provides a brief chronological summary of the development of the FE sector. It also presents an overview of the demands and context of FE teacher training outlining the importance of developing a secure professional academic identity.

Chapter two, the literature review, firstly explores concepts of identity in relation to the social self and the related symbolic interactions, signs and symbols prevalent in social groupings. It then defines professional discourse and scrutinises its significance in the maintenance and effective operation of professional organisations highlighting why it is an important feature in socially situated learning environments. Finally it highlights the concept of communities of practice from an academic perspective.

Chapter three, the methodology, presents and outlines the rationale behind the research strategy and confirms the specific research questions used. It explores

the data collection and sampling methods before confirming the data analysis techniques utilised. Finally it discusses factors impacting on generalisability and the limitations of the research.

Chapter four, the findings, details the key discoveries emerging from the study in the form of discourse themes, it presents direct quotations from interviewees in order to enrich and illuminate the topics analysed. It ends with an interpretive explanation of the predominant themes identified.

Chapter five, the conclusions and recommendations, summarises the key themes evident within the findings and discusses their original contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The first chapter of this study introduced the further education (FE) sector presenting its complexities within recent historical context. It highlighted the evolution of teacher training from its voluntary origins to the current compulsory and professional standards driven curriculum culminating in Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) accreditation.

This study is concerned with how beginner teachers, engaged in the learning process of the aforementioned compulsory teacher training, are influenced by the professional discourses that surround, envelope and impact on them as they work in the delivery of FE learning across Yorkshire and Humberside. It places great emphasis on social and workplace learning. This is not to suggest that traditional and formal learning theory such as cognitivism and behaviourism is irrelevant, ineffective or insignificant, it simply locates social learning at the heart of this research within what might be termed the participatory process of social interaction. James & Biesta (2007) suggest that learning is not just a by-product of educational interaction but a cultural practice. They define this as *“the social practices through which people learn”*, (p.4) and highlight the importance of engaging with others in the process.

This research takes place at a time when significant political and economic change is impacting on all sectors of society. Education policy is being transformed; neo-liberalism, globalisation and commercialisation, the traditional

change forces of FE in previous decades, have been eclipsed by the current financial crisis and public sector budget deficit resulting in major cuts to budgets and longer term concerns regarding the sustainability of education funding.

In order to adequately explore and evaluate recent research the forthcoming literature review has been organised into three elements.

The first section begins by briefly explaining the concept of identity from a basic psychological and historical perspective. Although there are many complexities in defining identity, the concept of acquiring a professional academic identity is crucial and highly personal for all trainee teachers working within the FE sector. The second section moves on to define professional discourse and explore how it shapes our interactions and understanding. Specifically its will explore what professional discourse is and why it is important to understand its impact within social, contextualised and situated learning environments.

Part three, the final section presents an overview of the concept of communities of practice and the notion of situated learning. These terms were developed by (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and are now widely recognised within social learning theory.

Concepts of Identity

In very simplistic terms, Soanes (2006) defines identity as; *“the fact of being who or what a person is”*, (p.373). Historically identity was something acquired from birth to death; examples of this include a person’s social class, their family

business or their ancestral title. As times and society changed this crude perspective began to deconstruct as a wide number of social; cultural; political and psychological theories exploded into view.

Identity is an evolving form of cognition, and it is clear that educationalists have a moral duty to extend the consciousness of their learners in order to help shape and balance the vision of who they are and who they want to become. Another equally persuasive argument for the study of identity recognises the rapidly changing context of modern society. In clear contrast to the pre-modern age, the decline of fixed family and social frameworks, together with the proliferation of global media content linked to lifestyle and image is changing how self-image is constructed and developed.

There appears to be a multitude of psychological and moral hazards in modern life. These include alienation, loss of traditional family bonds and values, together with an increase in hedonistic and narcissistic behaviours. Individual identity has become increasingly complex and problematic.

The notion of the social nature of the constitution of self, Mead (1967) recognises the great importance that the 'social self' has on each of us. We develop as individuals through interaction and engagement with others, through our conversations, our language, our social priorities etc. Social groupings and interactions are clearly significant as we seek to build our own sense of self. The symbols which we hold centrally have a meaningful quality and are a common currency for social groups. Mead recognises that self is both a process and an object within social interaction. This concept can be traced back to

infancy, as we have no sense of self at birth and we see ourselves through the eyes of others.

The social self and the surrounding symbolic interactionism is a significant, dynamic and influential concept within initial teacher training. Beginning teachers arrive in diverse and eclectic academic settings gaining exposure to the everyday behaviours, practices and rituals of experienced professionals, institutions and learner groups. Their ability to maximise the validity of this social and situated learning experience for their own professional development depends greatly on their success in becoming part of a legitimate academic social and professional group. The ability to observe, imitate and re-model performances alongside the meaning making of collaborative reflection enables authentic and profound learning to take place.

Goffman (1969) developed Meads work outlining and defining ego identity, personal identity and social identity. He recognised that the management of potentially damaging information was critical for these three aspects of our identity. Personal identity is our uniqueness; it is built up of identity pegs such as fingerprints and life stories. Our social identity is what others understand about us and by the symbols and groups to which we belong. Our ego identity refers to what we think about ourselves. Goffman set out a conceptual framework where face-to-face interaction can be interpreted as a performance. He suggests that as performers we both knowingly give and unwittingly give off impressions.

We are skilled in what he terms 'impression management'; we monitor all aspects of the behaviour of the other people we encounter. Sometimes we seek to deceive others while seeing through the deceptions aimed at us. Interestingly he suggests we often knowingly contradict our behaviours, he terms this 'misdirection'. Goffman also talks about the facades and stylisation individuals attempt to achieve in their conduct and behaviours towards others. He distinguishes between the 'front' and 'back' regions; frontal aspects are often framed to hide aspects of identity which are deemed to be undesirable. Upfront performances of individuals often contrast with back stage behaviour where individuals do not need to worry about the image they seek to project.

Giddens (1991) work on reflexivity is also influential in explaining the links between our personal and social lives. Reflexivity is a self-directing process which requires the monitoring of, and reflection on, psychological and social information streams. The reflexivity of modern social life requires constant examination of socially transmitted information to enable individuals to adapt and adjust their character in order to conform. Life is made up of elements of familiar certainty, anxiety and unfamiliarity and as individuals seek to make sense of this mix of cultural signposts and experiences, it is important to develop a sophisticated interpretation of these influences, especially in this postmodern, global hi-speed and information age.

Freud (2006) suggests that the self is divided and fractured describing it as always at odds with itself, the psyche is concealed, the ego at the call of repressed and unconscious desires. He categorises this in two ways; thoughts

stored away temporarily are branded 'preconscious' with significant and long term thoughts forming the true 'repressed unconscious'.

He believed that forgetting and the unconscious are essentially self-protecting mechanisms where desires, needs and wants that conflict with reality are shut away to alleviate bad or intolerable feelings. For Freud these mental conflicts can be interpreted from dreams, slips of the tongue and memory distortions. In reality this means that conflicting emotions can exist without contradiction, it is possible to hold extreme thoughts and wishes simultaneously whilst also loving and hating, accepting and rejecting etc. This can be recognised in sibling rivalry and the loving controlling tensions that exist within the parent and child relationship.

One way of labelling this is misrecognition. A factual distortion of the way we think about, or fantasize about our selfhood. Psychiatrist Jacques Lacan developed this notion by presenting a model of how we establish our sense of self through visual identifications, Bailly (2009). The mothers gaze is a child's first mirror; it is essentially narcissistic in nature and this supports the development of identity. Where the mother gaze fails to represent this mirror, studies suggest that children may fail to thrive, they can see no image of themselves so struggle to find a sense of self. He suggests the failure of this early mirror stage can be significant for personal development.

If we recognise Freud's arguments surrounding unconscious thoughts, Lacan proposes that by definition, the subject has difficulty consciously expressing them in language. He suggests that conscious speech obeyed a hidden pattern

with various coded omissions, misrepresentations, repetitions, mannerisms etc. He presents this as the discourse of the unconscious and placed great emphasis on structural linguistics. He recognised words and meanings are interpreted in many ways and so he became focused on how the language used presents a sound image and concept, he used the terms 'signifier and signified'. Put simply this means the signifier is not the actual meaning of the sound but the speaker's psychological vision of it, also the signified is not the actual object but the idea of the object.

In summary trainee teachers engage in situated social interactions in order to facilitate the development of academic identities. Typically these are supportive social groups aligned by curriculum specialism and work locality. Phillips (2010) recognises that teacher identities are emergent, influenced by discourse with others and are "*continuously re-mapped*" (p.634).

Professional Discourse

This section will define professional discourse and provide a systematic investigation into its use within the context of FE academic communities. To further illuminate the relevance of language it will also explain how trainee teachers must comprehend and engage with the academic discourses that saturate their situated teaching and learning environments in order to make sense of their role and to establish their careers.

In its most simple form discourse can be defined as written or spoken communication. Professional discourse is extremely influential and contributes

an essential role in the creation of professional practice. Gunnarsson (2009) defines professional discourse as “*discourse that enables the creation and maintenance of organisations and institutions as groups working for common goals*” (p.3). This can include the various forms and formalities of communication which incorporate both written text and spoken words. The language used combined with the way it is presented, communicated and understood is an important component of learning for any aspiring professional. More specifically academic discourse is the language which exists and is used within educational contexts to enable academic organisations to operate. Hyland (2009) develops this notion suggesting that it “*simultaneously constructs the social roles and relationships which create academics and students*”, (p.1). Robson, et al (2004) suggest professional discourses will “*position subjects in particular ways and offer particular identities through which people come to view their relationships with the different loci of power*” (p.184).

The ability to engage in and decipher professional discourse is an extremely important component in the creation and management of organisations and groups. There is a clear and ever present link between professional discourse and the context of professional settings. Learning the way professionals write and speak to other professionals is a crucial factor in the construction of knowledge for newcomers to the industry. The language and discourse used by experienced professionals within a given field, both confirms and reflects, their expert status and skill level. Academic discourse is specialised, privileged and challenging for those new to the profession. Irwin & Hramiak (2010) confirm that “*to work as part of a discipline, one must learn how to think like a member of that disciplines community*” (p.373).

The common language used by experts in a given discipline or domain enables that profession to be uniquely distinguished from other expert fields, or indeed lesser experts or learners within. It is a linguistic framework maintained within a hierarchical system which is learnt progressively as individuals develop skills, knowledge and understanding as well as authenticity and authority in their chosen profession. Academic language is specialised in that it constructs knowledge and distinguishes the brilliant learner from the average.

Gunnarsson (2009) recognises that professional discourse is goal oriented, situated within specific professional environments, and is socially ordered. All organisations are driven by forms of strategic plans, mission statements or annual reports. The FE environment is no exception with the annual process of Self-Assessment linked to the Common Inspection Framework. This measures outcomes for learners, quality of provision and the impact of leadership and management. These drivers are balanced with what might be termed commercial business objectives such as maximising income and sustaining growth.

The explicit nature of such goals are closely aligned with specific results, academically this means recruiting and retaining learners who successfully complete their chosen courses and progress into higher level academia or become economically active.

Professional discourse is also explicitly situated within places that are intrinsically specific to the messages that are communicated. Rogers (2011)

highlights an important consideration related to the situated significance of discourse, *“when speakers speak, they assume that listeners share enough knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences with them to be able to situate the meanings of the words”* (p.40). In reality each organisation establishes either purposefully or inadvertently, goal oriented situations and opportunities to communicate to different groups or sub groups within its control. Examples of this may include managerial or supervisory teams, departmental or curriculum staff etc. These combinations present and enact discourse at different times and places, with different combinations of participants, formally, informally, verbally and in writing: single person communication (individual reading and writing), two person events (face to face meetings and discussion, letters, emails, chatting), and group events (small meetings, group emails, collaborative report writing, large group meetings). Sometimes these activities are located in the same environment, increasingly often thanks to technological advancement; this is sometimes geographically distant via video link or email.

Asymmetries can occur when mixing the expertise within communicative groups. Comprehension is not always guaranteed if participants have knowledge gaps and the evidence presented is of a technical nature. It may also be a problem when messages which are generally believed to be explicit by experts are not communicated clearly to those with lesser knowledge or experience.

The hierarchical, socially organised and structured nature of an organisation both mirrors and supports professional discourse as it is created and cascaded within the various communicative situations of day to day work. The exact

nature of the discourse is often related to power and responsibility; confidence, dominance, friendship and proximity to others. Organisations establish internal role structures at different responsibility levels and these contain more informal social groupings. There are prescribed interrelationships and dependencies within and between groups but more casual and spontaneous interactions do occur between individual extrovert characters.

