

**SCITT trainee teachers' choice of ITT pathway -  
implications for marketing and recruitment**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

This study focuses on trainee teachers' experiences of application and recruitment to analyse the extent to which they made an informed choice of initial teacher training (ITT) pathway. This is prompted by the National Audit Office's report *Training New Teachers*, which noted: "Potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to make informed choices about where to train and the plethora of routes has been widely described to us as confusing" (2016:11).

The trainees were sampled from the 2017-18 cohort of a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provider in the North of England. The research was conducted using a qualitative, interview-based approach. Three focus groups, eight one-to-one interviews and a short biographical questionnaire were designed to provide complementary, rich data on the trainees' experiences and choices. This approach provides insight into the use of reflection as a methodological tool in accessing examples of trainees' ignorance.

Whilst the trainees' were united in their final choice of ITT pathway, their experiences and choices throughout their customer journey were notably varied. The findings indicate that trainees were relatively well informed regarding aspects such as the role of a teacher, but less informed about the process and outcomes of ITT, drawing theoretical insights from the field of Agnotology (Proctor, 2008). Facilitators and constraints on making an informed choice are outlined and the implications for marketing strategies discussed. The research provides insight into how applicants engage with ITT providers and the factors they considered, which contributes to the marketing field through consideration of ignorance within choice-making. The recommendations for marketing professional practice should be of interest to all ITT providers. The findings contribute to the ITT policy field by examining the impact of local and national circumstances in the 2016-17 recruitment cohort, and the recommendations support and expand upon the recent announcement for a review of the ITT market by the Department for Education in their 2019 *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy*.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 Research focus and background

This study focuses on current trainee teachers' choice of initial teacher training [ITT] pathway, and the ways in which they engaged with information sources to make their decisions. To become a teacher in England today, there are a multitude of decisions that need to be made such as where in the country you would like to train, and what subject you might want to teach. Fifty-three percent of the intake of new teaching candidates to postgraduate training routes in England in 2016-17 were aged 25 and under (DfE, 2016b). For these relatively recent graduates, their choices about where to train, and in what subject, even the format of their application would have been familiar to them as they may have followed a similar process when applying to higher education for the first time. These basic decisions are also not too dissimilar for any person looking to find a new job. The question of what role and where to base yourself still apply.

However, the process of applying to ITT is vastly more complex than just deciding where to train and in what subject. There are questions around eligibility, finance, and level of work experience. There are decisions for the applicant to make around how they would like to train, commonly referred to as the 'route into teaching' – University-led, School Direct, School Centred ITT and more - and what type of institution, the ITT provider, they would like to train with. In 2015-16, the National Audit Office [NAO] (2016) noted there were over 1000 ITT providers in total in England. There are decisions to be made about the intended outcome of their training; whether they are hoping to become employed in the institution in which they trained, and what qualification they hope to gain at the end of the training period. The variety in these choices raise further choices around the mode of programme delivery; whether they want to learn alongside researchers or those seen to be 'doing the job' of a teacher, and whether they wish to have greater responsibility for classes early on in their training. Even the fundamental question of where to train is no longer limited to choosing a vague city or region

on a map, but instead can involve detailed research into individual schools involved in different training providers' partnerships.

A report by the NAO was commissioned to understand, "Whether the Department for Education is achieving value for money through its arrangements to train new teachers" (2016:3). Their analysis noted; "Potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to make informed choices about where to train and the plethora of routes has been widely described to us as confusing" (National Audit Office, 2016:11). The implied assumption is that greater choice equates to greater freedom within the market (Berg and Gornitzka, 2012) and hence more qualified teachers with perhaps greater teacher retention. The study is set against a backdrop of a hotly debated 'teacher recruitment crisis' with repeated failures by the Department for Education [DfE] to meet its teacher recruitment targets (Schoolsweek, 2016; Vaughan, 2015). The question of whether applicants are able to make an informed choice of ITT route and provider, what I have referred to as the ITT pathway, has formed the basis of this research project.

For reasons explored further in the methodology chapter, the research approach focuses on one School Centred ITT [SCITT] provider based in the North of England. The research subjects were trainee teachers who were on the SCITT programme in the academic year 2017-18 and therefore able to reflect on their experiences of applying to ITT throughout 2016-17. A SCITT provider was selected due to the DfE's preference for this form of teacher training in general (Department for Education, 2016a; National Audit Office, 2016), and specifically for its recent change in relationship with a local University. The significance of this is outlined further in section 3.3 on the SCITT Provider's context.

At the outset, there are two points that must be addressed concerning the terminology and scope of this thesis. The first is that the programme that encompasses the learning and development to become a teacher is referred to throughout as 'Initial Teacher Training' [ITT], as opposed to 'Initial Teacher Education' [ITE]. The debate on the difference between Training and Education could form the basis of an entirely separate thesis. The use of the word 'training'

is dominant throughout recent policy documents (Department for Education, 2016a; DfE, 2017c; DfE, 2019). Pring (2016) notes the connotations around being based 'in the field' as opposed to 'education' which takes place in the academy, and this distinction underpins the context in which this research has taken place. A key decision for ITT applicants is whether to apply to a University-led or School-led ITT programme, and hence they are immediately expected to interpret and navigate this duality when exploring their options on how to become a teacher. ITT is the term that is used throughout this thesis, and it is clear that the trainees participating in the research raised no objections to this use of language.

The second point to be addressed at the outset concerns a potential misconception about the focus and scope of the research project. On embarking on the research journey into the landscape of ITT, there were many avenues that I could have taken to explore different aspects of the process. Analysis of the transition from potential ITT candidate, to applicant, to trainee, to newly qualified teacher, to mid-career and long service teacher could have focussed on any of these stages and addressed, for example, questions around the effectiveness of ITT programmes, or the longer-term retention of teachers in the profession. Instead, I chose to focus on the earliest stage; the progress from potential ITT candidate, to applicant, to trainee through the process of recruitment. Those researching longer term retention of teachers in the profession may build on the outcomes of this research, as inevitably the recruitment and training processes lay the foundations for sustainability in this regard, but the research does not directly access data around teacher retention.

## 1.2 Significance of the study and researcher position

This study is borne out of a professional interest in the recruitment of new teachers through my role as the Teacher Education Partnership Manager for a University that, when I joined in 2015, offered University-led, School Direct and School Centred ITT routes into teaching. Part of my role involved overseeing the recruitment of trainees onto the different teacher training routes offered by the University. This included attending recruitment fairs, giving careers talks,

answering direct enquiries and creating the published marketing materials on both the University website and in print.

Throughout this time, the niggling question in the back of my mind was what impact this activity had on the applicants' decision-making processes. It felt as if the marketing was viewed as a necessity – something that an ITT provider had to produce as it was a basic expectation of the applicant - but it felt as if little critical thought had been given to how the audience of potential applicants engaged with the contents. Likewise, there was a significant challenge in balancing the expectations of the different school stakeholders within the partnership, who were in effect competing for the same pool of potential applicants. I often found myself having to diplomatically extol the benefits of each route into teaching and each ITT provider in the partnership equally, despite the institution I was working for being placed in a competitive market context by the government's ITT policy. As such, I wondered greatly about the applicants' point of view, and what their experiences were of applying and being recruited onto an ITT programme.

Not only was the research topic directly related to my professional practice at the point of inception, the timing was also pertinent due to national political factors that were playing out in the context of the local ITT market. The 2017-18 cohort of trainee teachers was especially significant in that they experienced the effects of a change in national ITT policy to revise the training places allocation model (DfE and NCTL, 2015) so that no limit was initially placed on recruitment numbers for individual ITT providers from the start of the recruiting period in October 2016. Their accounts of their application experiences reflect the contemporary challenges of the ITT market that have not hitherto been explored in recent literature.

The NAO (2016) report acknowledges the implications of this methodology for the teacher education market and highlights the government's policy to impose a split of 51% School-led, versus 49% University-led teacher training provision within the market. It is ethically arguable that this study is required to explore and document the effect of this policy on applicants to the teaching profession (Pring,

2015). Instantly it is clear that the assumption of a free market in teacher education must be ruled out, and that there are more nuanced 'technologies' of power (Foucault, 1976) exerting influence over candidates when they are making their decisions about a training route. This context required a research methodology that is sensitive to both the individual, personalised and shared, group understanding of meaning attached to SCITT.

Whilst my professional role has subsequently changed from the subject of ITT, the topic is still familiar and related to my current professional context, raising questions about the challenges of insider/outsider positioning in my research (Merton, 1972). As Mercer (2007) argues, research within and between education institutions requires the researcher to shift back and forth in terms of location, time, as participant, and on topic. Whilst this positioning can be a strength, especially in a professional doctorate, it requires careful consideration of the methodological implications as outlined in chapter three.

This raises important ethical questions over my position as researcher within this investigation. In choosing to research an issue that is the result of my professional practice, what is it possible to know and understand and how might my research be influenced by my position? In context, at the start of the research project, SCITT constituted the 'other' (Schostak, 2002) facet to my professional practice, in comparison to recruiting for the University-led PGCE programme and School Direct partnerships. As such, there is an implicit bias that must be acknowledged to avoid any moral judgement of the research participants and their answers. Arguably, it is neither possible nor desirable to create true 'objectivity' in the scientific sense by stepping outside of the problem.

As an 'insider' – having both been through an ITT application process myself, and having coordinated recruitment in my professional role - there are symbiotic benefits that arise from researching my professional practice (Merton, 1972), but equally there are ethical considerations of inevitable subjectivity in framing the research investigation (Radnor, 2001). I believe that whilst I may have been

perceived to represent the face of 'the University', the fact that I was not known directly by the research participants allowed for a degree of separation.

### 1.3 Research Aims

The aim of this research project is to explore how ITT applicants develop their understanding of the routes, providers and courses available to them, and make decisions on how to train to become a teacher. Upon deeper reflection on the topic, my initial concerns around how applicants made their decisions invited further questions around the role and format of marketing information in ITT recruitment, and the process by which applicants engaged with this to make an *informed* decision about their pathway into teaching. The purpose of this investigation is not to judge the effectiveness of the marketing materials, and neither is it intended to assess the effectiveness of any particular route into teaching. Instead, I aim to provide an insightful account of how applicants engaged with various marketing materials to research the multiple ITT training opportunities, and how they decided on which route and provider to apply to. Appreciating this distinction can be used by marketers to improve their understanding of the ITT applicant 'market' (Iacobucci and Churchill, 2010).

The initial exploration of this topic through the literature review was therefore guided by two prima facie research questions:

- 1.) How is marketing currently understood and used within ITT?
- 2.) How does the applicant make his/her choice of ITT programme, including the training route and provider, and what circumstances might give rise to an uninformed choice?

My research investigation stems from a very stark need to better understand the drivers of choice of teacher training route for applicants. This will aid ITT providers and policy decision-makers, such as the National College for Teaching and Leadership [NCTL], to consider how applicants engage with the marketing for ITT during the recruitment cycle, to ultimately inform the recruitment strategies at a

national and local level. The hope in developing this study was to address an issue within my professional context, in order to bring academic understanding and rigour to what is otherwise an anecdotal problem.

The research findings are presented as a rich description of trainees' experiences and a discussion of whether informed decisions can be made within the context of such great variety and complexity in the ITT market.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The following chapter draws upon several bodies of literature to present a synthesised account of the research to date in the fields of ITT policy, marketing and higher education, the recruitment process and choice more broadly. The literature search was guided by the prima facie research questions outlined in the introduction.