Power may be exerted coercively and this is modelled on behavioural theories of reward and punishment. Rogers (2011) confirms *“power is a central concept... it tends to be defined in terms of negative uses of power”* (p.3). Often this power dynamic is legitimated due to the granting of authority, examples within education include a departmental manager communicating with staff or the power a lecturer has over the learners. Expert power results from gaining experience or education. When specific knowledge is important, individuals who possess such expertise have the ability to exert great influence on the situation and its potential outcomes. Some elements of referent power may also exist in certain situations, those who are admired or respected due to their personal attributes or accomplishments may gain power as others are likely to comply out of respect. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) confirm the power /knowledge dynamics, *“discourse in practice are represented by regimens/regimes or lived patterns of action that broadly discipline and govern”* (p.344).

The communicative structures within organisations face some basic barriers to effectiveness. Senior managers are often immersed in discourses which are political, financial and strategic in context, at the opposite end of the academic spectrum are small vocationally aligned curriculum teams who are extremely

close-knit cohesive communities communicating on the delivery of artisan teaching and learning. Clearly there are significant challenges and professional collective responsibilities in finding effective, efficient communicative structures and filters to cascade and interpret key information at appropriate times in appropriate ways.

Bloom (2008) highlights how group dynamics known as group think and group polarisation may also influence the communicative process. Group think is a term used to describe a phenomenon where collective agreement and harmony are highly valued by the group causing a limited exploration of opposing arguments. The resulting impulsive decision making process is flawed due to the failure to identify all the facts. Implications of this include discriminatory behaviour to others and a disregard for those discourses which do not resonate with the group communicative norms.

Group polarisation occurs when a group has a tendency to talk itself into extreme positions; its members become so animated about the decision that an internal energy is created forcing the group towards hasty actions. Again, more rounded and opposing views are not sufficiently considered due to the internal pressure to move forward quickly.

The social dimensions of professional groups are critical to their effectiveness. The formation of group identity and norms is influential in the construction of professional discourse and the uptake of the appropriate language and behaviour is often a constant motivating factor behind the establishment of the 'we' factor so important within the socialisation process. The discourse

simultaneously unites participants in professional groupings and differentiates such groups from others. The use of discourse situates its users in what can be naively termed 'them and us' classifications. The dominant professional group is able to impose its values and identity causing a marginalisation or 'othering' of those not aligned with its objectives.

Professional discourse is goal oriented, dynamic communicative interplay which is located within a framework of external conditions and pressures. Factors such as the time available; the place where communication is written, spoken or read and also the tools used in the creation, transmission and receiving of the message all contribute to its character within a situated frame. Any analysis of its purpose and meaning must take these factors into account. Meaning is made through understanding the dialogic purpose, the collaborative nature of the social communication structure as well as situated context within which the communicative events take place.

In many professional situations responsibility for achieving goals and actions is a shared responsibility. There is a collective obligation to contribute and be part of a process that converts organisational aims into practical reality. This means that each communicative event is not always a simple discrete interaction but rather what Gunnarsson (2009) calls a "*communicative chain*" (p.22) linking future action with the historical contributions to discourse of previous groups and individuals.

Discourse is also filtered through the organisational frameworks which exist within any workplace. Such frameworks include organisational hierarchies, the

social distinctions and divisions of work, the culture and relationships between staff and the balance of managerial autocracy and employee democracy. The communicative features of a small artisan curriculum team are highly dependent on the constraints or freedoms afforded by the structural norms of the wider organisation.

Gunnarsson (2009) highlights a number of external constraints which influence discourse. Broadly these frameworks operate at local, national and global levels and impact on professional discourse in various ways.

Legal and political frameworks provide laws, codes of practice and standards which regulate professional discourse. These influences are widely represented within public ideologies and the expectations of professional behaviours and conduct. Periodically these factors are reviewed, often after a significant event or public outcry. An updated regulatory framework is implemented often containing new professional documentation and terminology from which new professional discourse emanates.

Economic and technological frameworks are strongly entwined with the growth and development of professional organisations. As technology advances and economies grow, organisations use professional discourse to present a visible and affirmative signal of their worth and contribution in society. They wish to appear viable, competent and commercially adept as they seek to attract clients, employees and working partners who add value to their outputs.

Socio-cultural frameworks present ideologies and ethical dimensions within which organisations present and position themselves using the associated professional discourse. Professional approaches to issues such as democracy, respect, diversity, rights and responsibilities etc enable organisations to champion social values and reflect important cultural dimensions within society. This positioning, in turn, attracts and defines the professional groups and behaviours of those who work within such institutions.

The nature of the linguistic framework used is a critical influence on discourse in professional environments, the selection and use of the dominant communicative practices informs professional communication. Whether the language used is local or global; majority or minority; elite or non-elite greatly influences its accessibility and use. The ability and ease by which professionals and non-professionals can engage in professional discourse reveals the language politics of the profession and its positioning in society.

Professional discourse is complex and subject to the influences of a number of different framework systems. This begins with a specific situated communicative event taking place within a defined working group employed professionally in a given organisation. This organisation operates within a specific environmental framework. Beyond this is a range of constraining and interwoven political, economic, technological and societal frameworks which present as language terrains through which each profession navigates to get to project its voice.

Communities of Practice

As educators we recognise the benefits of a well-managed and successful induction stage of the learning programmes we offer. We bring together diverse individuals from different locations and backgrounds and we invest time and effort undertaking development and teambuilding with our groups. We seek to create broad and effective 'communities of practice' and these operate on both a practical and social level. Wenger (1998) recognises this stating that "*learning is, in its essence a fundamentally social phenomenon*" (p.3).

The concept of communities of practice is an influential learning theory, much research and academic study has been undertaken and this has percolated beyond education into managerial and organisational philosophy. There are a multitude of parallel and competing theoretical explanations which have resonance within this study although all are based around the social features of learning, see also (Mead, 1967; Bandura, 1977).

A central assumption in wider society is that learning is a product which can be acquired, it occurs in formalised and traditional educational settings guided by a 'teacher' figure. Cognitively, learning happens as the mind processes information from a wide variety of stimuli, in reality this also takes place in an eclectic range of social, home and leisure environments. People learn through the sharing of practices and experiences with the community or lived world in addition to purpose built teaching spaces. Communities of practice develop in both formalised and naturally occurring environments and the impact of the

work of Lave & Wenger (1991) was instrumental in extending the perception of learning from acquisition to participation based paradigms.

There are clear strengths and weaknesses associated with communities of practice as socially situated learning vehicles within vocational education settings. From a positive perspective the ability to participate in a small, cohesive and artisan based teaching community provides a rich experience which can easily be consumed and interpreted due to its accessible shape, size and recognisable relevance to all. Very often members will experience shared histories as they developed and perfected their technical skills and knowledge within previous industrial, commercial or public service careers. These collective and shared backgrounds provide both highly stable and deep symbolic identities. It is possible to view these original professional identities as resembling a family of comparable individual signatures. A signature is a unique imprint and it is formed, practised and perfected over time. It can be repeated reliably time and time again and it would take a strong will and a concerted effort to re-shape and re-style.

This analogy represents, in a simple way, the tensions that exist when skilled practitioners attempt to take on-board new academic concepts of professionalism. A variety of practical and creative tensions exist, Gleeson & James (2007) confirm that these “*simultaneously enhance or restrict professional practice*” (p.453). The old signature does not disappear; it merely evolves incorporating fundamental flourishes of both past and present professional identities. So long as the group remain compliant, cohesive and

harmonious then the politics of participation will endure. This however cannot be taken for granted.

The mechanisms by which trainee teachers within the FE sector become legitimate participants within existing academic communities of practice are complex. It is important to recognise that each group contains what may be termed experts and novices, traditionally these roles have been seen as linear pathways as learners progress from 'newcomers' to 'old timers'. Fuller & Unwin (2004) challenge this assumption and claim that "*helping others involves both experienced and inexperienced employees*" (p.40). Factors such as age, education and technological awareness facilitate a communal and more expansive notion of shared learning.

They suggest that organisations promoting inclusive working practices and respect for colleagues facilitate an 'expansive' learning environment. Those who operate in more 'restrictive' settings are more likely to stifle supportive learning cultures as employees are much more guarded and unwilling to encourage younger or more inexperienced colleagues.

Wenger (1998) recognises the fluid and continually changing notion of participation in communities of practice, he terms these successive pathways '*trajectories*' (p.154) and highlights five different forms:

1. *Inbound. Newcomers are joining the community with the prospect of becoming full participant in its practice*
2. *Peripheral. By choice or by necessity, some trajectories never lead to full participation.*
3. *Insider. The formation of an identity does not end with full membership.*

4. *Boundary. Some trajectories find their value in spanning boundaries and linking communities of practice.*
5. *Outbound. Some trajectories lead out of a community.*

Individuals strive to construct a learning trajectory that will enable them to operate and participate in social learning practices. Using the definitions above it is clear that beginner teachers partake initially in predominantly inbound and peripheral trajectories and these interactions and perspectives shape their experience and perception.

A key challenge for trainees is to become established as legitimate participants within their situated academic context. Many factors impact on this, some are intrinsic to the individual concerned, the majority are extrinsic and difficult to control. Hughes, Jewson & Unwin (2007) confirm:

“Newcomers learn through legitimate peripheral participation, that is, regular and progressive participation in circumscribed but real occupational tasks and practices under the guidance, discipline and surveillance of established members of a community of practitioners. Gradually the involvement of novices increases in scope, responsibility and autonomy until they emerge as full members of the community of practice” (p.157)

One of the most significant factors influencing legitimate membership will include being able to develop and contribute to the prevailing academic repertoire and discourse. A more colloquial and recognisable phraseology may present this as ‘being able to talk the talk before you can walk the walk’. This links back to key theories of (Giddens, 1991; Goffman, 1969; Mead 1967) already summarised earlier in this chapter. Clearly those trainees who can engage with and interact authentically and sincerely in communicative events are more likely to be accepted by others already centrally placed. These

individuals will experience more effective learning trajectories than those who have difficulty engaging and remain marginalised and distant.

Power relationships and what might be termed as the 'politics of participation' are inherent within social networks; this is present in two dimensions. Firstly the interdependencies between different individuals within the group present opportunities to exert power and influence; this is generally unequally distributed and benefits some participants more than others. The fulcrum of power is often located hierarchically to the traditional structural platforms within organisations such as job titles and responsibility levels. Power within more socially situated groupings may not aggregate with this view, ego-centric and charismatic individuals with no official enhanced authority can still exert exceptional influence over others.

Secondly it must be recognised that the community itself has the power and ability to control resources and information. Social groupings that exhibit high levels of cohesion and contain individuals with positions of power and leadership are able to exert proportionally higher levels of influence within any organisation. Groups with a high degree of centralisation tend to have more established norms of behaviour, Hughes, et al (2007) explain "*communications between points on the network are likely to pass along a few standardised channels that are readily subject to central policing*" (p.73). Decentralised networks will exhibit more fluid and dispersed features which contain fewer individuals with influence, subsequently communicational structures and content are likely to remain isolated and difficult to regulate and authenticate.

Clearly the centrality, legitimacy and influence of each community of practice will impact directly on the social learning and politics of participation contained within. Trainees whose learning apprenticeship and trajectories interact with more powerful and dominant communities containing individual members with leadership and supervisory status will benefit from the provision of more managerially ordered and well-preserved social learning opportunities. Those placed in more distant networks may experience more marginalised interactions.

An interesting counter point to the aforementioned argument is conceivable if we acknowledge that this initial period of apprenticeship and training should be focused on the development and fine tuning of classroom practice and the craft of teaching and learning. Those immersed in the communities of practice most removed from managerialist and performative cultures may find they have proportionately more time and space to devote to this.

Coffield (2008) has emerged to become an influential voice championing the back to basics philosophy of making teaching and learning the number one priority. He states:

“Finding dedicated time for tutors to devote to learning communities means, however, that something more must be done about the heavy demands on staff by bureaucracy, by the paperwork required by Awarding Bodies and inspectors, all of which divert energy and time away from T & L.” (p.24)

His arguments resonate strongly with many teachers working within the FE sector, Spenceley (2006) summarises this effectively stating *“There are a profusion of roles for the educator to fulfil... their primary focus lies no longer*

with the provision of a service but in proving the value of the 'service' offered through a range of statistical measurements and customer satisfaction surveys" (p.300). Clearly it is important for new teachers within the sector to learn and interpret the complexity and realities of these diverse roles but the priority must be to become proficient and confident classroom practitioners first.

Ball (2003) further defines the notion claiming "*performativity in the public sector... as a new mode of state regulation*" (p.215). At the core of this process is the transformation and evaluation of highly complex practices into much more simplistic and crude performance indicators. The heart of the progressive agenda is a seemingly devolving culture, re-positioning control and responsibility from centralised and authoritarian accountabilities towards a broader framework of monitoring, judging and evaluation within organisations.

He continues by asking the question "*who controls the field of judgment*" (p.216) and recognises this is a major cause of tension for teachers. Performance criteria are standardised and formulaic; they are imposed and blinkered to the realities and struggles of individual teachers working in diverse and unique learning environments. The reduction in flexibility and erosion of professional integrity pose a serious challenge and dilemma as the "*space for the operation of autonomous ethical codes based in shared moral language is colonised or closed down*" (p.226).

Another key dynamic which is currently influencing communities of practice is that of geography and the special location of work. Recent trends allow individuals to choose how they engage with 'work'. Traditional notions of

working hours are now eroded as technology facilitates the opportunity to blend work with home life. Work is now not effectively defined by a 'place' but rather a task. For some this amalgamation is beneficial and individuals can, for example, check emails and mark assignments electronically from home in a very efficient manner. For others the ability to balance the demands of work and home life become blurred, challenging and stressful. The social norms and expectations of collegiate groups will need to be adopted by any newcomer who is hopeful of developing effective working relationships and this may prove extremely difficult for some, especially those who have had little experience or confidence working with technology and flexible patterns of working.

The use of ICT and virtual technologies within learning communities is widely championed and there are implications for individuals who are unprepared or unwilling to engage in these forms of communication. Electronic technologies and networks change the traditional access and conduct features of participation. The ability to communicate instantaneously at distance, using multiple mobile devices creates an expectation of immediacy, this fast paced, always available culture challenges the traditional boundaries between private and public space.

The design and features of offices and staffrooms within the workplace also provide opportunities and challenges for those located spatially within.

Collective offices provide, what might at first sight, appear to be ideal environments for joint engagement, discourse and mutual working. Hughes, et al (2007) highlight that *"It also means that workers of different grades, skills and functions are constantly bumping into one another... new ideas, practices and*

projects arise out of the unsupervised and unfettered encounters of people circulating" (p.163). Theoretically this allows individuals to engage in participative working as well as task based activity, for those who have reserves of experience and a substantial personal teaching resource in existence this may be beneficial.

For newcomers entering this same participatory utopia the pressure and discipline required to survive and succeed is immense. Social strategies need to be developed which identify, filter and screen priorities for work. The work of Covey (2004) provides a useful guide to managing these challenges and perhaps "*Habit 3, put first things first*" (p.145) is a good starting point.

Whilst it is clear that personal characteristics such as self-direction, sociability and openness are important the trainee will benefit from the support from others. A good mentor is an essential component for survival amongst the 'noise' of the social working environment. Law, Ireland & Hussain (2007) confirm the importance of the mentor relationship in a learning journey, "*Like good teachers, coaches and mentors need to acquire skills to unpack the process of meaning-making... and help learners to form or rediscover their own meaning and take responsibility for it*" (p.48).

A final geographic consideration relates to the physical dispersal and proximate location of people within any given working community. Ideally in a well-balanced and effective team individual members benefit from local positioning and regular contact. Within an academically engaged organisation this typically manifests by division into faculties, schools, curricula and course teams. These

divisions enable specialisation and focus within the organisation and support logical and productive working arrangements. Often these communities are defined by specific work locations including the exclusive population of certain buildings, areas of campus and use of social facilities such as food service and common rooms. On the whole this supports effective working relationships and enables individual trainees to immerse themselves in subject specific learning and development.

There are times when both the individual and the organisation may benefit from a wider social interaction, a good example of this relates to the peer observation of teaching and learning within the classroom. One of the biggest fringe benefits when working within the field of teacher education is the opportunity to observe trainees working within the widest variety of teaching specialisms. The ability to witness and experience diverse good practice has a profound impact on one's own teaching, being able to test and embed varied techniques and characteristics enlivens classroom learning.

The conclusions of Bell & Mladenovic (2007) found peer observation to be beneficial, *"Tutors reported that they found the exercise valuable and that they intended to make changes to their teaching practices as a result"* (p.749). Peel (2006) recognises the transformatory value of peer observation claiming *"observation offers tremendous potential to promote self-knowledge and professional development, particularly when it is part of a continuing process"* (p.492).

A final danger linked to the effectiveness and inclusiveness of communities of practice relates to what happens when newcomers remain on the periphery and experience negative discourses as opposed to welcoming and positive support and encouragement. Bathmaker & Avis (2005a) uncover such 'marginalisation' and relate it directly to the change forces prevalent in FE at that time. For communities of practice to operate successfully all participants need to feel valued and have time and space to contribute effectively. As colleges begin the process of restructuring in line with funding reduction and the associated economies of scale, so experienced staff may become demoralised and face job insecurity. Where this depressed narrative becomes prevalent newcomers may find the realities of working in FE different from their aspirations.

Bathmaker & Avis (2005a) summarise this effectively:

"The trainees appeared to be marginalised from the communities of practice that they encountered on their teaching placement. Not only did they face difficulties with access to the communities of practice with whom they expected to engage, but the cultures of the communities of practice which they experienced did not match their own imagined professional identities and served to alienate them, rather than encourage them to seek participation more fully" (p.60).

Clearly the FE sector is once again positioned within the early stages of significant change cycle brought about by political and economic dimensions and I have outlined these features earlier in this report. There is a great risk that as the sector shrinks and the threat of redundancy appears on the horizon, the highly significant social dynamics of communities of practice which benefit trainees and learning greatly are eroded as the psychology of participants focuses on team and self-preservation at the expense of others. Haslam, Reicher & Platow (2011) confirm *"we can see that the cumulative effect of*

shared social identity is to transform a disparate collection of people into a coherent social force.

Summary

This chapter has discussed three prevalent areas of research which are highly relevant to this study. The first explored the concept of identity providing a brief historical summary before outlining the work of a number of high profile psychologists. The social nature of the self was explored in order to provide a basic explanation of an influential concept within initial teacher training. Social identity was defined and linked to a theatrical performance related analogy. The reflexive context of modern society was highlighted as was the hidden and repressed self-protecting elements of the unconscious.

Professional discourse was then defined within the context of academic communities and its importance was explored in relation to a trainee teacher's ability to decipher and engage in authentic professional communication. The relevance of the situated context was highlighted as was the hierarchical and controlling nature of discourse linked to power and responsibility. Lastly its goal oriented and frame worked structure was defined and linked to a number of external constraining influences.

Finally the concept of communities of practice was explored; its significance to social learning and the notion of legitimate participation and learning trajectories were highlighted. Novice and expert roles were described together with aspects such as power, legitimacy and influence. Performative features and the

subsequent reduction in flexibility together with the importance of geographic location and the use of online and electronic technologies complete the chapter.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Rationale

This chapter will discuss the research methodology used in this study, identify the rationale behind the research strategy and confirm the specific research questions to be asked. It will explain the data collection methods involved and justify the ethical and sampling approaches taken. Methods used to analyse the data will be clarified and finally it will discuss factors affecting quality and the limitations of the research in terms of validity, reliability and researcher influence.

This study explores the professional discourses of beginner teachers working professionally within seven FE learning providers across Yorkshire and Humberside in 2011. It aims to raise understanding of how professional discourse within communities of practice impact on beginner teacher's notions of professionalism and self as they participate in situated professional development as part of their initial teacher training.

Specifically the research questions within this study are:

1. What are the current and predominant professional discourses of beginner teachers working within the FE sector
2. What factors are currently influencing beginner teacher's professional discourses within the FE sector

There is extensive research and academic theory surrounding the established concepts of professional discourse and communities of practice in education and this has been widely reviewed within the previous chapter. There is, however, more limited research which tests the concept of learning communities, professional discourses and change in the context of 'in-service' initial teacher training within FE and I believe this will emerge to become a valid focus of study as significant economic change forces envelop the sector over the next few years.

Initial teacher training relies heavily on the concept of social and situated learning, in-situ professional development and concepts of mentoring and supportive action. Beginning teachers are influenced by, and susceptible to, the eminent professional discourses circulating and surrounding professional practice during their training.

Discourse within professional practice is likely to be slanted towards what Fisher cited in Czamiawska (2004) terms "*narrative probability*" (p.10). It recognises that a stories credibility is enhanced by the presence of sound reasoned assertions and that such assertions provide a valid platform for socio-political critique. Within this context individuals create valid personal interpretations of public moral arguments, the greater the rationality of the discourse, the more significant the meaning making and reality for those involved.

Academic research on professionalism and the concept of communities of practice within FE initial teacher training has typically highlighted contradictions

between what Bathmaker & Avis (2005a) call “*official rhetoric ... and the experience of those working and studying in English further education*”, (p.61). They go on to suggest that such contradictions could provide a sound basis for the analysis of such discourses.

This research, although small in scale and limited by time and resources seeks to illuminate this concern and provide ‘food for thought’ for future research. It is designed to provide a better understanding of how professional discourses within socially situated learning practices and communities affect ‘in-service’ trainee teachers during times of educational change. In essence it seeks to understand how novice FE teachers construct professional identities and meaning when terms, conditions and working practices are shifting.

Research Strategy

The primary research for this study is inductive in nature and is epistemologically based within the constructionist interpretivist paradigm and the traditions of discourse analysis. This is what Bryman (2008) calls “*the empathic understanding of human action*” (p.15), and he goes on to assert that human action and interaction provide meaningful phenomena which are interpreted and acted upon. He also recognises the “*active role of individuals in the social construction of social reality*”. Cresswell (2002) recognises “*the importance of the participants view... and the meaning people personally held about educational issues*” (p.50).

Gee (1999) confirms that discourse analysis recognises the important connections between *“saying (informing), doing (action) and being (identity)”* (p.2). In other words to fully understand what is being said it is important to recognise who is speaking and what they are attempting to achieve. Rogers (2011) proposes that discourse incorporates, mirrors and builds the social world around us, its meaning is *“caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious and cultural formations which are linked to socially defined practices”* (p.1).

Discourse analysis as a research method has many nuances and clearly different approaches work well in different contexts. The descriptive method analyses the content of the language to understand its impact and how it works. Other approaches concentrate on the structural functions of the grammar used and are rooted in linguistic sciences.

This study will utilise a descriptive discourse analysis approach to examine what Gee (1999) calls *“the seven building tasks of language”*, (p.17-20) as spoken and constructed by the interview participants. These are:

1. *Significance – how is this language being used to make certain things significant or not?*
2. *Practices – what practice (activity) is this language being used to enact?*
3. *Identities – what identity is this language enacting or attributing to others and how does this help the speaker or writer enact their own identity?*
4. *Relationships – what sort of relationship or relationships is this language seeking to enact with others?*
5. *Politics – what perspective on social politics is this language communicating?*
6. *Connections – how does this language connect or disconnect things; how are things relevant to one another?*
7. *Signs, systems and knowledge – how does this language privilege or disprivilege specific systems (e.g. academic vs everyday language or different ways of knowing or claims to knowledge)?*

These building tasks are closely linked and coexist within the same terminology. Discourse analysis considers the language, context and meaning in order to generate hypotheses. If data analysis continues and further examples and similarities emerge from the data, confidence in the hypotheses increases. Denscombe (2007) defines this as “*data triangulation*” (p.136) where information gathered from different participants at different times is assimilated. Both verbal and non-verbal clues are also utilised to present rich and meaningful research data to help develop understanding of the topic in question.

In the specific context of this study the building tasks will be used to uncover the predominant discourses that surround, envelope and influence trainee teachers as they develop professionally in socially situated academic contexts. What are the significant spoken or written discourses and how does this contribute to learning and the nurturing of their academic identity? What significant relationships exist and how does this triangulate with the community of practice concepts which are so central and relevant to social learning? How is the social politics of academic communities interpreted and engaged with and how does language enable trainee teachers to identify and decipher the relevant connections systems and knowledge.

One of my key study aims is to capture rich and revealing information because unveiling what Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou (2008) define as “*different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning*” (p.1) provides an opportunity to investigate individuals and the ways in which they operate socially,

professionally and psychologically. Webster & Mertova (2007) highlight the importance of understanding *“issues such as complexity, multiplicity or perspectives and human centredness”* (p.31) and confirm the value of narratives in this respect.