This section outlines the need for further research into the effects of ongoing change in ITT policy, and develops a theoretical basis from which to analyse potential constraints on applicants in making an informed choice of ITT pathway. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research to date, and the limitations thereof to be addressed through this research project.

### 2.1 ITT: The Policy Context

Initial teacher training, or ITT, is the term used to refer to the one-year (in most cases), postgraduate course that leads to the award of qualified teacher status [QTS] (for the full list of routes see table 1, taken from the National Audit Office (2016)). QTS allows teachers to work in state-maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales (NCTL, 2016). All trainees working towards QTS are required to have a degree. However, due to changes announced in 2012 under the UK coalition government, academy schools are able to recruit 'unqualified' teachers – those without QTS or a degree – so it is not true to say that everyone wanting to become a teacher must have a degree and work towards qualified teacher status. This initial qualification hurdle is the first requirement placed on people wanting to undergo ITT. Those who do not hold a first degree must either study for a degree in a relevant subject, and then go on to postgraduate ITT if they wish to teach that subject in a Secondary school. Those wanting to teach in primary without a degree can follow the same route, or alternatively, study for an undergraduate degree course in Education (or similar) that also leads to the award of QTS.

Trainees on ITT programmes are required to work towards the standards for QTS as set by the DfE (DfE, 2011; see also, Foster, 2018). There are certain criteria that the training provider must also meet in order to recommend trainees for the award of qualified teacher status. These criteria specify the number of days in school, which for postgraduate, non-employment based programmes would be 120 days within the year of the programme (DfE and NCTL, 2018c); and the requirement for at least two, differing school-based placements. Alongside this, the DfE issues guidance that covers the structure of the ITT programme; the input of subject knowledge training; and the format of observation and assessment to evidence trainees have met the QTS standards. This form of regulation stands ideologically opposed to the wider education reform projects which are grounded in Neoliberalism (Furlong, 2013a; Furlong, 2013b) and discussed in greater detail in the following section. Nonetheless the key point is that, set against a policy context of creating applicant markets and greater autonomy to design and deliver ITT programmes, the government retains a degree of standardisation over the key components of ITT, and this power is exercised instrumentally through Ofsted (Campbell, J. and Husbands, 2000; Cale and Harris, 2009).

This regulation from the DfE has implications for the choices that applicants make regarding their ITT pathway. There are certain aspects of each ITT pathway that are standardised in order to conform with DfE criteria, and there are other aspects of the course that are more flexible, such as the format of the training on subject knowledge and teaching pedagogy, which are dependent on the design by the ITT provider. This is in relation to the programme of study itself. There are a number of other variable factors that can differ between ITT pathways, such as the location and the ethos of the provider, and the format of the partnership between schools and HE institutions. The following section outlines the development of ITT in England, leading to the contemporary context in which applicants are faced with making decisions about how they would like to train to teach.

### 2.1.1 The Historic Development of ITT Policy

Over the last fifty years, throughout the Thatcher era (1979-1990), the instalment of a Labour government in 1997, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-2015) and up to the recent majority Conservative government, there has been an ever flowing tide of educational policy reform and with it, changes to the way the U.K. prepares its teaching workforce for the classroom (Cater, 2017). These reforms are built upon the Neoliberal imperative to introduce the concept of markets and deregulate processes and structures. MacBeath (2011) argues this was not only an ideological agenda stemming from Thatcher, but an economic measure under Labour to move 'training' into schools along the lines of an apprenticeship model. Both MacBeath (2011), Thomas (2018) and also Furlong (2013a) note how the teaching profession has been reduced to the minimum qualification of QTS. Furlong (2013b:32) goes as far as to say the concept of a professional *individual* teacher has been undermined by these political drivers in favour of a 'new professionalism' which is externally managed through regulatory bodies such as the Training and Development Agency for Schools [TDA] and more recently the National College of Teaching and Leadership [NCTL]. The impact of this has been to create a tension between teacher professionalism linked to qualified status and the role of the teacher as defined by the state, versus teacher autonomy in the classroom and even school autonomy to both teach pupils and train teachers (Parker, 2015).

Burn and Childs (2016) outline the political trends and the proliferation of routes into teaching that have developed as a result of this policy direction. The early 1990s was a period of significant change for ITT, with policy from the DfE proposing that, for the first time, schools had the right to apply to be partners in ITT (Furlong et al., 2000). By 1993, this had led to the proposed development of School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) programmes, which marked the beginnings of a divergence between school-led and University-led ITT, and which Thomas (2018) argues has undermined the academic award in teacher education.

At the outset, this thesis will address these routes as initial teacher *training* [ITT] and not enter into the debate around initial teacher *education*, as noted in the introduction. Furlong et al. (2000:100) note that the term ‘training’ was introduced in the 1990s, along with terminology such as competences, as part of the ‘new right thinking’ that accompanied these significant policy changes. Cater (2017) suggests that the impact of the current policy changes in ITT since 2015 under the Conservative government is not too dissimilar to the impact of the changes in the early 1990s, given that in both instances there has been a substantial period of government policy favouring one particular type of teacher training. McIntyre et al. (2019) note how the role of the University has been marginalised through this policy and current documents instead favour training alongside experienced teachers in the classroom, positioned as the authoritative teacher educator over the research in the University.

In the current context, Cater (2017) notes that such a biased policy direction has led to a reduction in applicants and damage to schools as a result of a dropping number of new teaching talent into the profession. Cater’s (2017) observations are corroborated by the data produced by the NAO (2016) which notes missed recruitment targets over the last five years (National Audit Office, 2016). Likewise, growing pressure around the retention of teachers within the workforce has shifted research focus onto trainees’ experience during their ITT year, and the impact this has on longer term retention in the profession (Committee, E., 2017) leading to sensational headlines of a growing “national teacher shortage crisis” (Schoolsweek, 2016; see also, NAHT, 2015). As such, the current recruitment context is very much that of a ‘buyers’ market’ in ITT, with choice and control located with the in-demand applicant (ASCL, 2015). Nowhere is this more acutely felt by ITT providers than in shortage subjects such as the Sciences, Mathematics and Modern Foreign Languages with a recent House of Common Education Committee report (2017) noting that some challenges in teacher supply appear to be worsening.

‘Teacher Training,’ or ‘Teacher Education’ as it is often synonymously referred to, is not as coherent or prescriptive in its outcomes as it may first appear. Teacher

Training is conceptually bounded by the fact that it is the programme by which you gain qualified teacher status [QTS] for a school in England or Wales. Pring (2016) provides an overview of the evolution of teacher training within the English context and highlights the ongoing pedagogical tensions that give rise to the debate on whether Teacher *Training* or *Education* is the concern of academic or professional institutions. In a way, this has created its own ‘false dualism’ (Pring, 2015) between the setting of teacher training in schools or in universities, which is apparent in the materials produced by the DfE and NCTL in marketing teacher training – see figure 1.

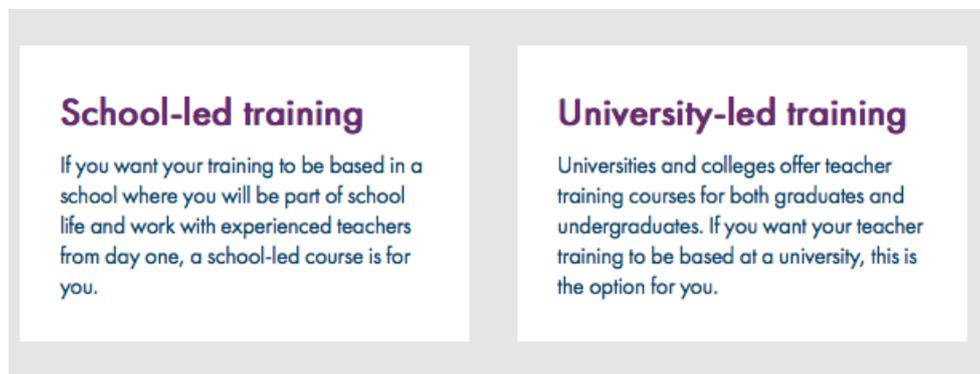


Figure 1: The explanation of the differences between School-led and University-led training. Source: [www.getintoteaching.education.gov.uk](http://www.getintoteaching.education.gov.uk)

The discussion that Cater (2017) presents suggests that if government policy favours one particular training route, as it did in the 1990s, this leads to a reduction in applicants overall. In contrast, proponents of current ITT policy might argue a diversified ITT offer is beneficial to potential applicants, who have numerous choices over how to train as a teacher, and helps to boost overall numbers entering the profession. This is the current ITT context that applicants are faced with. Table 1, taken from the NAO (2016) report, outlines the main routes into teaching that potential applicants have to choose from. The significant difference is whether the route is for undergraduate or postgraduate applicants,

Table 1 – Details of the Routes into Teaching (National Audit Office, 2016), with data taken from the 2015 ITT Census from the Department for Education.

Route	Number started training in 2015-16	Who leads recruitment and training design?	Who delivers training?	Are trainees students or salaried employees?	Qualification gained
University-led (undergraduate)	5,440 (16%)	University	University	Student	BA, BSc or BEd with QTS
University-led (Postgraduate)	13,561 (41%)	University	University	Student	QTS and PGCE
School Direct – Fee (postgraduate)	7,086 (21%)	School	Mix of school-centred providers and Universities	Student	QTS, usually with PGCE
School Direct – Salaried (postgraduate) *Applicants must have around 3 years' work experience	3,166 (10%)	School	Mix of school-centred providers and Universities	Employee	QTS, usually with PGCE
School-Centred ITT (postgraduate)	2,372 (7%)	School-centred Provider	School-centred provider	Student	QTS, usually with PGCE
Teach First (Postgraduate)	1,584 (5%)	Teach First	Teach First and University	Employee	QTS and PGCE, optional Masters
Total	33,209				

with other differences such as whether a salary is provided (and whether fees are paid), level of experience required, and qualification gained. At the outset, potential applicants to ITT are faced with making choices about their *route* into teaching, as per Table 1, without even getting into the complexities of which training *provider* to choose, and the numerous variable factors that are involved in that decision-making process. The choice of both ITT route and provider are from now on referred to as the *ITT pathway* for the remainder of this thesis.

### 2.1.2 Recent Policy Trends in ITT

The overarching trend has been to prioritise ITT based in schools, and to move away from large scale University-led ITT provision (Department for Education, 2016a). The development of the first SCITT routes in 1994 (Cater, 2017) and the introduction of Teaching School Alliances and School Direct programmes under Michael Gove in 2012 (Burn and Childs, 2016) heralded an era of increased competition for potential trainee teacher applicants, spread across a proliferating number of routes and providers. The NAO report (2016) notes the increase in SCITT providers from 56 in 2011/12, to 155 in 2015/16, and the development of 841 School Direct partnerships in the same period, highlighting an exponential growth in school-based routes which, although founded on similar ideology and conforming to the same ITT standards framework, cannot be presumed homogenous in their ITT provision model (Brown, T. et al., 2016; see also, Pring, 2016). Subsequent proposed changes to ITT policy since table 1 was produced include the development of a postgraduate ‘Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship Scheme’, which Cater (2017) suggests may eventually replace the School Direct salaried route. The Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship is described as a, “work-based route into teaching” (UCAS Teacher Training, 2018 ) and offers a salary alongside no tuition fees, unlike the other routes into teaching. Likewise, there were proposed changes to the model of gaining QTS which meant that applicants would instead be awarded QTS after two years – upon successful completion of their ITT training year and their induction year (DfE, 2017c). Following a consultation by the government with ITT professionals, these

proposals were amended so that applicants to ITT were assured that their ITT year was spent working toward the award of QTS (DfE, 2018b).