It is important to note that the stories told are shaped by the listener so that intellectually dual interpretations will exist as the research findings and analysis is written to interpret the participants own interpretations. The way people talk, write, and discuss help build reality through social construction. As Plummer (2001) suggests narrative approaches attempt to gain *“enhanced understanding from the story”* (p.241). He recognises that sometimes participants may forget, become slightly confused, exaggerate or get things mixed up, but that it is the role of the researcher to *“examine the features of the narrative structure... to grasp its workings”*. Andrews, et al (2008) develop this point further and argue that *“there are multiple valid interpretations”* within narrative research

Ontologically constructivist in nature this study aims to highlight and examine how professional discourse impacts on trainee teachers completing either the two year ‘in-service’ PGCE or Cert Ed during the summer of 2011. Specifically it attempts to identify the current dominant professional discourses within the social and situated contexts of communities of practice and explore how participation with this discourse influences beginner teachers.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured qualitative interviews will be carried out with ten trainee teachers selected from PGCE and Cert Ed cohorts studying in FE colleges across Yorkshire and Humberside. Semi-structured one to one interviewing provides the opportunity to ask direct questions and engage with participants face to face. Denscombe (2007) confirms the popularity of this method and suggests its main advantages include its relative ease to arrange, ease of control and simplicity of transcription. My professional knowledge and experience working in the field of initial teacher training provides authentic insight that will be valuable in the reflexive context of a one to one interview situation.

The type, size and structure of this study provides me with the opportunity to explore an area of research which is somewhat known and experienced. This has the benefit of providing a sound footing for me to begin from, it also matches and is an authentic fit from which to attract, manage and maintain the interests of participants thus improving my chances of generating interesting and valuable findings.

A non-probability purposive approach will be used to construct the research sample. Strategically this is an important and pragmatic decision as it is important to balance the research aims with issues of relevance and variety. Purposive sampling limits the ability to generalise to a wider population but is not random and is not constructed by chance. Bryman (2008) suggests that purposive sampling enables participants and organisations to be identified and

selected because of their “*relevance to understanding a social phenomenon*” (p.415).

Within this study there are two layers of purposive sampling; firstly the selection of organisational contexts (i.e. the colleges) and secondly the identification of individual trainee teachers as research participants. Organisations were chosen based on geographic location and therefore travel time for myself as researcher. A travel time of no more than 90 minutes was identified as a key criteria, this enabled me to travel to the selected organisation, conduct two semi-structured interviews and return home in a single day. Limiting interviewing in a single day minimises fatigue and supports a focused and attentive interview, enhancing the experience and maximising the dialogue with each participant.

Individual participants were selected from within relevant initial teacher training cohorts on a voluntary basis, see Table 3.1. Broadly this was established to facilitate gender balance, curriculum diversity and exposure to sufficient teaching within the FE environment to enable sound and reasoned contributions to be made. These criteria, although statistically unsound, ensure that the sample was as broad as possible within the narrow context of such a small scale study.

Table3.1: Profile of trainee teachers interviewed

(* all participants given anonymity via letter/number code)

Code*	Gender	Hours taught per week	Age	Curriculum taught
N1	F	24	33	Public Services
N2	M	10	37	Performing Arts
S1	F	24	42	Business Administration
S2	M	24	27	Physical Education
E1	F	24	39	Beauty Therapy
E2	M	24	29	Sport
W1	M	24	28	Construction
W2	F	24	24	Travel & Tourism
C1	F	24	23	Agriculture
C2	F	24	28	Animal Management

All participants gave their fully “*informed consent*” (p.159) Cresswell (2002) to take part in this research and this process was conducted using the ethical practices and principles recommended by the British Educational Research Association. Due to the nature of this study it was necessary to provide both a written explanation (Research Information Sheet) of the research agreement and to also explain verbally using plain language immediately prior to the interview to make sure that they understood the ethical responsibilities in place. All participants individual and work location identities were protected.

Additional ethical considerations related to why the information was being collected, who the information is for and how it will be used. Issues related to data access and the right to review before publication was also included. Ethical procedures need to be clearly in place and in practice in the research process. Participants were given time to make an informed choice about consent. The nature of the research questions was also shared at consent stage with a simple definition of the topic being provided for each interviewee to review.

Individual recorded interviews explored the issues and impact on the real life experiences of these teachers. Interview questions were developed and refined prior to their use, Cresswell (2002) calls this “*pilot tested*” (p.402) and this helps to ensure the questions are understandable and that the phraseology and wording does not cause confusion.

This piloting process raised important concerns and led to both the wording of the questions being simplified and the criteria for selection of interview participants being adapted. The pilot interview participant only taught for two hours per week and subsequently they found some of the questions were difficult to interpret and the depth of response was limited for those they could answer. As a result of this it was decided to use plainer language within the interview and also to condition the selection of interview participants to those teaching ten hours plus per week. These changes had the desired effect with all interviews revealing interesting, complex and thoughtful insights.

All interviews were digitally recorded and prior permission for this to happen was requested within the research information sheet. When interviews took place the recorder was set up in full view of each participant and verbal re-confirmation was sought for the session to be taped and transcribed.

Framework for Data Analysis

All data was recorded and transcribed verbatim and returned to the participants for checking prior to analysis. The transcripts generated a total word count of 69761 words. Data received was read and examined to identify the terms and

phrases associated with the research questions. Two further approaches were used to analyse the data. Firstly the way participants construct meaning from the language used was explored. This is sometimes known as what Goodson (1997) terms "*the story of action within a story of content*" (p.115) and secondly frequencies of use of similar narrative were identified in order to draw wider conclusions.

A discourse analysis approach was used to interpret data and present key findings. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) define discourse analysis as "*the organisation of ordinary talk and everyday explanations and the social actions performed in them*" (p.298). Gee (2011) confirms there are numerous approaches to discourse analysis and that some "*concentrate on ideas, issues and themes as they are expressed in talk and writing*" (p.ix). The dominant stories that emerge were analysed and explained from both the individual participant's work life narratives as well the broader discourses linked to the development of trainee teachers and workplace change.

Discourse analysis is based within the constructionist paradigm; ontologically Bryman (2008) suggests this affirms the Goffmanian position that "*social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors*" (p.692) and that individual versions of social reality are recognised and depicted through language and communication. Central to this hypothesis is that discourse within communities of practice is both constructive and rhetorical. Constructive perspectives recognise discourse as a way of creating particular views of social reality and that individuals have choice and influence when presenting this. Rhetorical implications draw attention to the fact that discourse

provides the opportunity to create single versions of the world from multiple competing versions of reality.

Goodson (1997) confirms that *“it is therefore laudable that new narrative movements are concentrating on the teachers presentation of themselves”* (p.112). He recognises the importance of viewing the narratives and stories not in isolation, or from their own singular perspectives, but rather coupled with the *“political or micropolitical perspectives”* (p.111) of restructuring and performativity.

It is therefore fair to assume that discourse is not impartial and objective but rather what Bryman (2008) calls an *“action oriented”* (p.500) way of achieving things and creating meaning. Language is considered as a valid practice and is affected by the context that it is confronting.

Limitations and Issues of Research Quality

The major limitations impacting on this study concern issues of validity and reliability. These fundamental and important criteria can be likened to benchmarks or quality standards and they provide meaningful and measurable research norms by which to assess and judge the quality and relevance of research.

Qualitative research provides rich and detailed data and it is important to ensure what is measured and analysed is genuine and uncovers what was initially targeted for discovery. The traditional definitions of validity and reliability

present difficulties for qualitative research and the following passages clarify how this research interprets and complies with these important meanings.

It will be difficult to replicate the exact nature, time and context of this research and as such the external reliability of this methodology is weak. As this is a small-scale study I operate as a lone and individual researcher. This negates issues of standardisation and misinterpretation of data amongst and between different members of a research team.

It is important to recognise that as the researcher, I am socially and professionally positioned in close proximity to both the academic theory and working context of the participants in this study. I have over ten years' experience working as a Lecturer within the FE sector; I followed an identical model of initial teacher training and professional development; I am a qualified coach and mentor for new and trainee staff and currently teach and manage programmes of initial teacher training within my own organisation. This prolonged immersion within the context of the study provides significant insight and understanding, supporting strong internal validity.

External validity and the ability to generalise the findings of this research is problematic, this is due to the small sample size and general scale of the study. Cohen, et al (2000) state that it is important to "*provide a clear detailed and in-depth description*" (p.109) of the participants and settings so that other researchers can decide how the findings relate to other research situations. Caution should be taken when using personal narratives as a main source of data and I work on the basis that the consistencies uncovered between the

stories increases the validity of this research within the existing limitations already mentioned. In order to further validate this data it is collected at the end of an academic year giving participants time and space to develop deeper understandings and experiences professionally and academically.

The study will provide glimpses and hints about the issues described above and I believe these will be credible, trustworthy and authentic. Its strength lies within what Bryman (2008) recognises as more contemporary criteria for qualitative research. Yardley cited in Bryman (2008) proposes four such criteria, “*sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency & coherence and impact & importance*” (p.380). Although this framework was originally developed within the context of healthcare research, the natural symbiosis that exists between education and health make these criteria suitable for adaptation into educational research.

A final consideration relates to the sampling profile used in the study. All participants have volunteered to take part and this elective selection of active trainee teachers should be viewed with caution. Firstly what are the precise motivations of those volunteering, do they have something to say, do they have a specific agenda, or are they just interested in learning and perceive this research as an additional opportunity to engage in professional development?

Secondly they are still actively on programme and categories as trainees, it is reasonable to expect their experiences to be generally more positive. If they felt their course was poor or highly challenging they may have withdrawn from the

course and as a consequence not be available for interview within the remit of this study.

Summary

This chapter has presented the research methodology selected for this study. It states the research questions and confirms that the research is intended to illuminate the topic of professional discourse in relation to the development of beginner teacher's professional identity.

It shows that the study is small in scale and adopts an interpretive and qualitative approach using semi-structured interview and discourse analysis to collect and analyse data.

Interviews were conducted with ten participants currently undertaking the PGCE or Cert Ed in FE colleges across Yorkshire and Humberside.

Ethical issues were managed in line with the British Educational Research Association guidelines through the use of a research information sheet and participant informed consent form.

Finally it recognises that this research contains limitations in respect of validity and reliability although it does however offer a platform for future research of a more statistically valid nature.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter explores the key discourse themes emerging from the ten individual interviews with beginner teachers completing the 'in-service' route of the Certificate in Education or the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education during the summer of 2011. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews in order to aid flexibility and as Denscombe (2007) confirms "*let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on issues raised*" (p.176). All participants volunteered to take part after being alerted to the study via electronic communication channels. All participants received standardised research information and participant informed consent documentation to support what Cohen, et al (2000) recognise as "*competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension*" (p.51). The email information and invitation to participate was initially emailed to a professional network of teacher training lecturers working at six locations across Yorkshire and Humberside, these staff then cascaded the information directly to their PGCE and Cert Ed cohorts via email and/or electronic message portals and interested participants made contact with me directly via email. Interviews generally took place in or around the participant's place of work at mutually convenient times, in two instances this was time limited and occurred during a break in teaching. All interview conversations were recorded, transcribed and imported into QSR NVivo 9 for coding and analysis. Fielding and Lee as cited in Denzin & Lincoln (2011) recognise that "*qualitative researchers traditionally learn their craft in apprenticeship mode*" (p.633). As a relative newcomer to academic research

the training and development I received whilst on programme in respect of qualitative data analysis encouraged me to utilise bespoke analysis software for the first time. As Bryman (2008) highlights *“if you have a very small data set, it is probably not worth the time and trouble navigating you way around new software”* (p.567), however with the large amount of transcript data (69,761 words) and my intention to continue researching beyond the cessation of this academic programme it appeared to present an appropriate opportunity to enhance my skills and understanding.

Two major discourse themes have become apparent; between them these two narratives encapsulate the major cause of professional tension and anxiety for beginner teachers. The first is broadly titled ‘teaching and learning’ and this category incorporates coded material related to planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons and the interaction and liaison with students. The second key discourse is labelled ‘performativity’ and this includes material linked to commercial pressures, the increasing role of the tutor and the external pressures on the sector. These two titles are used as the initial sub headings immediately following this introduction within this chapter.

Two additional significant themes emerge which are not predominant discourses in their own right but rather highly influential mechanistic frameworks within which discourse transmits and circulates as each trainee teacher strives to make sense of their experiences and develop as a legitimate professional. These are ‘organisational hierarchy’ and ‘localised communities of practice’, both titles are equally analysed and form the latter sections of this chapter.

Each section begins with an exploration of the key topics and distinctive narratives, direct representative quotations from all interviewees are used to illuminate and enrich each section, this is followed by a comparative analysis and interpretation of significance and meaning. These extracts are diverse, authentic and recognisable as trainee 'language in action', basic grammar and formality is sometimes lost as individuals construct meaning through verbal response to the questions asked. The participants come from assorted backgrounds, some were graduates, others vocational practitioners with few qualifications and this greatly influenced both the comprehension and responses of each interviewee.

All interviewees volunteered to take part and none had any previous experience of participation in academic research. Procedurally no major issues occurred within any interview and although participants were inexperienced, each spoke authentically about their working discourses. The body language, eye contact and general behaviour of each interviewee was aligned to what was said. An initial period of anxiety was recognisable at the beginning of each interview and most participants repeated the initial question to create thinking time, although this ceased once the conversation developed and the interview gained momentum.

A final chapter summary will re-cap and draw together the key findings.

Teaching and Learning

In line with the trainee teacher context of this study, teaching and learning is a central theme for discussion and debate for all participants. The process of 'becoming' a teacher in the FE sector requires the satisfactory completion of both academic study and what is known as 'in-service' work experience. This work differs significantly in line with the diverse dynamics of each learning institution and the specific needs of both the curriculum presented and the learner groups taught.

Face to face contact with learners can take many forms and is typically made up of whole class teaching, individual and group tutorials (progress tracking combined with other elements of hidden curriculum delivery), assignment workshops and study skills sessions. In some cases team teaching may occur where larger groups are taught in partnership with another tutor.

When asked what they predominantly talk about at work the trainees confirmed their engagement in regular conversations about their professional practice and how they can improve it:

"What do I talk about professionally? About the course structure, we have meetings, we talk about how we are going to deliver the lessons, we talk about our assessment when we're marking, we ask for each other's' advice, you know, where the students have got, what grades, you know if we think we agree with each other. What else do we talk about professionally, anything to do with the course really" (W2)

"What can we do to improve ourselves even more with our teaching skills? Is there any new ways that we can look at?" (C1)

"I can hold my hand up and say that I have taught a lot of rubbish lessons this year, and I think it's because, one, I got dropped in the

deep end and I hadn't a clue what was happening and what was going on, two, my lack of experience and knowledge, but I've come out knowing and thinking, "Right, that can't happen again," and I very much don't think that things have happened twice. I've tried to alter them wherever possible" (C2)

"We discuss a lot in regards to the curriculum and how we can develop it for the learners, how the learners are doing on individual courses and how we can look at improving what we do ever" (S2)

"I think everyone's aiming to improve what we deliver, keep it up to date" (S2)

It is evident that each participant has developed both their classroom practice and their organisational presence and confidence significantly since starting their course.

"I've had very mixed experiences with students, I think every lecturer probably does. My Level 3s I seem to have got on with really well. I set out from the start this is what I wanted, this is what I was going to get, they were brand new to college, I was brand new to college, and it's worked very well. I taught Level 3, year 2, and it went down like a ton of bricks. They didn't like me at all. They walked out of my class, they swore at my face, told me I was an awful lecturer. I probably wasn't confident enough when I went in originally. I was in with 2nd years, some of them were 19/20, I think they thought I was a little bit nervous, and I think, for the first week, they probably ran the lesson more than I ever did. And, after that, they thought, "Well, why should we bother?" and when I sort of found my own feet and thought, "Hang on a minute, this can't happen," they didn't like it very much. However, I did change that. (C2)

"I don't think I understood how difficult it would be. And, you know, I think students – you've got to, kind of, have a way, haven't you? Well, I found that you need to have a way to, kind of, win them over in a sense. Once you've done that – not win them over, but it's building trust, I think; it's building a rapport. And they need to build up that professional relationship with you. And I struggled with that at the beginning. Well I think because I was taking over from a very experienced teacher who was going on maternity leave, the group had been informed I was a new teacher, which I don't think that helped me, so they really tried to push the boundaries. And on many occasions at the end of the day I would be in the staff room crying, 'I don't know what I've done, why have I done this?' But my manager was very supportive and, you know, said, 'You've done the right thing. Don't let the students get to you.' And that's when I found it

really helpful, because everybody was saying they felt the same when they first came into teaching and everybody shared different experiences” (E1)

A key realisation in this process is gaining the confidence to plan delivery in a flexible way; new tutors often spend a disproportionately large amount of time planning sessions and as a consequence stick rigidly to their own planned agendas rather than relaxing slightly and incorporating a more learner led approach:

“I’ve actually understood the whole aspect of, you know, how I communicate as well to students, that I need to allow for flexibility, whereas I wasn’t doing that at the beginning. It was almost, like, ‘This is my lesson plan, this is what I have to do today, and no matter what happens I will do this.’ And I wasn’t listening to students. I wasn’t being aware of students’ needs. I wasn’t being aware of the classroom dynamics. It was almost a bit of paper that I was following, whereas I’ve developed now and I think that can only come with confidence, though, that you develop. And I am comfortable in what I’m doing now; I’m confident in what I’m doing. So I think the students are probably the same, but I’m able – I don’t take it personally. I think I took things too personally before” (E1)

“I think we’re too focused on what we’re delivering rather than the learners themselves. We’re too focused on how we’re delivering, what we’re delivering, as opposed to the learners, are they actually engaging in what we’re delivering” (E2)

Other regular communicative events highlighted by participants are linked to progress tracking, resources building and standardisation:

“Schemes of work, lesson planning, lesson reflection, talk about how the progression of the scheme’s work is going, so in terms of are we up to date, are we keeping up to things” (C1)

“Although we have all our schemes of work in place, lesson plans and everything, they have to be working documents and adaptable really, because what you can plan to do one day can just totally go

out of the window. Because you may get a student that comes in who's having a really bad time, needs extra support with something" (E1)

"It's really developing our resources in terms of making things more interactive, more student friendly, and resources that will meet the EKA points that we need to meet on City & Guilds standard really" (E1)

"We all teach the basic courses and obviously we have regular meetings to see what's doing what. And we sit down with the books and see the marking and we're all correctly marking the same way"

Participants also highlighted the challenge that dealing face to face with FE learners provides new or inexperienced teachers:

"Behaviour is a big issue; we tend to talk about how people deal with different things; what the expectations are in terms of teachers, in terms of students; why students behave the way they do. I don't know it is more of a social discussion that ends up into a work discussion and a professional discussion" (N1)

"That's the worst thing about the job, and that's the one thing that I've found really hard. As I say, I'm quite a fast learner and with regards to the teaching and the planning and the preparing, love it. The worst thing is the students who just... I think it's the fact that they don't want to be there, so they don't understand it, they don't put the effort in. You'll give them a feedback sheet which you've spent 20 minutes writing and they've not read their actions so they hand it in with one done, and it's just backwards and forwards. But again, that's, for me, again that was a learning curve in that the first term was the worst, second term got a bit better, third term even better. There's ways, I think myself, that I could have made that easier" (W2)

"I've realised you've got to isolate the incident, maybe take it out of the classroom, so they haven't got their peers to think they've got to show off in front of. Or, also, these have just been implemented, it's a student code of conduct, and we refer to them. It takes me out of it. 'Look, I'm not having a go at you, it's not me personally. This college, these are the rules, this is what you've got to apply to. So I can't really move on that. That's what you've got to do.' I'm finding out that works a lot better" (W1)

Teaching and learning is the main focus of all trainees who are engaged in the development of their classroom practice and becoming qualified via completion

of their PGCE or Cert Ed. Although they have some autonomy within this framework it is clear the specific situational and social contexts individuals find themselves within has significant influence. An interesting notion to consider is that of what constitutes good professional practice? Does good practice look and feel the same in all contexts or is it variable in relation to the teacher, learners, environment etc.

The trainees interviewed present as highly committed to teaching and learning and the ambition to develop their personal practice to become 'good professionals' is clear. They are caring individuals who, as well as developing individually as professionals, are developing team and organisational identities. The typical language used evidences and incorporates strong notions of group identity, the term 'we' appears consistently and this signifies that trainees are in fact highly embedded from both a physical, proximate and psychological perspective within staff teams.

Hodkinson, as quoted in Avis, et al (2010) recognises the wide range of 'conditions' impacting on learning; these include learner attitudes, tutor attitudes, resources, syllabus, the interrelationships between individuals, managerial influences and social, vocational and academic cultures. A teachers practice and agency will be determined by these contexts. Coffield & Edward (2009) highlight that "*professionals do not decide what constitutes good practice on their own*" (p.387). This group notion and open-ended approach to good practice aligns with teaching and reflective cycles where learning experiences are evaluated and reflected upon. These reflections then inform future planning

and so the process continues in an endless cyclical process of improving performance.

Forde, et al (2009) recognise there is strong evidence that collaborative working and discussion on reflection has a widespread professional benefit to those that take part. It allows 'supportive action' to be developed both at an individual and collegiate level and this confirms the importance of changing practice beyond the individual practitioner.

Performativity

The commercialisation of further education not a new phenomenon as it has been a feature of the FE landscape for thirty years. It sits centrally within a broader context defined as 'performativity'. Ball (2003) explains how "the performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of quality, or moments of promotion or inspection" (p.216). Performativity is widely explored within FE, see (Orr, 2009; Simmons & Thompson, 2008).

For new trainees and inexperienced teachers the realisation that education is subject to what they perceive as broad commercial and economic pressures are a shock and a disappointment:

"I suppose moving into education I thought it was different, I didn't think education was as much about a business as what it was and I think that is the shock I have had maybe that now it is having to be run as much more of a business and there is a lot of different expectations on organisations, on teachers, on managers, on what to do and how to do it and I think having come from that background

and thinking I was coming into something that was different, maybe that has been a bit of a shock to find out that actually it is not any different and we do need to be run like that” (N1)

This target driven focus is part of a cyclical and chronological process which begins at the start of each academic year. Initially student recruitment targets are negotiated and established which compound towards a potential income for the organisation:

“It’s been a major push to get students in, bums on seats” (W2)

“We are going through all the interview process and have been doing for months and the formal college message is that we need bums on seats and we need as many as possible because otherwise we are not going to make any money” (N1)

Clearly recruiting high numbers of learners provides what financially are known as ‘economies of scale’ and this ensures that course programmes remain financial ‘cash cows’ for academic institutions. Once recruited a secondary pressure emerges which places retention and holding onto the students as the priority:

“When you have got a group of students for example that some of which are struggling but you have kind of passed that magic six week marker and there are still six months of the year left but if you let them go or withdraw them then it is going to affect the figures and it is that pressure of having to keep students or learners that you wouldn’t necessarily keep had it not been drilled into you that if we lose them it affects the retention and achievement and it affects the figures and it affects the overall school and the college and everything. I think that is a massive pressure, having to keep students that either aren’t interested in being here, aren’t towing the line or doing their work and I find our hands are tied quite a lot” (N1)

The final element of the cyclical, economics driven agenda occurs towards the end of the academic year and prioritises achievement and success. Teachers engage in formal and informal communication within organisations in order to maximise achievement:

“Yes, you want your student to complete, that’s the end goal, that’s why we’re here to make sure that they complete, and to make sure that they’ve covered absolutely everything that they need to. So, I think, we quite often have like staff... regular staff meetings to make sure that we’re up-to-date with everything in the years with the lecturers and the other managers and course tutors and things like that to make sure that we are making the students’ progress” (C2)

“Achievement is massive. You know, if they’ve done their Health and Safety test twice and they’ve failed it, they’ve got to do it again and they’ve got to pass and we’ve got to give them more tuition... but in my eyes if they’re not capable of passing the second and third and they keep going, and there’s only so much tuition... I mean you can take a horse to water but you can’t make them... You know?” (C1)

“We’ve had to drag them in for three weeks solid now. We’ve got them through and we haven’t spoon-fed them, but they’ve then got our one on one attention which is not necessarily fair for those who haven’t been able to get it. And they’re through, which, you know, fair enough, they’ve put the work in, but I think that’s why it gets stupid, I think, at the end of the day.(N2)

“It’s my integrity as an assessor; I will not sign it off if he’s not doing it to the standard. But, then – so you’ve got to work harder, you’ve got to plan stuff, you’ve got to support them more, to see if you can get them through in a short space of time, basically” (W1)

The pressure to hit targets and ensure a high percentage of recruited students achieve their qualification is a significant and continual operational discourse and topic for most trainees. The target driven cultures are driven from two distinct agendas. *The Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills*, Ofsted (2010) was established by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HCMI) to meet the requirements of the Education and Inspection Act 2006, it

sets out the principles inspection for FE and skills based education detailed in part 8 of the Act.

The inspection framework is a complex procedure which incorporates data analysis, live lesson observations and specific interviews with all stakeholders including staff, learners, managers and governors. It aims to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of educational provision and outcomes are categorised by the use of common four stage grading terminology (Outstanding; Good; Satisfactory & Inadequate) and five segmented elements (Overall Effectiveness; Capacity to Improve, Outcomes for Learners; Quality of Provision; Leadership and Management).