The impact of this continued evolution of ITT models has been to trouble the notion of *who* within the ITT partnership between schools, universities and the government holds the professional body of knowledge, and subsequently *how* this is best passed onto the next generation of teachers and *if* someone is suitable to enter the profession. Whitty (2014) argues this has led to such routes into teaching trading on their status and promoting a form of 'branded' and 'local' professionalism, training teachers in a particular format suited to the institution within which they will subsequently work, rather than as autonomous professionals who are able to adapt to different teaching contexts.

Furlong et al.'s (2000) work on the Modes of Teacher Education (MOTE) project in the early 1990s identified the differentiation of ITT programmes at the time between levels of professional knowledge, skills and values acquired as a result of the course. Added to this, they identified the amount of time in school, the placement structure, and the location of training to be significant factors of variation between ITT programmes. I would argue that contemporary applicants to ITT are faced with similar levels of differentiation across these variables.

Considering all of these elements together - the choice of route into teaching, and the associated variables of qualification, salary, level of experience required, alongside the choice of provider - suggests that applicants to teacher training have a significant task to comprehend and choose from the options available to them, and this context forms the basis from which this research study was developed.

In 2016-17, the DfE, in conjunction with the NCTL trialled a new recruitment methodology for one year (DfE and NCTL, 2015) which has subsequently been adopted in all years since. Each year the DfE uses its Teacher Supply Model to estimate the number of teachers that need recruiting into the system. Prior to 2016, ITT providers would make a request for funded training places based on

their anticipated capacity and local need, and the DfE would allocate places based on their model. Since 2016, this allocation no longer applied, and instead providers were encouraged to recruit as many trainees as they liked, without restriction, whilst the DfE monitored national recruitment levels, and then imposed a hard stop on recruitment once they reached the required national numbers indicated by the Teacher Supply Model (Foster, 2018). For providers, the effect was to further compound instability in forecast planning (Spendlove, 2017) and a 'race to the bottom' or as Universities UK put it in 2014, a perverse incentive to recruit on a first-come, first-served basis. For applicants, they were faced with ITT courses closing earlier than usual, particularly for Primary and Secondary History teaching, as the places had been filled quickly in anticipation of recruitment controls being applied. The context of this new approach to the ITT recruitment methodology creates an additional layer of complexity that applicants to ITT faced in this year. Subsequent reports have not made reference to the direct impact that these changes had on the applicants themselves, and their experiences of the recruitment process (Cater, 2017; Foster, 2018; National Audit Office, 2016).

The House of Commons Education Committee (2017:9) report notes that, "Many prospective teachers may not be aware of the differences, or similarities, between the different routes." The question remains as to how applicants make their decisions, and who is responsible for providing information on the many ITT pathways. Furlong et al. (2000) make reference to the challenges of recruitment but do not discuss who is responsible for trainee teacher recruitment and how these challenges can be addressed. It is evident from this section that further work is required to understand the process of recruiting and training new teachers.

As noted in this section, the policy direction over time has placed increasingly greater emphasis on schools as the centres of professional practice in which ITT should take place. This is set alongside the developing marketisation of Higher Education, which is situated within a neoliberal ideology of greater choice and competition. These two developments together have seen the landscape of ITT

alter drastically in recent years, which presents a challenge for applicants to navigate. Based on the analysis of the marketing and choice discourse in the next section, I argue closer and deeper theoretical attention needs to be paid to how applicants discern which ITT pathway is right for them, through their interactions with the information sources available.

## 2.2 Marketing and Education

The previous section established the historical development of ITT leading to the contemporary context of a diversified 'market' in which applicants to ITT are in relatively short supply, and the number of ITT providers has grown rapidly, across a number of different routes. The question raised therefore concerns how applicants navigate the landscape of ITT and settle upon a particular choice of pathway into the teaching profession. This section outlines how marketing has been conceptualised with regards to education in the literature. It outlines the contentious concept of marketisation for Higher Education - within which ITT is situated – and uncovers the debates around the perception of the student as customer, and where value is created, which leads to deeper ontological questions about the development of an ITT 'market.'

### 2.2.1 The conceptualisation of markets and marketing in Education

There is a large body of literature on the growing marketisation of Higher Education [HE] (See for example, Brown, R., 2011; Gibbs, 2002; Maringe and Gibbs, 2009; Williams, 2013). Maringe and Gibbs (2009) provide a sound overview of the theoretical basis for the drive to operate under a more customer-oriented model in HE institutions. Noting the development of tuition fees and the increasing competition for students, due in part to population changes but also what they term the "massification" of HE (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009:30), this has created the impetus for HE institutions to promote themselves through marketing. Brown, R. and Carassao (2013) note the developing concept of a market in Higher Education, suggesting the government's piecemeal approach to

policy in this regard exposes a lack of a coherent conceptualisation of a 'market' in this sector. They note Williams' (1992; 1995, cited in, Brown, R. and Carassao, 2013) work that argues the shifting funding model for H.E. away from public funding towards more private investment assumes institutions would operate within traditional market principles and be incentivised to put the needs of the customer first. This assumption is troubling for two reasons; firstly, there are a number of regulations and structures that limit the operation of a free market in H.E such as the capping of tuition fees; and secondly, the imposition of the label of 'customer' on the would-be student implies an expectation of a different form of engagement with institutions, especially at the point of application. Therefore, the assumption of a logically coherent 'market' operating in ITT and HE more broadly, cannot be taken for granted.

Likewise, Maringe and Gibbs (2009) note the shifting role of the student towards being a learning partner and engaging 'collaboratively' with teaching and research at a University. I argue this shift, combined with the introduction of fees for the ITT course, presents a number of expectations and responsibilities placed on the applicants, who Lynch (2006:3) would describe as 'consumer-citizens', to make an informed and market-led choice about the institution they attend and the course they choose to study. These ontological assumptions about the role of the applicant in the market form the conceptual framework for this study's analytical approach.

Marketing as a concept is understood through various models, but is traditionally described by Kotler and Fox (1995) as a summation of the 5 P's – Product, Price, Place, Promotion and People – what is termed the marketing mix, and which has supported management thought on marketing since the 1950s (Marion, 2007). In the context of education, this is expanded to 7 P's, including Processes and Physical Facilities as the remaining two aspects (Kotler and Fox, 1995). Applying this model to ITT, marketing may be understood as a combination of: building a quality training programme, at a reasonable cost to the trainee (albeit the tuition fee is capped by the government), delivered to the trainee in a location and setting that is desirable to them, with outcomes and benefits clearly

communicated to the applicant in advance of enrolling, and delivered by knowledgeable and credible course leaders. The additional two P's may be considered in this context as the process of ITT, as somewhat dictated by the government's standards for ITT; and also the physical setting of the training environment – be this in the school or the university. Marketing as a holistic concept influences all of these aspects of the marketing mix so that the 'offer' meets the needs of consumers who are providing the demand.

However, subsequent critical debates in the field of marketing have turned to a discussion of who constitutes the customer, how organisations balance meeting customer needs versus organisational goals, and how the exchange is constructed in modern marketplaces (Marion, 2007). Marion (Ibid.) notes the divergence between academic concepts and the original management definition of marketing. Her argument is that subsequent critical research should focus not on how marketing is currently practiced, but how it should function. This is important when considering the analytical and evaluative approach to the data collected for this study.

The conceptualisation of marketing raises an interesting debate, given the context of ITT within the field of recruitment. Kotler and Fox (1995) suggest that marketing leaders design the offer based on the target market's wants and needs. In effect, marketing creates the product, rather than the product existing to be promoted. This is an important ontological distinction, particularly when related to ITT. If the ITT programme is considered the 'product', is it simply the role of marketers to advertise this product to a market that may, or may not, exist? It is easy to equate this conceptualisation with the current issues surrounding a recruitment crisis. However, if we consider the role of marketing to design and create the product to meet the needs of consumers, is this what is witnessed through the proliferation of school-based ITT routes? Arguably, this is simply the consequence of the DfE's responsiveness to consumer needs, as per Foskett's (1999:38) holistic model of the marketing triangle – see Figure 2. Marion (2007) argues that firms do not understand their customers' needs better than the

customers do themselves, which justifies a research approach that focuses on trainees first and not the providers' view of marketing initial teacher training.

Foskett argues that for public sector organisations such as schools, there are a greater number of complex factors that define the customer relationship. The argument extends beyond marketing as the simple conveyance of agreed messages towards the management of external relations. Foskett's model of the marketing triangle posits that educational institutions' marketing positions are balanced between maintaining internal quality, responsiveness to the community within which they are based, and the recruitment of students. Comparing this to England's national context of ITT, I suggest that the current policy trend to promote school-based ITT places the DfE firmly within the 'responsiveness' vertex of the triangle (see figure 2), and tending towards the recruitment vertex. Arguably, this is at the expense of considering quality through a coherent and clear ITT system that is simple for applicants and ITT providers alike to navigate. However, the focus of this research is not concerned with the quality of ITT per se, and any conclusions on this may only be implied.

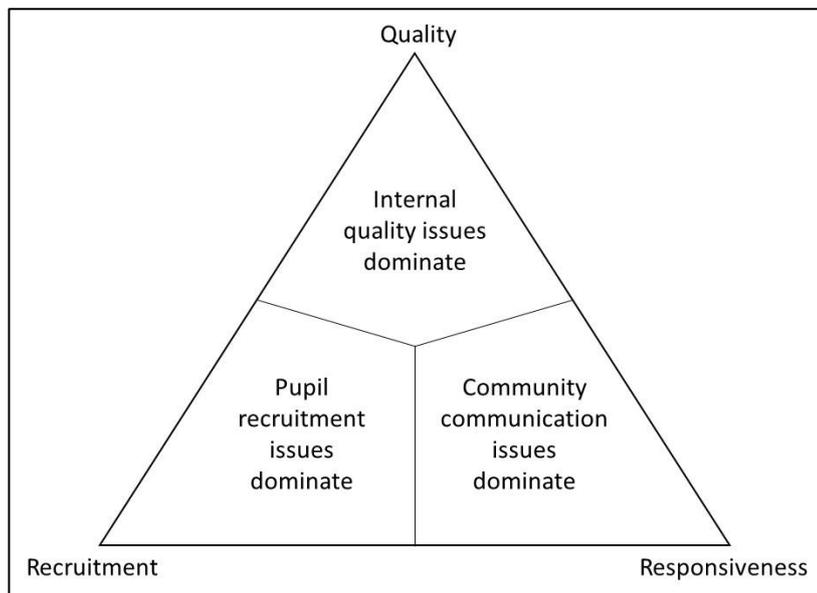


Figure 2 - The Marketing Triangle for Schools, (Foskett, 1999:38)

This in turn begs the question, which party represents the 'target market' in this situation? This might be the group of potential applicants, or this can be flipped around to consider the schools themselves as the target market, given they are the ultimate recipients of newly trained teachers. In this way, applicants to ITT are not simply signing up to receive education or training, but are effectively marketing themselves as potential labour for schools through the recruitment process. This resonates with more critical debates around the concept of co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) and how value is 'extracted' through the production of experience, with customers unable to predict their experiences on an educational programme at the beginning. This is explicitly relevant to the context of ITT, where arguably applicants are looking to produce themselves as valuable employees by undergoing the SCITT training experience for a year. These questions present new and interesting avenues, especially in relation to the complexity of the ITT landscape, and open the need for further analysis around the drivers of applicant choice. Lynch (2006:3) describes choice as "the carrot with which people are duped into believing they will have freedom to buy what higher education they like in some brave new market." She notes choice's effect in shifting control from Universities to the 'sovereign consumer'. This conceptualisation raises questions around where value is created in the market and by whom.