The 'Outcomes for Learners' grade is based on evaluative judgements from a range of performance indicators, the first and most significant of which is 'learner's attainment of learning goals'.

The second target driven agenda is the *Young Peoples Learning Agency Funding Regulations*, YPLA (2011) this determines the national funding methodology in line with the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and learning Act 2009. In basic terms funding is provided based on standard learner numbers (SLN) at rates that reflect appropriate costs for delivery and enrolment on authentic learning programmes which do not duplicate qualifications.

Funding payments are made to learning providers on a monthly basis and these are calculated by totalling the number of SLN on programme at the given census point each month, once an enrolled learner leaves a programme or

withdraws before completion they no longer count for inclusion in the SLN payment calculation and so typically over time funding payments reduce.

Another way of increasing income within the regulated funding regime is to enrol learners on additional small qualifications which complement their main programme of study. Typically these are functional skills awards (Numeracy, Literacy and IT) however other short courses are also evident and these cause frustration for trainees:

“I know they’re funded. I know that’s why we do them, because they’re funded. And I know, yes, they do benefit the students, but I actually think they have a demotivating effect on them because, you know, “Well we did all this at school, we haven’t come to college to do this,” but the college gets money to do that. And I’m pretty sure it’s the same in other organisations” (C1)

Maximising achievement and inspiring learners to attend, contribute and submit work to deadline is not just a managerial concern but a core responsibility of all teachers. Trainees are aware of this professional responsibility but it is a cause of tension:

“It is very difficult and you’ve kind of got to think about professional ethics but you’ve also got to think the value of that student getting through to the organisation... we have regular meetings with our manager who’s talking to us about success rates and the importance of getting students through. Really whatever it takes to get your student through, you’ve got... you know, a student A is worth £4,000 to the college, so ten students that don’t succeed in our department is £40,000 off what we could be potentially earning. So it’s massive, there’s a big drive” (S1)

Many vocational courses allow flexibility in assessment methodology and do not rely on examinations or formal tests to gauge understanding. Continual assessment frameworks and the building of evidence portfolios are common mechanisms for ascertaining ability and judging whether a learner has

completed a programme of study and passed all required elements. These summative decisions are sometimes challenging and are certainly easier to make with experience.

From a more emotional perspective it is clear to see how tensions can evolve for teachers when asked to provide what is often seen as extraordinary levels of support to enable learners who have, for the majority of the academic year, been positioned beyond the reach of the traditional group dynamics and learning opportunities on offer. The tutor has built a position of leadership within the group, they have engaged with committed and well organised individual learners who contribute to the social maintenance of the group, comply with all ground rules, submit work in line with expectation and achieve; it is then hard to accept that the same rewards and long term benefits can be gained by some who do not respect the group norms and show the same dedication and work ethic.

This feeling is based around the concepts of integrity, fairness and respect; components which are at the heart of effective group dynamics. Haslam, et al (2011) quoting the work of Cartwright and Zander (1960) confirm that group maintenance and goal achievement are two primary functions of leadership, and that “maintenance of positive intra-group relations and the assurance that all group members and sub groups (e.g. minorities) are treated in an impartial manner” (p.114) are key to successful group cohesion and performance.

Very often managers are removed from direct contact with learner groups and do not have the opportunity to build individual relationships with learners. Their

role priorities are more strategic and involve judging organisational effectiveness from a data driven perspective. Decisions are taken based on numeric evidence in respect of targets and financial performance and this approach often comes into conflict with the more humanistic and emotional perspective of teachers.

These different perspectives are both essential for the effective operation and management of academic institutions, the tutors individualised contact and interaction within learner groups are central to the provision of effective learning experiences; the manager's strategic performance monitoring of such provision is also critical to meet the demands of the increasingly prescriptive funding dynamics and inspection regimes. A key challenge is to raise awareness, understanding and build confidence across both parties, indeed it may be enlightening for a managers role to incorporate a small proportion of teaching and for tutors to engage in CPD which clearly and defines the wider financial dynamics and funding implications for the organisation.

The realisation that educational decisions are influenced by performative and commercial influences is clearly a challenge for trainees. Their often idealised notion of teacher professionalism comes under threat from what they perceive to be managerial pressures, combined with what Bathmaker & Avis (2005b) found was very often their own past experience of education.

"I also base it on my own experience of college and school and also my own expectations of what my work ethic was like when I was a student or a teenager compared to what this generation seems to be like and although I am not particularly old I still see that there is a massive gap, a massive difference in how students respond to things and what their expectations are from them and of them" (N1)

The changing context of the FE sector and challenges to democratic professionalism and trust are widely explored. Ball (2003) recognises that performative technologies “leave no space of an autonomous or collective ethical self... and have profound consequences for the inner-life of the teacher” (p226). Avis (2003) highlights the significance of trust and autonomy within professionalism, he likens evolving concepts of teacher professionalism as ‘trusted servants’ rather than empowered professionals.

Sachs (2001) concludes by suggesting that “managerialist discourses give rise to an entrepreneurial identity in which the market and issues of accountability, economy, efficiency and effectiveness shape how teachers construct their professional identities” (p.159). It is clear given the current financial deficit and public sector spending reduction teachers will continue to be asked to operate within a performative model of education that requires compliance and operational extrapolation of data to justify provision, quality and learning.

Localised Communities of Practice

As previously discussed, the in-service trainees participating in this research operate within a variety of differing professional and vocational contexts, although their learning trajectories can be broadly viewed as inbound, it is clear that all recognise and value their developing relationships with close colleagues. These localised communities of practice provide a significant range of support, reassurance and inspiration for trainees. A key element which is central to this cohesive and social framework is that of proximity. A trainee explains how a simple change of staffroom can have such significance:

“When I first started, we were put in the technicians’ office because, one, there wasn’t any space and, two, they thought it would be beneficial because they were... we were doing a lot of practical teaching. And it was really good because they had lots of animal knowledge, but I’d never taught before, so I had no teaching knowledge. And I found that really difficult because people would say things and, I mean, somebody asked me for a scheme of work and I was like, “But what do you mean? What’s that? What do you need that for?” and, as soon as I stepped up and into an office surrounded by... one of the ladies has been there, teaching for 10 years, 20, I think. We’re in now offices... everybody upstairs and I talk to people constantly about work, about the students, about schemes of work, about reflection, and it has made a mountain of difference” (C2)

Many interviewees highlight the importance of working in a staffroom environment rather than individualised offices:

“Because we always end the day upstairs just, kind of, evaluating your lessons and everything. And I think because everybody is up there it’s quite close knit up in the staff room” (E1)

“What I have found is that it is particularly good if and when you need to sound off about something, which when you need to vent something if you have had a bad day, going into the staffroom or whatever and just being able to go ‘aaahhh’ at somebody and they understand, is a big benefit. And I think sharing, a good practice in sharing information and knowledge and again I am quite lucky with that in our staffroom because people are very helpful and knowledgeable and have a lot of experience and have been in the organisation a fairly long time” (W1)

This close-nit approach facilitates a culture of teamwork, sharing and support for one another which is immensely valuable for trainees:

“Well because we’re doing this teacher tool kit we’re having – every six weeks we have a meeting on this so everybody uses different tools out of the book, and then we write up how it went, what we used; we’re building up a bank, really, at work to put all these resources in, and just see how we can use them across the board” (E1)

“I think it’s just a culture that we have in our office because we’re such close knit and it’s very difficult not to share your feelings. If you come out of a classroom quite upset there’s generally somebody there you can go and get it off your chest with, and you’re not necessarily then talking to your manager about it who might think, “Hmm.” Well, you know, it depends on the week and what’s going off. Some weeks are busier than others. But generally towards the end of the day, and because there’s that many in our office and we know each other fairly well. They can say, “Are you alright?” And you know. And they wouldn’t say that if they didn’t want to listen to you” (S1)

“Within the department, even though there’s some of us that have been there maybe ten years, some that have been there two years, we’ve all got the same qualifications, we all listen to each other, and it’s like nowhere else I’ve ever worked in terms of nobody believes that they are better, highly qualified, more skilled. Everybody’s willing to give somebody else a chance, or a try, or let’s give that a go today. Again, unlike anywhere else I’ve ever worked” (E2)

It is also clear that beginners are accepted socially and become increasingly involved and engaged in the topics that flow around the staffroom, age and experience do not appear to inhibit social acceptance within teams:

“At first you kind of sit back and think, “Right, what are they talking about? What do they usually do?” but then again, as it’s progressed, I now offer my own ideas and things like that” (W2)

“We’re quite close, we’re quite... I’ve become quite comfortable within the team, I have open conversations” (W2)

“Generally older people aren’t as up to date with the new stuff, so we can help them as far as technology and what learners are getting up to today and what they enjoy doing, and they can help us with experience with, like, controlling situations and, like, planning and delivering and stuff” (W1)

Confidentiality is another social norm within groups which help build relationships and establish clear team approach:

“There’s sort of an unwritten rule in our office that what’s discussed wouldn’t go to any of the managers unless we thought it was at the risk of somebody’s health or something. I think it’s very sort of, you don’t have to say don’t repeat it, it’s kind of given that we wouldn’t as professionalism to each other really. The organisation doesn’t even really figure in that, I don’t think it’s an organisation thing it’s just how we’ve formed in our...” (S1)

“We’re quite an open team in that respect. There’s nothing where I’ve felt, “Ooh I can’t say that” at all really” (W2)

There is strong evidence that all trainees experience positive benefits from their legitimate participation in academic communities of practice. These relationships have obviously developed over time, the research occurred at the end of the academic year and so it is not unusual for new trainees to be inducted and established within effective teams. It is clear that traditional linear ‘newcomer’ to ‘old timer’ pathways are not visible within this study. This further develops and confirms the findings of Fuller & Unwin (2004).

Lave & Wenger (1991) highlight three main conditions for effective communities of practice, shared repertoire, mutual endeavour and expert novice interaction. All three conditions appear centrally within the narrative accounts of the trainees in this study. Much of this activity is centred on the continuous attempts to continually improve and develop teaching and learning for the benefit of both staff and students. The drive to pursue these collaborative activities appears to come from both experienced staff and trainees.

Whilst managers receive considerable praise and complements within many transcripts it is clear they are not centrally located within the academic communities described. The reasons for this are not explicit but a number of

factors should be considered. Hierarchical positioning restricts the teaching roles of most managers, teaching is the fundamental collaborative activity with numerous teachers working cooperatively to teach multiple subjects to course groups. The practice of actually teaching becomes the pre-eminent legitimating factor that bonds and binds groups as communities.

As Coffield (2008) asks *“can we have a learning organisation, the leader of which exempts himself or herself from the main form of learning taking place in the organisation”* (p.63). The current answer to the question currently is yes in many cases, if managers could or would deploy themselves to teach, even for an hour or two per week it would have a significant impact on how they are perceived, such an initiative would certainly break down many of the barriers to legitimate participation.

It is encouraging to uncover evidence of strong and stable communities of practice, even though these are small and localised it is clear that the central goal of many of the discourses relate to the continual improvement of classroom practice. This shared and collaborative approach to professional development is occurring at a time when commercial pressures and financial accountability are increasing their grip on the sector.

There is little evidence to conclude that trainees are adversely affected by what might be termed the ‘defensive’ or ‘restrictive’ strategies of other established teachers fearful of redundancy or job insecurity. This must be directly related to the ‘in-service’ employed nature of their roles as previous academic research

such as Bathmaker & Avis (2005a) highlights the 'marginalised' feelings of pre-service trainees in similar circumstances.

Organisational Hierarchy

The shape, size and culture of learning organisations differs greatly, each has developed its own hierarchical structure and systems to support its functions. Typically this is based on the division of curriculum into similar or complimentary departments; these are managed by full time departmental heads with the support of others in curriculum or course leadership roles, often these staff have dual roles and are required to teach proportionately as part of their contract. Lecturing staff, who are employed under a variety of contractual arrangements, operate under this system of supervision.