Building on the previous distinction between the product being marketed, and the market driving the product, Slater (1997:90) suggests that advertising and promotion in this regard, evidences what he refers to as 'producer anxiety'. Slater argues that advertising is not simply driven by the desire to inform the consumer, but instead is an attempt to maintain a market and continue to drive demand for a particular product. In this sense, the advertising of ITT can be seen both as an attempt to inform potential applicants of their options, but also more importantly, it can be analysed as a function of increasingly concerned schools attempting to create their own pipeline of incoming teacher supply, set against the context of a recruitment crisis (Committee, E., 2017; Vaughan, 2015). This raises the question of whose responsibility it is to inform potential applicants of the breadth of their ITT pathway options, versus the imperative of individual providers to recruit to their particular programmes. The compulsory education

sector has faced similar imperatives to market and promote their schools to parents and pupils (Gewirtz et al., 1995) as highlighted by Lubienski (2007) in the American context. Unlike HE Institutions, which Maringe and Gibbs (2009) note are focussed on marketing their individual institutions, Primary and Secondary schools, are involved in developing a market *brand* for their provision and selling their ethos to prospective parents and pupils through schools' websites, brochures and even social media (Gewirtz et al., 1995). This is in part due to the increasing academisation of schools and the development of school Trusts (Hill, R. et al., 2012) wherein groups of schools join together to operate under the same banner and legal entity, which Whitty (2014:472) argues leads to a form of 'branded professionalism' for ITT providers, building upon their status as wider educational institutions. These challenges for providers must be considered in any analysis of whether applicants can make an informed choice of ITT pathway.

The introduction of basic market principles in Higher Education and in the U.K. compulsory education sector is no more evident than at the interface between the two sectors, that of SCITT. Compared to the other routes into teaching as outlined in table 1, SCITT is based on the principle that the lead school holds the accreditation and thus accountability for ITT. As such, it is responsible for recruiting and training potential candidates towards QTS, but this responsibility may be supported by HE institutions if services are 'bought in' to do so. Unlike most HE programmes, where the sector is purely self-promoting and there are no broad brush adverts by a third party aimed at encouraging further study, ITT is supported nationally by government advertising campaigns aimed at getting more people into the teaching profession (Department for Education, 2016b). The DfE provides guidance on marketing and recruitment for school-based providers (DfE and NCTL, 2018b) but it is arguable that these providers do not have the resources or gravitas to market on the same scale as an HE institution. As a result, an analysis of whether SCITT applicants made an informed choice of ITT pathway would present a particularly relevant research avenue.

## 2.2.2 Marketing as Communication with Customers in Education

The other ontological concept to be considered in more depth is the idea of the applicant or trainee as the customer. The discussion so far has framed the educational research within a business and marketing perspective. Does it logically follow that those choosing to undergo any teacher training course might be considered a customer? From a transactional viewpoint (Finney and Finney, 2010), it may be argued that they are customers, as trainees pay up to £9,000 for the training experience – regardless of the route, except in the situation of a School Direct salaried programme, where the fees are paid for by the recruiting institution. For the purposes of this research investigation, this group of salaried trainees will not be included in the research. Therefore it is conceptually arguable that the applicant may legitimately be considered the customer as they *purchase* the course through reviewing the offer, being influenced by the marketing messages, making a decision over which training route and paying the tuition fees.

It is evident in the ITT policy documentation that trainees are considered customers (National Audit Office, 2016; Williams et al., 2016) of their ITT providers, both in the names of the reports such as “The Customer Journey to ITT” (Williams et al., 2016) and in direct references in the text:

To meet its objectives to improve the quality of teaching and give schools greater autonomy, the Department for Education (the Department) has encouraged the expansion of school-led training. This part considers the effectiveness of the teacher training market where trainees are customers and training providers are suppliers.

(National Audit Office, 2016:37)

Maringe and Gibbs (2009) acknowledge that marketing is more than advertising and instead involves the ‘exchange of value’ between the two parties – in this case between those leading the training (the ITT Provider) and those being trained

(the trainee). Brown, R. (2011) discusses the development of the market in Higher Education and its consequences, noting that one of the challenges of this development is the availability of good quality information about the institutions in the market. Contrary to typical market theory in this respect, Brown, R. (2011) argues the challenge is not due to information 'a-symmetry', with the unenlightened consumer unable to access the relevant data. Instead he argues no one has the relevant information available to make serious and considered comparisons of HE provision, especially given that training or education implies a delayed benefit. (Brown, R. and Carassao, 2013) later identify the challenge of providing effective and reliable information as a failure of the quasi-market in H.E. The long term benefit of choosing one ITT provider over another is difficult for the applicant to predict at the outset. This has been compounded by the effect of the quasi-market, noted in the previous section, which has been to liberalise Higher Education and also to commodify education generally, making it a challenge to articulate education's purpose. The result is argued to be confusion on the part of the applicant, in terms of their breadth of options, the quality of the programmes and providers, and the benefits of studying through any one particular pathway (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009). This confusion cannot singularly be attributed to students applying to ITT or H.E. Widening the focus as Giesler and Fischer (2017) suggest, there are a number of actors involved in the ITT process, including the applicant, the provider, other schools beyond ITT partnerships, and the Department for Education, hence it is also possible to infer confusion on the part of those shaping and delivering ITT programmes.

This provides an interesting example for further study into how the marketing information flow in this context is operating, and whether and how applicants define themselves as 'student customers' when seeking out opportunities to train in the teaching profession. As established in the first section, the multitude of ITT routes, providers and courses has led to a complex system that is difficult for the applicant to navigate (National Audit Office, 2016). *The customer journey to ITT* (Williams et al., 2016) is a research report produced by the Institute of Employment Studies that identifies the interests and policy approach of the government towards the recruitment and training of classroom teachers, and

likewise the previous report by Matthias (2014) attempts to understand the experiences of teachers in shortage subjects entering the profession.

It is my argument that greater attention needs to be paid to the manner in which applicants research and decide upon their choice of ITT course – the first stage of which has been termed the ‘customer journey’ (Williams et al., 2016) - and that more work needs to be done to review the information available to applicants and how schools are marketing their ITT provision.

### 2.2.3 Promoting Initial Teacher Training

The commonly understood ‘circle of consumption’ (Arnould et al., 2004:11) may be applied to the ITT process. This research project aims to look specifically at the ‘acquisition’ stage to delve more deeply than before into how ITT applicants research, choose and acquire a particular ITT course amongst the multitude of options available to them; what Baxter (2005) refers to as ‘evaluation’ in the market. Returning to the concept of co-creation of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) referenced in section 2.2.1, ITT may be considered driven by more service-dominant rather than goods-dominant logic (Lusch et al., 2007). As such, the market is no longer concerned with the exchange of things but instead positions the consumer as integrated within the process of value production. This has important ramifications for how ITT is promoted to potential ITT applicants. Assuming ITT is service-oriented would explain a promotional focus on the potential experiences of applicants. However, the messaging in ITT promotion also specifically refers to outcomes or goods such as the PGCE. Distinguishing between a service and goods orientation is important for analysing the positioning of applicants within ITT marketing and their individual phenomenological experiences (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) of how ITT is promoted.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2001) present a model of the purchase process for services – arguably relevant to the application and acceptance of a place on an ITT course - which splits this process into three parts: the pre-purchase stage, the service

encounter stage, and the post-purchase stage. This model forms a significant part of the next section on the applicants' decision-making process, but is also relevant to the stages at which applicants may encounter advertising and information sources regarding their potential ITT pathways.

Bulger et al. (2015) suggest that the role of marketing in ITT recruitment has often been unclear, and that up until now, ITT providers have taken a haphazard approach. Rosa and Spanjol (2005) discuss the development of marketing strategies as markets mature. Applying this to the case of ITT, the market is yet to be, "stable and well-defined" (Rosa and Spanjol, 2005:197) based on the policy analysis above. As Foskett (1999) highlights, often schools simply think of marketing in terms of the final aspect only; that of advertising and promotion, and hence the prominence of advertising in the typical form of brochures, fliers and web content. Likewise, with the development of social media marketing channels, Tuten and Solomon (2015:22) highlight the issue of "Tradigital marketing", where organisations are applying traditional marketing principles to digital and social media channels. These forms of communication with potential ITT applicants present varying challenges to research in this field, with questions raised over the effectiveness of attempting to access the views of those currently in the acquisition stage. Rather than take an in-depth study of applicants' engagement with one particular marketing channel, this project aims to review the overall big picture of how applicants explore and navigate their ITT options.

Gewirtz et al. (1995) in their work on markets in education, argue that the communications in these brochures are being simplified and are becoming more formulaic, attempting to portray a school which is all things to all people. Drawing upon the field of Communication Studies to gain further insight into the analysis of meaning amongst audiences, and in relation to marketing research, Campbell, C. (1997:341) notes that Sociologists have tended towards the "communicative act paradigm" when researching advertising – that the consumption of goods or services is symbolic rather than instrumental, and is used as a means to send messages about the individual who consumes. This framework is an interesting lens through which to consider the 'purchase' of an ITT course (Lovelock and

Wirtz, 2001) and how applicants use their consumption to send messages about their own identities framed within the 'language' presented to them in the marketing of their ITT course. This lends weight towards positioning the research design within a post-facto narrative, using current trainees rather than applicants as the subject of the research.

The term 'marketing materials' is quite nebulous and could refer to a range of content and communications channels used to advertise and recruit applicants onto ITT programmes. Mackay (2005:1) quotes the Chartered Institute of Marketing's definition that, "Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably." The concept of marketing is centred on communications with potential customers (Holm, 2006). It encompasses activity such as market research, branding, value creation and packaging, and strategic advertising and promotion (Holm, 2006; see also, Hill, E. and O'Sullivan, 1999). The literature differentiates between the advertising of products, services and recruitment as distinct fields (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2001; see also, Asprey, 2005; and, Ryan et al., 2000), with ITT arguably bridging all three fields of literature. In this context, ITT is effectively promoting the product of a professional teacher as the end result of the training course. I would argue this is no different to promoting an exercise regime that requires input and effort on the part of the consumer to achieve the promoted outcome. Equally, ITT may be considered a service, in the sense that the programme provides training and support from the schools throughout the year. Finally, marketing of ITT is clearly concerned with recruitment, in that advertising of ITT is synonymous with promotion of the teaching profession. As such Mackay (2005) notes that recruitment advertising is different to other forms of commercial advertising, as it is asking people to make a considerable 'life decision' by switching jobs, or in this case, choosing a particular career and training pathway.

Early research into advertising looked at the production of materials, rather than how they were viewed and perceived by their audiences (Nava, 1997). Debate in this field has moved on to consider both the production of the marketing, and the production of the audience through the marketing (Hagen and Wasko, 2000).

Likewise, Puntoni et al. (2010) in their work on polysemy in advertising, note that commercials can have multiple meanings for audiences, and suggest that this is a fruitful area for research, lending weight to the argument to further explore the perspectives on the advertising itself of applicants to ITT. Davis (2013) highlights the interaction between the consumption of advertising, and the production of culture, arguing that promotional activities have become absorbed into day-to-day culture and internalised by the individual as a symbolic practice. This may be used to think about how applicants to ITT consume promotional messages, make choices based on these, and then self-define, negotiate and re-produce distinct messages and philosophies around their own training routes – something that could be evidenced through their language and explanation of their decisions around their ITT programme.

For this project, what originally started out as the term ‘marketing materials’ has now been reframed to cover all information sources that the applicant used to make their decisions about their ITT pathway. At the outset, the assumptions of what marketing materials or information sources the applicant might use were noted in figure 3, with those circled in red highlighting materials and sources that were specifically discussed in the project. This covers a wide range of different forms of communication, both in person, either at events or over the phone, or the published word via websites, social media and printed materials. From a search of the literature, there appears to be no recent and coherent work that examines how applicants have engaged with these information sources to make their decisions over ITT pathway. Whilst Williams et al. (2016), Matthias (2014) and the National Audit Office (2016) reference the sources and the quality of the information they provide, they omit reference to the impact these materials have, or more importantly do not have, on the choice of ITT pathway. The overlay of theories taken from the field of Communication Studies, especially addressing how the audience consumes and internalises the promotional messages relayed through marketing, appears to be an original concept in this particular context of ITT research.

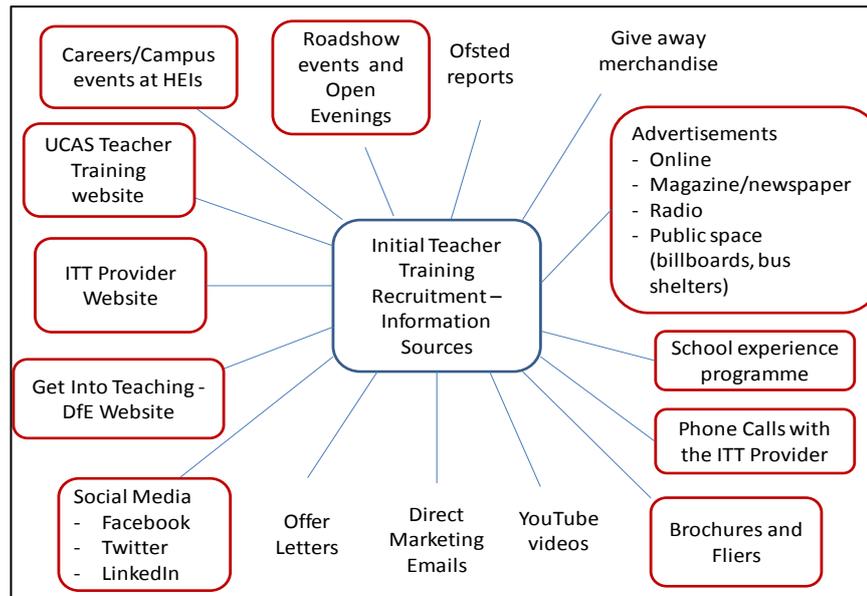


Figure 3 - The sources of information and marketing materials for ITT recruitment that were considered at the outset of the research project

In summary, the operation of a traditional market in Initial Teacher Training cannot be assumed. There are a number of constraining factors such as government intervention in training place numbers, and the limitation of tuition fees that suggest otherwise. This is alongside a deeper ontological debate around the exchange of value in education and the positioning of the applicant as customer, with the associated expectations to therefore remain informed about the market in which they are entering into. The marketing process itself takes a prospective candidate for ITT all the way through the application stages, and arguably onto the training programme and beyond the other side, following Lovelock and Wirtz's (2001) model of pre-purchase, service encounter, and post-purchase stages. Marketing involves the communication with potential customers, and in the context of recruitment, advertising is especially challenging as it requires persuading someone to choose a particular job or career path, such as ITT. Recent trends in the field of marketing research have focussed on the receipt of these promotional messages by audiences and as such, it would make sense for the research project to focus on people who have reached the point of making their decisions with regards to their ITT application. The number of promotional channels and sources of information for applicants within ITT is vast. Instead of focussing on the effectiveness of just one particular type of advertising

or promotion, it is proposed that the research focusses on this whole picture in order to understand how applicants engage differently with the information sources available to them.

### 2.3 The conceptualisation of choice

The previous section has established the landscape of ITT, and the information sources available to applicants. The following section presents a conceptualisation of the applicants' choices as they move through the 'customer journey', and questions their engagement with these sources of information throughout the application process.

#### 2.3.1 Previous studies into Student Choice

Understanding applicants' choice of teacher training pathway – both route and provider – has undoubted research value at this point in time. Despite the recent attempts to understand similar issues through government reports such as Williams et al. (2016), the contemporary context of the 2016-17 recruitment methodology provides an additional, original frame through which to analyse the applicants' response to the recruitment landscape that they found themselves in. In its simplest form, understanding applicants' decision-making processes, and the reasons behind their choices, will aid ITT providers in considering how they attract and recruit future teachers – this is the same motivation for conducting research into graduates' choice of surgical residency programme, as per Mayer et al's (2001) and Caraccio and Gladstein's (1992) research in the medical field. These papers were a useful starting point to understand how choice of a similar professional development programme has previously been conceptualised.

Many studies have been conducted into students' choice of courses in various professional fields. As far back as 1981, changes to ITT programmes led Smedley (1981) to investigate why students chose between two options for the BEd and PGCE at Loughborough University. Importantly, Smedley distinguishes the

difference between expressing interest and applying to a particular course, adding weight to the argument to investigate applicants' decision-making processes once they have already secured a place and begun their ITT course.

Other studies have investigated choice of courses statistically. This has been through a survey such as that of Oliva and Staudt (2003) or Carraccio and Gladstein (1992), the latter of which used a Likert Scale to rank the order of 25 factors affecting students' preference of medical residency training programme. Carr et al. (1993) applies hypothesis testing to explore whether women are more attracted to primary care when choosing their career path in internal medicine. These studies identify variables and potential factors of choice that are applicable to this study, but the approaches of their research attempts to find quantifiable patterns within the data, which moves away from exploring the individual experiences of applicants to ITT in this context.

Furlong et al.'s (2000) work on professionalism in teacher education begins to identify some of the variable factors between different ITT routes and providers, such as the level of skills and professional knowledge as an outcome of the programme, the location and structure of training; and the amount of time spent in the school. It would be beneficial, given the recent context of developments in ITT policy, to bring this study up to date and identify the factors that applicants currently use to differentiate their choices of ITT pathway as part of this study.

Caraccio and Gladstein's (1992) work on choice of surgical residency programme, whilst driven by similar motivations to this study, takes a more positivistic view of the phenomenon of choice, aiming to rank the factors involved in choosing a training programme and determining whether these factors vary by medical specialism. This is intuitively counterposed to the epistemological assumptions of this study, which considers the individual's choice from an interpretive, phenomenological standpoint (Finlay, 2009). More detail on this is given in the methodology in chapter 3.

When making a choice of ITT Provider and course, it is assumed that applicants have a relative degree of knowledge on which to base their decision. As Lovelock and Wirtz (2001) note, the decision is made at the pre-purchase stage based on an awareness of need – in this case the decision to become a teacher drives the research into, and application to an ITT pathway. The following sub-section outlines this process, detailing any assumptions around commonality and difference in the ‘customer journey’ for applicants.

### 2.3.2 Epistemological Assumptions – the ITT Customer Journey from Start to Finish

The customer journey for applicants to ITT starts with the individual considering a career in teaching. As outlined previously, each individual will have varying levels of prior knowledge regarding the teaching profession itself, and the teacher training process. Time plays a crucial role in conceptualising the individual applicant/trainee as customer as they move through the stages of recruitment. This is further informed by the philosophy of phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009), with significant epistemological implications for the generation and analysis of any data collected. Phenomenology is rooted in the principle of the ‘lived experience’ of the individual (Titchen and Hobson, 2005). As such, if the research were to take this philosophical position as opposed to previous studies which have taken a more positivist approach to modelling student factors of choice (Carr et al., 1993; Mayer et al., 2001; Oliva and Staudt, 2003), the focus is maintained on the experiences of individuals in applying to teacher training. One option would therefore have been to research directly with the applicant population who are attempting to navigate the ITT landscape at the current point in time. However, returning to the research aims, the intention is to look deeper into the ‘customer journey’ as it develops over time. Researching directly with applicants would not allow for a rounded view of their decision-making process and subsequent outcomes. Instead, I have looked to the philosophical work of Sartre (Priest, 2001; see also, Onof, 2003), which serves to frame this ‘customer journey’ as a chronological state of becoming a teacher.

As the individual moves between the stages of the customer journey, they take on different roles from:

Potential Candidate → Applicant → Offer holder → Trainee → Teacher

It is only through acknowledging this metamorphosis from the candidate, to applicant, to trainee teacher that the research can fully assess the choices and the process of decision-making that occurs along the way.

As a distinction, the recruitment process and the application process are taken to mean two different things. The recruitment process for ITT providers encapsulates the entire journey, supporting the individual to move from potential candidate to trainee teacher at the start of their ITT programme. Alternatively, the application process is a sub-set within this, which begins with the individual entering into the application mechanism of UCAS Teacher Training, and hence becoming an applicant, and ends when the applicant is converted into an offer holder following what usually involves an interview with the ITT provider. This distinction is important to clarify at the outset. It is feasible that some individuals may enter the recruitment process as a prospective candidate, but drop out during the application process, as is the focus of Williams et al.'s (2016) study into drop-out rates during ITT recruitment. As the focus of this study is not specifically on drop-out rates, the research is instead positioned with individuals who have made it through the entire recruitment process, in order to gain a fuller picture of their engagement with the marketing at each stage.

At this point, it is important to articulate the composition of the ‘audience’ for the ITT marketing effort, and thus ultimately the research subject for this project. Arguably, the audience simply comes into existence as a specific group of people due to the framing of the marketer (Maxwell, cited in, Hagen and Wasko, 2000). Consideration must be given to this in the research design. Lury and Warde (1997) cite the ‘self-reflexive consumer’ as a topic for debate and study in sociology. If the consumer in this context equates to the ITT applicant, this frames the research subject as possessing a degree of ‘self-knowledge’ (Ryle, 1994) and suggests looking back on the process of consumption, requiring a brief but necessary passage of time. When entering into the research and application process, the applicant cannot be expected to know about all of the ITT options available to them, nor their own characteristics or preferences that will guide them towards a particular choice, hence this phenomenon is only accessible upon reflection.