Although the size and geographic footprint of each learning provider is an important factor, the most significant issue is the managerial culture they are immediately surrounded by. Trainees appear desperate to engage in face to face direct communication, the availability of this has an enormous impact on the discourse and communicative systems in use:

“Managerial people where I work are very supportive. They’ve got, like, an open door policy. There’s always some – if you’re having a bit of a hard time, there’s always somebody there that you can go and ask for some help. I would say it’s very informal hierarchy, kind of – you know who is the boss, but you still sit and have lunch together and chats and what have you, which I like that” (E1)

“We do have staff meetings. We have a whole college meeting fortnightly and a department one fortnightly. But, I like things face to face personally, but I understand everything needs to be recorded a lot of the time, so that’s why emails are so probably important. As I

said, I'm not shy to go and ask either, so I do go and do a lot of, "What's this, what's that?" (C2)

"Email is probably used too much to be honest. However with my colleagues within my department I do try to always have the face to face discussions first without the emails. And I have an approachable boss and curriculum leader, which I have built a good relationship up with so I find that quite easy. But I do also find that sometimes having the emails, the written word is also quite important" (N1)

"The biggest communication we use is through electronic, through email. Unfortunately, even when that same manager is sat down the bottom end of a building, he will still electronically send information on whatever, which is a massive problem with us because he could just give us a chat" (E2)

Trainees value the opportunity to attend meetings and engage in team discussions about areas of concern. These exchanges are an important learning and development opportunity for each trainee:

"We have lots of standardisation meetings where we all get together as a team, just to ensure that we're all working within the same remit. And then other meetings are maybe things to, kind of, professionally develop, so there may be training events etc" (E2)

"Well, we just have regular staff meetings, team building meetings. And everybody's, you know, voice and opinion is listened to really, so everybody is involved in key aspects of helping the organisation move on" (E1)

Sometimes tensions do exist when organisational meetings and communication are dominated by managerial and organisational demands rather than the needs of the curriculum:

"I know certainly on the FE there might be more issues surrounding the curriculum in terms of students failing or passing and their situations, so there is more of that, but ostensibly those targeted meetings are really organisational. I mean it needs to be done, it has to be done, but in some ways maybe some of those things, some of those sort of logistical issues sometimes take precedence over more

curriculum based issues that perhaps could be talked about in those terms. (N2)

“Management are still expecting to be delivering what we were when we were full-time, well they were originally, I think they’re starting to come round to the fact that, considering we’re meant to be a department of a manager and 11 staff and we’re down to a manager and 6 at the moment, and they’ve come to realise that those 6 can’t do 80 hours a week. So I think they’re starting to come round to that, but originally they were expecting us to be still carrying on delivering the same hours” (S2)

“I wouldn’t say they always listen to you, even though they’ve experienced the same problems that we face, and I’d say that’s a frustrating thing, the fact that they’ve experienced the problems that we face but they faced them five or six years ago and nothing’s still been done about the same problems that keep reoccurring” (S2)

Although trainees are predominantly occupied with developing their classroom practice, some have the ambition to learn more about the wider organisational contexts:

“But then when it comes more down to the organisation in terms of how it is structured and how it is run and the mechanics to it, that bit of it I feel I don't understand fully and that is the bit that frustrates me now because those are the bits that I want to understand as well because although my job is in the classroom and dealing with the students and making sure they are doing what they need to do, I also like to know how the organisation works, how things are funded and I don't always all the time understand all that. And in my previous career I was very much involved and in tune with that and understood everything” (N1)

The reliance on electronic forms of communication is an accepted and ever present feature of modern organisations, the further education sector is no exception and this is the most common form of written communication experienced by trainees:

“If you’re not good with emails, well you’ll just fall behind” (C1)

“I don’t think you could work for this organisation without having a basic knowledge of how to open your emails” (S1)

“We contact people by e-mails, which drives me mad a little bit when someone is sat in the next room and they e-mail you asking a... but that’s the way forward, I suppose” (E1)

“Well, if we’re sent an email and we’re asked to do something then it’s important that we act on that, perhaps without that email then perhaps we might let something slide for a couple of weeks and it’ll be something else, so once we’ve had an email from our manager, it’s something that we generally perhaps should have done a few days earlier, and she’ll just send a polite email chasing it up and then you think, right I’d better do that now” (S1)

Although email is an efficient and direct form of communication it does cause trainees some concerns:

“I think some people don’t always either say or write what they mean and messages can be misconstrued, certainly in emails. I think the tone of emails and how they are written sometimes can be misconstrued and annoy or frustrate people” (N1)

“Certainly I’m always worried on emails about the tone, because often you can send an email, and unless you put a smiley face which isn’t very professional. People don’t necessarily know. They can take things the wrong way unless you’re face-to-face. And sometimes you’re going ooh, I’d rather do this face-to-face and so you’re waiting for a moment and so these things slightly get put off” (N2)

“I think e-mails are crucial. From me, personally, from my point of it, it’s a way of covering yourself as well. You can cc in your managers and deputy managers into it, so you’ve done your part as far as ... What I learnt from when I first come, I am pretty old school. I like speaking to people face to face. If they’re only down the corridor, rather than e-mailing them I’d go and speak to them. And what I found is they’d say, ‘Is that being done?’ And I said, ‘You didn’t ask me to do that.’ They go, ‘I came to you, I saw you the other day.’ I said, ‘I can’t remember that.’ So I found out now a way of covering your back is if you actually e-mail them and then cc their managers into it” (W1)

Whether trainees are employed by large or small organisations it appears they only engage in professional discourse with their immediate colleagues. Few trainees actively engage with staff from other

departments or geographic locations. Clearly this is a practical and understandable tendency as their initial teaching responsibilities will be relatively narrow and contained.

Organisations large and small utilise electronic communication on a regular basis and email is the most common form of written communication in use. Avis, et al (2010) highlight the use of email as a teaching tool, *“email can also have a pedagogical role, for example in supporting tutorials and group work”* (p.158), there is also an expectation that trainees are familiar with and can efficiently use electronic and web based technology.

Trainees highlight the reliance on email as a primary communication mechanism, although this is a mixed blessing. Primarily the quantity of emails can be overwhelming; finding a suitable strategy to read and react to email requires diligence and routine. It is easy to imagine a circumstance where a trainee experiences a lapse in checking emails, in some organisations many tens or even hundreds of messages could stack in the inbox and prove impossible to manage, subsequent procrastination would compound the problem and result in significant levels of workplace stress and anxiety developing.

On a positive note, trainees recognise the positive benefits the email audit trail provides. Often they describe it as protective and describe it as ‘covering their back’.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will summarise the key findings of this thesis investigating professional discourse and its impact on trainee teachers working in the FE sector. I will review the original research questions and explore how the findings offer a contribution to new knowledge in relation to the existing academic literature. I will also reflect on how this study might shape future academic research on this subject.

Study Aims and Research Questions

This study aimed to critically analyse and interpret the professional discourses impacting on ten trainee teachers working within the further education sector in England. It identified what the trainees defined as the predominant discourses impacting upon their working life and explored the factors influencing such discourses.

Specifically the research questions were as follows:

1. What are the current and predominant professional discourses of beginner teachers working in the FE sector?
2. What factors are currently influencing beginner teacher's professional discourses within the FE sector?

Methodology

This study utilised ten semi-structured interviews with trainee teachers working in diverse FE teaching establishments across Yorkshire and Humberside, the interviews took place during the summer of 2011; all interviews were recorded and transcribed generating a total of 69,761 words. A discourse analysis approach was used to interpret the data and the qualitative data analysis package, NVivo 9, was used to categorise and code the data prior to interpretation.

The Relationship of the findings to the Research Questions

Trainee teachers within this study are attempting to develop and qualify as professional teachers and so it is not a revelation to find that teaching and learning discourses are central in their work. Trainees regularly engage and are eager to participate in conversations about the professional practise of teaching and learning. All the trainees in this study are enrolled on either the PGCE or Cert Ed, Initial Teacher Training qualifications and are following the in-service pathway in order to acquire professional status. Typically trainees come from a wide range of industrial and vocational backgrounds, although they are working towards gaining professional academic accreditation as a teacher their professional identity is subject to conflicting dualities; grounded heavily within their original professional context they are asked to cultivate a new academic identity and learn new models of expertise and behaviour. This requires engagement with new language and terminology, new skills and new

knowledge. This transition is challenging and it is clear to see why individuals engaged on such a journey seek collegiate support and guidance.

This study reveals that trainees are increasingly active and dynamic teachers who, over time, participate as full members of small, often localised communities of practice, this is what Wenger (1998) defines as legitimate participation. Barton & Trusting (2005) suggest that *“questions about whether an institution constitutes a community of practice ultimately impose artificial problems”* (p.96) as the boundaries imposed or in place within the given community may not mirror those of the institution. Trainees rely heavily on the close, personal relationships they have developed with more experienced teachers within their defined curriculum areas. They speak highly of the support, guidance and advice given to them by colleagues, often this occurs naturally due to the proximate nature of these relationships, sometimes the trainees seek advice and ask questions.

The trainees appear to be confident and sufficiently assertive becoming authentic and productive team members; some highlight their role in driving teaching developments and supporting academic quality improvement, others highlight how their industrial and commercial experiences have currency and relevance. The study findings also support the conclusions of Fuller & Unwin (2004) regarding the apprenticeship notions of ‘novice’ and ‘expert’, recognising *“the roles young people play in the workplace are more complex than the ‘novice’ concept implies... young people help older employees learn and vice versa as part of work groups”* (p.41). Younger people entering the workplace have skills and expertise that are in demand from older colleagues and vice

versa. The traditional notions of a one way flow of support with the expert helping the novice are out dated and simplistic. In addition organisations finding respectful ways of sharing knowledge and dialogue between colleagues will experience 'expansive' and collegiate cultures which facilitate many benefits to both the individuals involved and the organisation. Organisations where 'expansive' notions of learning exist are most likely to foster such activity as employees in 'restrictive' environments tend to be more guarded.

The in-service nature of the trainees has significant influence on their learning trajectories. At first many trainees found difficulty in understanding the discourses circulating through formal channels such as team meetings and written communication mediums such as e-mail. The use of technical professional language and the prevalence of abbreviations compounded what were already challenging situations. Initially trainees highlight their reticence at engaging in professional dialogue for fear of appearing naïve and inexperienced.

Over time, with the support of close colleagues this initial reluctance soon faded as trainees gained confidence and experience. These trainees were contracted formally to teach within their respective teaching and learning organisations, the everyday, permanent and routine nature of their role acted as a strong catalyst for collaborative and supportive action from others with the result that they soon became legitimate participants in the artisan communities of practice which existed. This contrasts with the findings of Bathmaker & Avis (2005a), their study involved pre-service trainees studying on a one year full time teacher

training programme, they described feeling marginalised, exploited and lacking status. Other findings suggest that their perception in FE teaching was problematic and that there was little motivation to improve teaching and learning, they describe lecturers as focused on avoiding change.

The findings of Bathmaker & Avis (2005a) show great disparity with the findings of this study as there is strong evidence of a progressive and continually improving dialogue which underpins much teaching and learning. This is often achieved in a collegiate and collaborative way, trainees develop and share teaching resources, debate issues of quality and explore standardised approaches to classroom practice, assessment and verification. There is generally a supportive and collegiate culture.

A second and equally significant discourse can be most simply defined as performativity. The FE sector has regularly been subjected to structural and strategic change forces typically driven by political and economic factors. These change forces have become progressively pervasive and constraining for teachers who have experienced an eroding of their independence, creativity and intrinsic notions of professionalism, see (Simmons & Thompson, 2008). This constant tinkering and intervention has burdened the sector with a range of prescriptive and commercial bureaucracies which have come to be generally defined as 'performativity'. In simplistic terms performative features are part of a regulative framework which requires organisations and individuals to align themselves with performance indicators, targets and evaluative judgements linked to calculated outputs, see (Ball, 2003).

The key performative discourses and pressures which surround FE teachers revolve around hitting key targets and ensuring high numbers of learners successfully complete their respective qualifications. The realisation that performative pressures heavily influence FE is a clear shock and challenge for some trainees. Some highlight the challenges that dealing with FE learners can cause, predominantly this manifests as behavioural issues in the classroom and it is clear that the trainee's professional boundaries are pushed to the limit by some. Initial frustrations do fade as trainees develop their classroom practice and organisational presence with the help of more experienced colleagues.

A continual and formal dialogue between staff and managers relates to ensuring achievement is maximised; this often requires extraordinary levels of additional support for some learners causing trainees to question the morality, fairness and equity of such approaches. Many findings match those uncovered by Wallace (2002), she analysed the diary accounts of intending lecturers teaching on Level 2 and 3 college programmes. She highlights the trainees desire to teach willing students and their expectation that most students would be capable of the level of work demanded.