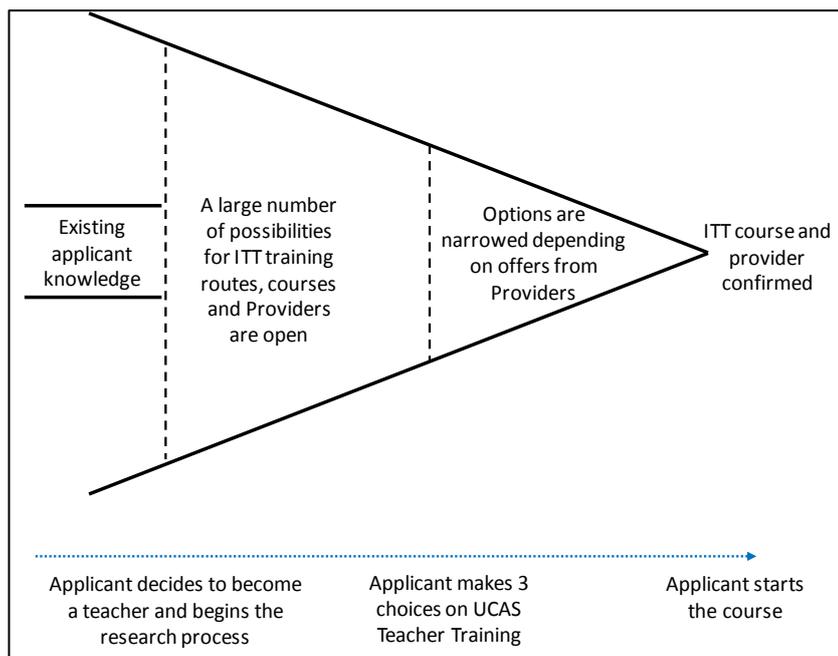


Figure 4 - The key decisions and ‘possibility space’ for applicants to ITT

In order to discuss this research with non-specialist audiences, the diagram in figure 4 was created to outline the basic ‘customer journey’ that all applicants must adhere to in some form. Across the bottom of the diagram in figure 4 are the key decision points and choices for the applicant. The first decision is to become a teacher, and enter into the research and application process to find an

appropriate ITT pathway. The second decision involves making three choices, as per the constraints of the application mechanism of UCAS Teacher Training. As the applicant then moves through the recruitment process, if they are successful, they are made offers and effectively become 'offer holders'. The final choice is therefore which offer from which ITT provider to accept. Once this is confirmed and any conditions are met, the applicant moves out of the recruitment process and becomes a trainee when they start the ITT course, usually in September.

As this journey progresses, the number of options available to the applicant become narrowed. This is due to both proactive choice on the part of the applicant, and imposed restrictions formed by ITT policy. At the point of deciding to become a teacher, arguably all training options are open to the applicant. These are immediately restricted based on their current qualifications. If an individual does not hold a degree, then they cannot directly apply to a postgraduate route and hence most of the options outlined in table 1 are inapplicable. On the other hand, the applicant may not choose a particular ITT pathway option due to what Kotler and Fox (1995:252) term, "infeasibility", "unawareness" or "non-choice". A provider might be considered "infeasible" if it is far beyond the location that the applicant wishes to base themselves in. An applicant might discount or make a "non-choice" that the University-led route into teaching is not appropriate for them and their personal circumstances. Finally, an applicant may be unaware of one of the possible training pathways, such as Teach First, and therefore this option is never considered. It is these nuances in the decision-making process that determine whether an individual applicant can make an informed choice of ITT pathway, and it is these variations that form the basis of this study. It is foreseeable that the applicant may only become aware of these multiple, possible worlds (Lewis, 1986) upon reflection, once a period of time has passed and their time on an ITT programme has allowed for a greater understanding of the training process and the outcomes.

It is important to challenge the assumption that applicants can be aware of and comprehend all possible routes into ITT available to them in England. The sheer volume alone suggests this would be considerably challenging. Each applicant

starts out with an existing degree of knowledge of the ITT process and has different prior experiences of the classroom, both as a child and working adult. Each individual has a distinct set of criteria from which they begin their journey of understanding. Theoretically, at this point, whilst a large number of options of ITT are open to the applicants, as they move through the key decision points, their scope is narrowed until they settle on one particular route and provider – their ITT pathway. Each individual has a distinct set of criteria from which they begin their journey of understanding. Croissant's (2014:7) work on knowledge and ignorance highlights that, "These knowing and non-knowings are not pattern less, but neither are they completely specified or structured." Her argument supports a research approach that focuses on an in-depth analysis of individuals' unique circumstances, in order to draw out common themes and variations between their *customer journeys*, rather than attempting to draw statistical conclusions as others have done.

Having established the process through which an applicant makes their choice, and the information sources available for them to base this decision upon, the final section of this literature review outlines and reviews possible theories to explain constraints on making an informed choice of ITT pathway.

## 2.4 Theories to explain constraints on making an informed choice

Returning to the impetus for this study, the NAO, in their 2016 report, stated it was difficult for applicants to make a fully informed choice of ITT pathway. This statement was based on the range of training routes and providers available, noting that it is difficult for applicants to differentiate between these pathways based on cost or quality, as the majority of ITT Providers charge the maximum tuition fees and those providers who have been inspected by Ofsted have almost all been rated as 'good' or above (National Audit Office, 2016). The NAO also corroborate the statements in the DfE's (2016a) white paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, which notes that the distribution of ITT routes and providers across the country is widely varied, and applicants in different areas have disparate opportunities to train across the full range of pathways on offer.

Therefore, to unpack the statement that applicants to ITT do not have sufficient information to make a fully informed choice involves consideration of a number of factors, including course cost, quality, the route into teaching – its delivery on the course and its outcomes in terms of qualification - to name just a few.

The research must take care to distinguish between the different aspects that an applicant may or may not be aware of, and to assume that this is a binary concept is unwise. The concept of Johari window (Chandler and Munday, 2016) in figure 5 is an appropriate model in this context. The Johari window is used to represent knowledge in the form of comparisons between what is known to the self and what is known to others, dividing into four quadrants. Figure 5 represents this diagrammatically. The crux of the argument is that there are some aspects on which an individual may be unaware that they are ignorant – similar to the state of having blind spots in figure 5.

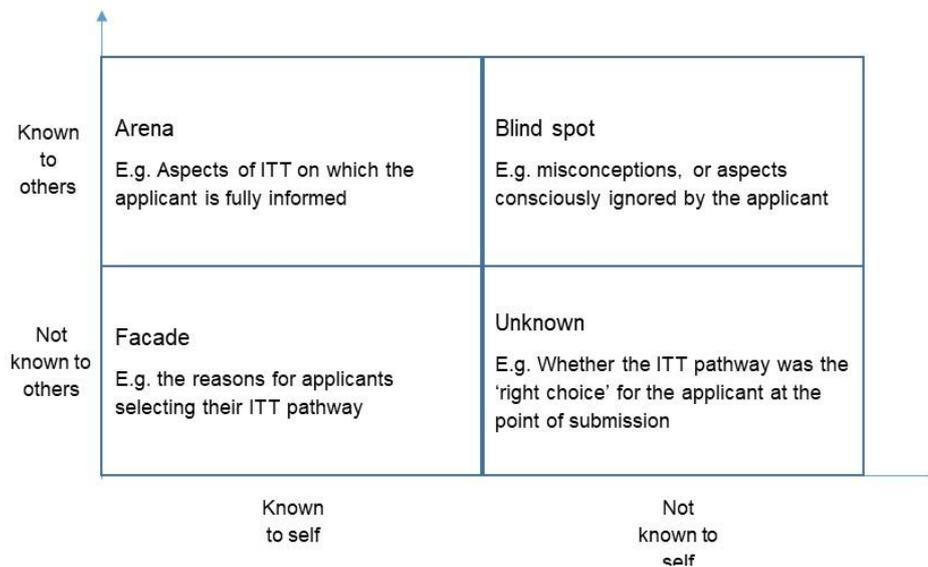


Figure 5 – The Johari Window, (Chandler and Munday, 2016)

In the context of this research study, an applicant may have some information about ITT, but not be fully informed, falling into the blind spot category. Likewise, they may hold misconceptions that have arisen as a result of the information that was presented to them. They may hold misconceptions from an alternative source

to the marketing and information produced by the government and the ITT providers. There may be aspects of the course, or of themselves, that they could not possibly have known at the point in time at which they began their training, falling into the unknown category. This also raises questions around what a fully informed decision would look like and whether this is even possible, given the wide array of choice of ITT pathway in the market.

This analysis begins and ends with the individual. However, a sense of scale must be employed to fully comprehend the complexity of factors. As such, this final section moves from questioning the contents of the individual's mind – their knowledge, potential misconceptions or alternatively their ignorance; to the meta-structures of the ITT landscape, the policy drivers and the construction of a market; to question the role of the applicant in engaging with the market, and how the market responds to demand; and finally to outline why the specific circumstances of recruitment might add an additional layer of complexity to the process of choice.

Smithson's (1989) work on ignorance and uncertainty provides an interesting theoretical framework through which to consider what an *uninformed* decision might look like, and how an awareness of need (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2001), prior knowledge, and conversely forms of ignorance, lead to a choice ultimately being made. Smithson (1989) makes the distinction between informational and epistemological ignorance: the former being based on a lack of facts, and the latter referencing an inability to process those facts. This distinction underpins the discussion around the marketing of ITT, and whether fully-informed choice stems from the coherence of information contained in these communications, as per Brown's (2011) argument, or the applicants' willingness and ability to process this information.

Building upon Smithson's (1989) work, the theoretical framework of Agnotology (Proctor, 2008) or 'the making and unmaking of ignorance' as the book is subtitled, presented itself as a meaningful way to explore applicants' behaviours and choices in relation to ITT Providers and courses. Proctor's (2008) book on the

subject outlines three ways to think about ignorance: as native state, in the sense of not knowing something which leads to the impulse to discover; as lost realm, in that the subject is known to some people and not others, usually through the active choice to ignore or forget; and as strategic ploy, or the active construction of some people's ignorance by the actions of others as a way of keeping people in the dark. These three concepts are unpacked and interrogated throughout the following paragraphs, continually challenging the balance between the agency of the individual and the effect of the structures of the ITT landscape.

#### 2.4.1 Complexity of choice in the ITT market

The first constraint to making an informed choice is arguably the complexity of the ITT market. I would posit that complexity of choice presents a challenge in two ways: both in simple terms of the variety of ITT pathway choices that the applicants are expected to understand and decide between; and also in terms of how this complexity blurs the boundaries around who is making this decision – who assumes the role of provider and supplier – and how this ultimately affects the applicant as *one of* the decision-makers, attempting to comprehend all of the options available to them in a complex recruitment market such as ITT.

The *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (Department for Education, 2016a:28) paper states that, “We will continue to move to an increasingly school-led ITT system which recruits enough great teachers in every part of the country, so that the best schools and leaders control which teachers are recruited and how they are trained.” This policy has arguably three drivers; to promote school-led ITT over University-led, the agenda for which is critiqued within the work of Whiting et al. (2018); the location of the training, which might be underpinned by both demand from applicants, and also demand from schools; and finally this concept of control by schools themselves, as the ultimate recipient of the newly trained teachers. This simple sentence in the DfE's white paper illustrates a key orientation for the ITT market. The DfE notes that not all *schools* have access to all types of ITT providers across the country, acknowledging the geographical concentration of HE providers in more urban settlements. As such, a key driver for the proliferation of

the routes into teaching is to localise ITT provision by basing it in schools that serve their local communities. This arguably evidences the policy's underlying assumption - that it is the schools who are in demand of teachers. This presents a re-framing, or switching of positions between who is the consumer (the school, rather than the applicant/trainee) and hence the direction of thought is to support *schools* in recruiting, not applicants in training.

The initial assumption, as in the context of Higher Education, is that providers are the suppliers, and students are the consumers (Brown, R., 2011). Within the context of recruitment, training and future workforce labour, this is reframed to consider the schools as both the supplier of ITT, but also ultimately the consumer of the ITT 'output' – the newly qualified teacher. With the drive towards school-led ITT, it is possible to consider that schools are in fact the consumers in the market, looking for a consistent supply of teaching labour. However, given the context of a recruitment crisis (Vaughan, 2015), the supply of willing applicants is not available. Schools use ITT as a means to recruit future teachers for their workforce. Hence, the government policy to proliferate school-led ITT providers so that *schools* have access to a greater choice of ITT providers, which has given rise to an increasing number of providers targeting a limited pool of applicants. With this understanding, the complexity of the ITT landscape can be viewed as an outcome of a policy attempt to benefit the schools, and not the applicants within this situation. Arguably instead, this complexity presents a significant constraint on applicants making an informed choice of ITT pathway.

To draw upon Berg and Gornitzka's (2012) work, the policy direction of the DfE follows the assumption that more choice in the market equates to more freedom for the consumer – both the schools and the applicants. However, the literature suggests that the scale and diversity of ITT pathways on offer has had an adverse effect on the recruitment of new teachers (Allen et al., 2016; see also, Cater, 2017). The language of the DfE's White Paper (2016a) suggests developing choice in the ITT market is driven by the needs of the schools, which has resulted in the requirement to engage with a diverse number of routes into teaching and ITT providers. Whilst choice can also be assumed a benefit to the applicant, Berg and

Gornitzka (2012) argue this places excessive demands on people's choice capacities, and hence the complexity in the market forms the basis of the first constraint on making an informed decision of ITT pathway.

Given the direct written evidence to support the government's policy direction towards school-led ITT noted above, it can be stated that the complexity of the ITT market is a direct and desired outcome of the DfE's policy (2016a), although not necessarily with the intention of benefitting the potential applicant. The NAO (2016) states that the information provided on ITT does not allow the applicant to make a fully informed decision about their choice of pathway. Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that complexity in the market is driven by a desire to deceive or coerce applicants towards particular teacher training routes, the resultant effect is argued to be a level of ignorance amongst ITT applicants. This research project must establish both whether applicants feel they are able to make an informed decision, but also their reasoning for choosing particular ITT pathways, so as to understand the impact of complexity in the ITT landscape.

#### 2.4.2 The information sources

Returning to the concept of cyclical production and consumption facilitated through marketing (Arnould et al., 2004), the concept of 'strategic ploy' (Proctor, 2008) might be used to assess how marketing actively constructs applicants' ignorance. At the national level, the 2016 recruitment advertisement campaign 'Get Into Teaching', produced by the DfE, was widely ridiculed for its claim that teachers could earn up to £65,000 (Sweeney, 2016). Whilst the advertising standards agency did not uphold complaints that the television advert was misleading, this hints at the deliberate crafting of strategic ploy ignorance (Proctor, 2008) in the field of ITT marketing. Likewise, the DfE's Get Into Teaching website (DfE, 2018a) talks about University-led ITT being 'based' in a University (see figure 1), which is a potentially misleading statement given the statutory requirement for all ITT courses to include a minimum number of days (120 in total) spent in schools (DfE and NCTL, 2018c). Arguably, the latent result of driving further complexity and competition for talent amongst providers in the ITT

market, is to drive marketing behaviours that either deliberately or not, deceive potential applicants into making choices which might retrospectively be deemed uninformed.

Developing the concept of marketing for recruitment, Wilden et al. (2010) argue that branding affects relationships with potential employees as well as customers. Branding in this sense represents the values and qualities for which an organisation is known, especially in regards to its relationship with its employees. In the particular context of school-led ITT, a trainee teacher is also arguably a potential future employee. Wilden et al. (2010) note the creation of information a-symmetry with regards to recruitment marketing. One side may not truly know the other's experience: you cannot really know what a job is like until you do it. This is a potential barrier to making an informed decision about the choice of ITT pathway. Wilden et al.'s (2010) criticism will be important to the research design for two reasons; as a reminder to incorporate this notion of employer 'branding' within any line of questioning as a concept over and above direct marketing communications; and because it calls into question the stage at which the research should engage with ITT applicants.

Research in this field would need to assess how applicants received and acted upon messages, as outlined in section 2.2.3. At the provider level, the aim of this project is not to directly assess the quality of claims made in the marketing materials. Instead, evidence for strategic ploy ignorance (Proctor, 2008) can be uncovered by asking current trainees to compare their expectations in terms of what they were 'sold' against their experiences on the course. This has significant implications for the research design.

In addition to the quality of the information and the key messages portrayed through the ITT marketing, the distribution and dissemination of advertising must also be considered. Building upon the information sources outlined in figure 3, it is possible that applicants would engage differently with each format. Some may conduct their research of their choices purely online, whereas others may prefer to speak to ITT providers in person. The extent to which an applicant might be

uninformed may therefore stem from the distribution and accessibility of the information sources, alongside their willingness to engage with the materials to become informed, which is covered in the next section. Understanding this relationship has been key for the study's analysis, and a significant driver of the research questions.

### 2.4.3 Applicant Engagement

So far, this review has identified two potential constraints to making an informed decision regarding ITT pathway. The first relates to the complexity of the market that applicants must navigate. The second refers to the quality of the information sources – both in terms of their messages and their accessibility. The following section discusses the extent to which applicants to ITT can really be expected to fully engage with all of their options, and understand what is required of them both as applicant, and trainee, throughout the process of becoming a new teacher.

As a researcher, I must first acknowledge the challenge of making a claim of ignorance amongst research subjects. Pinto (2015) argues, in her discussion of Agnotology in relation to the social understanding of science, that work to date in this theoretical field lacks a clear conceptual analysis of knowledge and ignorance, and to beware of making implicit normative assumptions about these states. It is not a case of mutual exclusivity, nor is it simple to define what constitutes knowledge and what constitutes ignorance, particularly when analysing from a relatively privileged position. Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989) note that the interviewer and respondent must be in positions of equality. It may be that my previous professional role as Teacher Education Partnership Manager makes me more aware of the ITT training routes from the outset but the interviewer should not present themselves as more knowledgeable when discussing an individual's personal experiences (Thompson et al., 1989). However, Smithson (2008) argues that ignorance should be assessed in terms of: who is ignorant about what, and how is this known; how does this match claims about what can and cannot be known; and how do people use and respond to claims of their ignorance

(Smithson, 2008:213). These questions will be important in terms of the theoretical assessment of the presence of ignorance amongst ITT applicants – what do they *not* know about the ITT choices that were available to them; how do I, as researcher, know they are ‘ignorant’; what is it possible for them to know; and how do they respond to and justify their choices of ITT course given any potential ignorance.

Applicants to any course of study, be it ITT, or anything else in Higher Education, will need to research and learn about their options. Despite various levels of prior knowledge, all applicants to some extent will need to develop their understanding both of the application process itself and what is required, and the programme they intend to study. There is an assumed state of innate ignorance at some point on the journey to becoming a teacher. Proctor (2008) classes this type of ignorance as ‘native state’ – the ignorance that is derived from just not knowing something yet. Proctor (2008) argues that this type of ignorance is beneficial in certain circumstances, as a lack of knowledge can drive the impetus to learn. In the case of applicants to ITT, it is an assumption that all applicants at least to some degree will need to draw upon their native state ignorance to explore and understand their choices of possible pathway into the teaching profession.

However, building on the challenges put forward thus far – the complexity of the market, and the quality of the information sources – a further constraint to making an informed choice is whether the individual applicants are cognitively capable of engaging with the market and the information available. Berg and Gornitzka (2012) argue that ‘choice overload’ is decreasing consumers’ abilities and competences to engage with the market in the ways that they are expected to. Expanding on this concept, Berg and Gornitzka (2012) argue that the demands placed on consumers - to measure quality, compare price, and police their own decisions as to what is an ethical purchase - is overwhelming and leads to a strategic choice on the individual’s part to either stop engaging or ignore certain choices. This returns to the contextual argument that differentiation of choice between route into teaching and the number of providers, is potentially presenting a constraint on applicants making an informed decision due to what

Berg and Gornitzka (2012:160) term, “Consumer Attention Deficit Disorder”. The idea that consumers are unable, and therefore choose not to engage with all of their market options, relates to Proctor’s (2008) final classification of ignorance, that of ‘lost realm’, or the conscious choice to ignore or forget certain types of knowledge. Whilst the examples of lost realm ignorance in Proctor’s (2008) work are retrospective, and relate mostly to society’s collective ignorance of certain topics, I am interested in whether this concept might be applied to ITT, where the applicant is afforded agency within the recruitment process, considering how they make a selective choice to ignore certain information or pathways that are open to them.

Berg and Gornitzka (2012) ground their work in debates around behavioural economics – focussing on the limitations of consumers, and questioning whether they are rational acting consumers or just behaving in a certain way. Their work argues that consumers in different markets are flitting between both positions, and hence it is important in this context to discern and discuss whether applicants are making rational, strategic decisions in their quest to find the right teacher training pathway for them, or if they are simply responding to influences and constraints placed upon them by the market. Croissant (2014) identifies the role of *Intentionality* in constructing the conscious ignorance of certain types of knowledge, based on the individual’s determination and choice that they simply do not need to know certain things. This concept is particularly relevant in attributing autonomy to the ITT applicant, and assessing whether and how the individual chooses to remain ignorant of certain opportunities available to them once they decide upon a course of action - what Proctor (2008) notes is referred to in the field of psychology as confirmation bias. This could be summarised as the applicants’ engagement with the marketing materials: how they research, select and then justify their choice of ITT course based on their interactions with the marketing. The implicit assumption is that applicants choose to remain ignorant of some of their options, as they begin to discount certain routes, providers and courses – an assumption that would need to be tested in any analysis.

#### 2.4.4 The mechanics of application

The final potential constraint identified at the outset through a synthesis of the marketing, consumer and recruitment literatures, is that of the mechanics of application - the fact that it is a two-way choice between applicant and recruiter - creates a situation that influences behaviour beyond that of a rational market decision. As shown in figure 4, the possibilities for the applicant are narrowed as they begin to make choices based on a number of variables. Crucially, UCAS Teacher Training only allows three choices of programme to apply to. Once the applicant enters this stage of the recruitment process, and potentially begins to attend interviews and receive offers, the end game is within sight. This dynamic could arguably constrain any final notions of informed choice in two ways: firstly, through pressure to accept the first offer that is made, and secondly, by removing that choice altogether if the applicant is rejected outright by the provider. Williams et al. (2016) note this as a specific point at which applicants can drop out and be 'lost' by the ITT recruitment system.

Based upon the potential constraints of the application mechanism, and its chronological position within the customer journey, the question is raised as to how best to explore constraints on making an informed choice throughout the application process. Building upon the work of Croissant (2014) around chronicity and the revelation of ignorance over time, the implication for the research design is that the subject of the research becomes the trainee and not the applicant. To conduct research directly with applicants, is to miss the opportunity for a period of reflection and to fully comprehend the impact of the final stages of the application process on informed choice and potential ignorance.

#### 2.4.5 Challenging assumptions

The analysis of the literature surrounding ITT, marketing and consumer choice has raised a number of potential constraints to making an informed choice of ITT pathway. These constraints are both structural, through the mechanics of application, the quality of information sources and the complexity of the market;

and involve the agency of the individual in their ability to engage with the marketing information provided. This final section of the literature review notes some challenges to assumptions within the narrative of informed choice and ignorance.