The study reveals that trainees experience, and are subjected to, mixed managerial practices and procedures. Some managers operate in an open and supportive way finding time to discuss issues and contribute to problem solving as and when the need arises, trainees often refer to this as an 'open door policy'. Other managers operate at distance and rely more heavily on electronic communication to engage in professional dialogue and cascade information. Lucas & Unwin (2009) confirm that "*college managers need to conceptualise*

learning as something that is central to the practices of their employees as much as it is for their students” (p.432). All trainees prefer and desire face to face communication with colleagues and managers. However it would be unfair to suggest that the trainees are critical of electronic communication per se, most recognise its benefits and value the audit trail of information it provides, indeed the ability to effectively utilise electronic communication methods appears to be a fundamental skill required by all trainees.

Significant features of language include the collaborative and developmental agency of staff teams. Consistent references to ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ indicate authentic group formation and participation. Such teams are seeking to continually improve and design new and more innovative teaching and learning interactions. This includes supportive and caring interaction, resource building and the sharing of practice. Other significant discourses prioritise the performative nature of education and the importance of meeting targets and ensuring learners succeed on their chosen programmes. This primarily managerial language is a source of some concern and moral conflict for many trainees. Jephcote & Salisbury (2009) highlight the paradoxical position where *“FE teachers as professionals are increasingly subject to external standards and codes of practice, and, on the other, FE teachers exercising their own agency, in control of and constructing their own professional identities”* (p.971)

The identities of trainees are authentically grounded within active communities of practice and much of their dialogue is geared to maintaining the social and professional mechanics of such groups. Trainees are developing professional academic identities in line with the situated notions of their own particular

brands of professionalism linked to their subject specialism and professional background. Lucas & Unwin (2009) highlight the “*determination of trainee teachers to complete their ITE programmes and to develop their professional expertise amidst an often tense and pressurised workplace environment*” (p.431).

Trainees are enacting professional teacher relationships which are collegiate and supportive. Often trainees present themselves as active and engaging of others in order to drive professional development or learner achievement. Relationships are almost exclusively localised and engagement with wider academic communities is limited both by proximate factors and trainee ambition.

In summary, the predominant discourses which surround trainee teachers working within the FE sector relate to teaching, learning and classroom practice. Trainees are happy and eager to engage in this type of dialogue, both written and verbal as they identify themselves as developing teachers and recognise the importance and validity of such communication. Ideally they would prefer much of this to occur face to face as they enjoy the personal interaction and humanistic developmental opportunity this provides.

Very often these communicative interactions occur in local proximity and engage close colleagues and team members in collaborative professional development activity. These events sometimes happen spontaneously and naturally, on other occasions a more formal professional dialogue facilitates the arrangement of regulated meetings which satisfy the needs of the individuals

concerned, the organisation and the awarding bodies. The positive and supportive communicative events has a significant impact on the professional development of the trainees as they gain confidence and establish themselves as legitimate professional practitioners.

Another significant discourse impacts on trainee teachers and this causes more anxiety and concern. Performative discourses require trainees to consider a wide range of target driven agendas in addition to their classroom practice which meet the needs of the funding agencies and inspection frameworks. Typically managers are tasked with monitoring performance and these discourses are formal and restrictive. As a consequence of this managers are often viewed in a similarly formal and performative context.

Electronic communication is prevalent in all learning organisations and trainees are required to engage with email and online technologies to survive at work. Typically this type of communication is more formal and trainees are more cautious about how they present themselves when writing. Electronic communication has positive and negative impacts on some trainees. For those who are comfortable and confident email is an efficient way of communicating and it provides a secure audit trail of evidence relating to the professional activities of the individual. For those less able email can appear overwhelming and stressful. The continuous messaging and delegation of jobs to others can result in individuals disengaging and opting out of the system.

Recommendations

As a result of this study four key recommendations emerge from the findings. The first suggests future research opportunities, the second champions the notion of managers retaining some teaching. The third and fourth relate to minor changes within the PGCE and Cert Ed curriculum.

First this study was limited by scale, time and financial restrictions. The trainees recruited for interview were all actively engaged and productive members of either PGCE or Cert Ed cohorts and so the study did not question anyone who has withdrawn or failed to meet the demands of the courses. As a consequence it is likely that the contributions made by the participants will be broadly positive as they are grounded in generally successful experiences in the workplace.

Future longitudinal research should be conducted which is more expansive and utilises a more statistically generalisable and valid sample group.

Teacher and manager roles are clearly differentiated and hierarchical. There is a tension caused by the mismatch of academic and performative concepts and this creates an avoidable barrier between teachers and managers. Learning organisations should consider establishing strategies which require managers to undertake small scale teaching responsibility in order to build relationships and increase their authenticity with staff.

Trainees are shocked and frustrated when they experience the impact of performative demands on their teaching. Academic institutions operating initial

teacher training programmes should consider the opportunity to expand relevant module learning outcomes to incorporate aspects of performativity.

Email is the central and predominant method of formal communication between teachers and managers. Academic institutions operating initial teacher training programmes should explore opportunities to further embed and integrate electronic communication within relevant modules.

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Research Information Sheet

Research Topic:	The Influence of Professional Discourse on Beginner Teachers within the English Further Education Sector
Researcher:	Dave Brown
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Professional Discourse – “A Definition”

In its most simple form discourse can be defined as written or spoken communication. Professional discourse is extremely influential and contributes an essential role in the creation of professional practice. (Gunnarsson, 2009) defines professional discourse as *“discourse that enables the creation and maintenance of organisations and institutions as groups working for common goals”* (p.3). This can include various forms of communication, written text, spoken words and non-verbal communication. The language used combined with the way it is presented, communicated and understood is an important component of learning for any aspiring professional.

Background information:

I am postgraduate student studying for the MA in Education (by research) at the University of York. As the focus of my studies I am undertaking a small-scale research project investigating professional discourse and change within the Further Education sector. The project involves 10 participants working formally in five different educational locations in the North of England and is taking place in June and July 2011. This information sheet explains participants’ rights, and how I will ensure these are observed. It has been devised to enable participants to make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

Purpose of the study:

I have taught in Further Education for over ten years and my specialism is Teacher Education. I am interested in exploring the professional discourses that surround beginner teachers and how this impacts on the development of their professional identity. I locate this research within the context of political and economic change together with an acknowledgement of the increasingly diverse and fluid nature of academic, technical and skills based curricula and learner cohorts within the sector. The research will also inform and develop my own, and other colleagues practice of teaching.

How will participants be recruited:

Participants will be recruited from within Initial Teacher Training course groups with participating colleges, who for the purposes of the study, will be named based on their geographic proximity to each other (central, north, south, east and west). Each participant will be briefed on the context and methodology of the study and provided with a personal copy of the Research Information Sheet. I will answer questions about the research and allow time to think about the decision. If a person chooses to participate I will draw attention to their rights and how I will maintain these, and then accept their consent in writing. They will be provided with a letter code pseudonym by which they will be named within the study. By changing names and naming colleges by location I will maintain personal and organisational anonymity at all times. I will ensure they understand participation is voluntary; that it is to help me; and that it is not connected with their college work. I will make sure they have an opportunity to ask questions. The research will at all times be conducted within the principles set out in this Research Information Sheet and comply with British Educational Research Association's guidelines.

What happens if participants want to withdraw:

If anyone has a change of mind about participating, they may withdraw from the research at anytime and without giving a reason. All information provided by the individual will be destroyed at the time of withdrawal.

How will the information be recorded, stored and used:

The interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder; the recording will be transcribed into a MS Word document for analysis and use in research and academic publication. All participants will receive an electronic copy of their interview transcript for comment and approval prior to analysis. As well as individual participant copies, I will store all transcripts electronically on a non-networked home PC running full version anti-virus and firewall protection during the analysis and writing up process. Transcript information will be shared with Dr M Tsouroufli my Research Supervisor. At the end of the project on the 1st September 2011 all paper files and transcripts will be destroyed, electronic copies will be retained for a period of two years. No other person will have access to the data, other than through the publication of this research. All participant and organisational names will remain anonymous at all times.

Further information

If you would like any other information about this research, or if you have any questions about the information I have given, please contact me. If you would like to speak to an independent person about my research please contact:

Dr M Tsouroufli

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University of York
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Tel. 01903 233468
Email maria.tsouroufli@york.ac.uk

**The Influence of Professional Discourse on Beginner Teachers within the
English Further Education Sector
Participant Consent Form**

*Please indicate your agreement with each of the statements below. You can delete sections which do not apply, or with which you do not agree.

1. I have read the Research Information Sheet written by Dave Brown and have been provided with a copy to keep.
Yes/No*
2. I have had the opportunity to ask Dave Brown questions about this study.
Yes/No*
3. I consent to participating as an interviewee in this research according to the information and principles described in the Research Information Sheet.
Yes / No*
4. I consent to my interview being electronically recorded / transcribed according to the information and principles in the Research Information Sheet.
Yes / No*
5. I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason, and that all information I have given will be destroyed.
Yes/No*
- 6.
7. I understand my identity will be protected by treating the information I provide anonymously, and it will be used only by Dave Brown for the purposes of writing a dissertation at the University of York.
Yes / No*
- 8.
9. I understand the information I provide will be kept electronically and securely according to the information and principles in the Research Information Sheet.
Yes/No*

Participant Name (print):

Signature:

Date:

Participant Interview & Demographics Form

Participants Full Name: _____

Contact Tel / Email: _____

Interview Date: _____

College / Employer Name:
ORGANISATIONAL NAME IN FULL

Participant Code Reference within Study: C N S E W 1 2
*EACH ORGANISATION LETTER CODED
PARTICIPANT CODED 1 OR 2 CHRONOLOGICALLY*

Participant Gender: M F

Participant Age:

Participant's Curriculum Taught: _____
*PARTICIPANTS OWN TERMINOLOGY
CAN BE FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL NAME*

Participants Contractual Classification: FT PT PTHP VOL
HPW
FT = FULL TIME
PT = PART TIME FIXED CONTRACT
PTHP = PART TIME CASUAL CONTRACT
VOL = VOLUNTARY TEACHING
HPW = HOURS PER WEEK

Length of Interview: _____
TIME TAKEN FROM DATA RECORDER

NOTES / COMMENTS:

MA Education Interview Script & Schedule

Introductory Components

Welcome and introduction; Confirm completion of Participant Consent Form; Confirm interview fundamentals (data recorder, semi-structured, anonymous, timeframe etc); Confirm completion of Participant Interview & Demographics Form; Confirmation of go-ahead (switch recorder on and state participant's code name, date and time)

Theme 1 – Current Professional Discourses Surrounding the Beginner Teacher

- a) **What do you talk about professionally at work?** Topics/frequencies/goals/results/chained or isolated
- b) **What are other professionals talking about?** Topics/frequencies/goals/results/chained or isolated
- c) **Have you noticed any recurring or dominant themes in these conversations?** Teaching & Learning/departmental/organisational/external /political/economic/social
- d) **How does this communication take place?** Formally/informally/verbal/written/electronic/face to face/single/dual group/locations
- e) **Who do you talk to and interact with?**
Course/curriculum/dep't/organisational/teachers/managers
- f) **Is there any clear social order or conversational community at work?**
Relationships/power/confidence/friendship/responsibility/proximity
- g) **What ways of speaking and behaving underpin the popular view of being a professional?**
Significance/practices/identities/relationships/claims to knowledge

Theme 2 – Factors Influencing Discourse

- a) **In what ways do these conversations influence you professionally?** Change practice/identity/develop or damage relationships/signify/knowledge impacts
- b) **Do you initiate professional conversations at work?**
How/why/when/frequency/speaking/text/formal/informal if not why not
- c) **As a trainee, what do you want to talk about professionally?**
Learners/teaching/organisational/political/economic dimensions
- d) **Do you feel able to ask questions and talk about the difficulties you face as a trainee?**
Yes/no/why/what would need to change to make it easier
- e) **Are there professional issues no one talks about?** What are they/why does no one speak up/what are the implications of speaking up
- f) **Is there a difference between communication that is written and that which is spoken?**
Why/different practice/difference in identity/relationships/politics
- g) **Do you think your engagement and understanding of professional academic communication in the workplace has developed?** Why/how/if not why not
- h) **What effect has professional communication at work had on your development as a trainee?** Your own teaching/wider understanding/teacher identity
- i) **Have you noticed any mismatch between what is said and what is done professionally?**
Barriers/group dynamics/social asymmetries/them/us/othering

Interview Schedule

24 th June 2011	Interview Candidate C1
24 th June 2011	Interview Candidate N1
27 th June 2011	Interview Candidate C2
1 st July 2011	Interview Candidate W1
1 st July 2011	Interview Candidate W2
6 th July 2011	Interview Candidate S1
22 nd July 2011	Interview Candidate N2
19 th August 2011	Interview Candidate E1
24 th August 2011	Interview Candidate E2
24 th August 2011	Interview Candidate S2