There are also a number of structural assumptions to be conscious of and to address in the research design. Primarily, Proctor (2008; see also, Smithson, 1989) makes it clear in his writing that applicants are not necessarily negatively affected by their ignorance. Likewise, the nature of the research can suggest the researcher is in a privileged position of knowing. Whilst my professional experience does potentially suggest I have a greater degree of knowledge of the ITT landscape, it is important to approach the research from a position of understanding how potential ignorance exists and in what form. This is not to assume that ignorance of ITT routes is necessarily detrimental to the applicant who has chosen a particular pathway into teaching. Finally, it is important to state that the research does not approach the marketing of ITT from an explicitly critical perspective, and that there are no assumptions made that it deliberately sets out to deceive or construct ignorance within the applicant.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (Allen et al., 2016) argues that the UK is prescribing to a supply-side model for ITT which is not coherent or aligned to 'high-performing' countries. To add to the challenge around the consumer/supplier dichotomy, Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) work on co-creation experiences and the blurring of the boundaries between production and consumption, exemplified in contexts such as social media and retail, might be applied to ITT. Following on from this discussion as to whether schools are instead the consumers of the teacher training output, it would present an interesting research angle to analyse how applicants to ITT see themselves within this relationship.

Berg and Gornitzka (2012) argue that through market complexity, and the confusing demands placed on consumers, the whole process becomes cyclical, and that uninformed consumers lead to weaker markets that promote a supply-side model. Based on this argument, the implication that an uninformed applicant

is somehow at fault, must be challenged. In turn this raises the question as to whether potential evidence of uninformed applicants to ITT are in fact the effect, or the cause of challenges within the marketing.

Finally, perhaps the most important assumption to challenge is whether the applicant should strive to be fully informed, or whether this notion of an 'ideal consumer' is not really possible (Berg and Gornitzka, 2012). The evidence for this would be facilitated through engaging with research subjects who have been through the application process and subsequently had chance to reflect on their experiences of application, and of ITT itself.

## 2.5 Summary of the Literature Review

To bring all of this together, the aim of the research is to explore how ITT applicants develop their understanding of the routes, providers and courses available to them. By researching with current ITT trainees, it is possible to explore what they knew and did not know at the time, and how their knowledge of the ITT process has developed whilst on the course. It is my assumption that the ITT landscape, in terms of the choice of routes, providers and courses is fundamentally knowable, but whether it is wholly knowable (Croissant, 2014) is a different matter. Exploring the factors on which trainees based their decisions about which pathway to train through will serve to analyse whether there are aspects of the overall ITT offer that applicants may be uninformed about. The ITT providers' marketing has a role to play in providing access to information (Brown, R., 2011) regarding applicants' ITT choices of route, provider and programme, acknowledging that each provider will aim to promote their particular pathway due to competition for potential trainees. It is inevitable that individual applicants will engage with these information sources differently, and this itself has implications for any assessment of whether applicants on the whole can make informed decisions about their ITT pathways. The following chapter defines the research questions to be answered and explains the research design that was developed to address these, with an outline of the full methodology for the project.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions

Based on the nature of the research problem, I decided to employ a qualitative research design that draws upon an interpretive approach (Merriam, 1988; see also, Cohen et al., 2007). This means that, in accordance with the work of Schutz (1967), the methodology is built upon a phenomenological, sociological view of the world, accepting the premise of intentionality (Schutz, 1967; see also, Croissant, 2014) and appreciating the variation in experiences between individual applicants to ITT. Consequently, the conclusions drawn represent the trainee voice and close attention was paid to the quality and rigour of the research methodology to present these as valid conclusions.

Given the variation in the routes into teaching as summarised by the NAO (2016), there is a tendency to consider that ITT providers within each of the routes have a degree of homogeneity regarding their programmes of study. To some extent, the variation in the format and content of the ITT programmes is regulated by the government's statutory requirements for ITT provision (DfE and NCTL, 2018a). The offer presented to applicants across all ITT providers is therefore uniform in details such as the minimum entry requirements, minimum amount of time to be spent in school, and the requirement to have taught in two schools prior to the award of QTS. However, the attributes of ITT providers such as their location and their ethos can vary considerably. As such, the research questions and the subsequent research design have been put together based on this ontological consideration.

The *prima facie* research questions outlined in the introduction served to guide the developed of the literature review. An analysis of the literature to date in chapter 2 has guided the development of the main research questions, which has driven the research methodology and my decisions around methods of data collection and analysis.

The research questions for this study are:

1. How did the participating SCITT trainees research and engage with ITT providers during the application and recruitment stage?
2. Why did the SCITT trainees opt for their ITT pathway – the route and provider?
3. To what extent did the SCITT trainees make an informed choice about their ITT pathway?

Taking each of the research questions in turn and elaborating on the sub-questions (Punch, 2009) underpinning them will serve to position the research design outlined in the following section. The questions take both a direct and indirect phenomenological approach (Titchen and Hobson, 2005) to the study of applying to ITT, that is they attempt to uncover the reasoning behind the individuals' actions from their own perspectives, but also seek to explore the background circumstances that might give rise to the applicant making an uninformed choice within a social constructivist viewpoint of the world (Hammersley, M. , 2007).

By asking how trainees researched and engaged with ITT providers during recruitment and specifically application, I attempted to understand the similarities and differences between their experiences of the customer journey. Behind this sits the question of what were applicants' strategies for researching and understanding all of the information that they had available. Were they constrained in making an informed decision because of the quality and accessibility of the information (Brown, R., 2011)? Or were the trainees in any way hindered in by their own ability to engage with the information presented in line with consumer attention deficit disorder (Berg and Gornitzka, 2012) and the notion of conscious ignorance (Proctor, 2008)?

Asking why trainees chose their particular ITT pathway helped to determine the factors they considered as part of the decision-making process. Likewise, framing the research to allow for a period of reflection on this decision-making process

allowed current trainees to identify for themselves whether they made an informed decision, or whether their subsequent knowledge of ITT changed their understanding of what factors should be considered when applying to ITT. The act of reflecting on this decision is important for uncovering whether initial expectations have been met, and if not, what the perceived barriers were.

The extent to which an informed decision was made was uncovered through the insights provided by the trainees when articulating their experiences of application alongside whether or not the ITT programme has subsequently met their expectations. This relied on a sense of meta-cognition by the trainees themselves to reflect on whether they made an informed decision, without directly phrasing it as such. The question of whether they made an informed decision was not directly posed to the trainees, as this would have affected the tone and effectiveness of the research conversations to imply that the trainees were uninformed. Instead the data from research questions one and two were designed to provide complementary insights that allowed conclusions to be drawn in regard to research question three. This research question had particular implications for the format of the question frames used with the research participants (see Appendices F and G).

### 3.2 Research Design

The methods selected for this study were primarily focus groups and interviews, as well as a short biographical questionnaire. The subjects of the research were trainees in their autumn and spring terms of their ITT year in 2017-18. The justification of this approach and the methods selected is covered in this section on research design, which first considers the epistemological assumptions and data required to answer the research questions.

The research questions ask current trainees to reflect on their experiences of application from the previous year. I selected this approach rather than asking questions directly of candidates going through the ITT application and recruitment

process for reasons outlined throughout this section. This approach necessitated a very different research design that allowed for a period of reflection following the recruitment process. Croissant (2014:6) refers to the concept of 'chronicity', as the revelation of knowledge, or prior 'non-knowledge' or ignorance, over time. The research was therefore conducted with trainees who had recently started their ITT programmes, in order to capture their experiences of the entire application and recruitment process from start to finish.

The stimulus for the study was the NAO's (2016) statement that applicants struggle to make an informed choice. The overall aim is to provide insight for ITT providers and policymakers who are involved in marketing ITT, and recruiting and training new teachers. As such, the literature review has provided several theories for why applicants may not be able to make informed choices of ITT pathway to support a form of theoretical triangulation (Hammersley, M., 2008). The data collected serves to analyse and challenge whether these theories apply in the context of ITT.

### 3.2.1 Epistemological assumptions – selecting a qualitative approach

The purpose of the research design is to provide data that allow significant conclusions to be drawn regarding the extent to which the trainees made an informed choice. My approach is rooted in a phenomenological understanding of the world (Schutz, 1967; see also, Husserl, 1964) and accepts that individual circumstances and experiences will be unique. In terms of what it is possible to know, consideration was given to the stage at which the research subject, in this instance the trainee, is on a continuum of 'becoming' (Priest, 2001). Time plays a crucial role in conceptualising the individual applicant/trainee as a customer on a 'customer journey' as per Williams et al.'s (2016) framing of their research report. This has significant epistemological implications for the generation and analysis of any data collected, which is framed within the philosophical work of Sartre (Priest, 2001; see also, Onof, 2003) as a chronological state of becoming a teacher, or the trainee-teacher lifecycle which can be summarised as:

Potential Candidate → Applicant → Offer holder → Trainee → Teacher

In this way, research with current trainees allows for additional perspectives on the application decisions made, and the experiences of recruitment, which would not be possible if the same questions were asked of current applicants. However, the challenge to this approach was in trainees' accurately recalling their experiences of application, given that for some it was over a year since they went through the process. Thus, in the analysis, careful consideration was given to whether the answers from research participants were reflective of their experiences, or simply the result of poor recollection. This form of *ex post facto* research (Cohen et al., 2007) has implications for dependability of the conclusions in an ever-changing context of ITT (Smith et al., 2009).

The research questions therefore lend themselves to a richly descriptive, qualitative approach to illustrate how trainees made their choices. Despite research question two asking *why* trainees chose their particular ITT pathway, the intention is again to collect rich, descriptive data about the considerations that applicants had, rather than infer direct causation through a more positivistic approach, such as the work of Carr et al. (1993), Mayer et al. (2001) and Oliva and Staudt (2003). The aim is to understand the qualitative association between variable factors in the ITT market such as location or PGCE qualification, and the choices made by the applicants so that ITT providers and policy-makers might have greater insight into the decision-making processes of ITT applicants. A detailed, qualitative approach allows us to answer 'to what extent' type questions by giving depth to responses. It is my assumption that a combination of individual circumstances and individual attributes of an ITT programme lead to the applicant's choice of that particular pathway. This can never be understood through any sort of formulaic implication of causality (Hammersley, M; et al., 2000) but rather through rich, qualitative discussion and representation of the applicants' journeys through the recruitment process.

Consideration was given to researching directly with current applicants. In terms of accessibility (Cohen et al., 2007), it would have been possible to identify applicants to ITT via careers fairs and other events to invite them to participate in the research. This may have been more challenging to coordinate and would have required an incentive to take part in the research. Another challenge would have been the drop-out rate of applicants who do not make it to the final application – this form of research would have been too similar to that of Williams et al. (2016) and therefore not original. A possible advantage of this design would have been the ability to select a more representative sample in terms of demographic characteristics such as ethnicity and prior work background. However, this advantage does not outweigh the challenge of assessing whether the applicant made an informed choice at the point of making that decision. Arguably, this is not something that can be fully understood at the point of happening, especially in direct discussion with the applicant. Instead, the topic has something to benefit from a research design approach that views the application in retrospect. As trainees, the research participants have the opportunity to reflect on their application journey and compare their experiences on the ITT course with their expectations beforehand. This gives rise to a different form of self-knowledge (Ryle, 1994) that surfaces through the passage of time and the transition from one state to another.

This makes an epistemological assumption that the trainees would be sufficiently self-reflective to answer the questions around their decisions and motivations in applying to ITT; and that their answers would allow for evidentially significant conclusions to be drawn about whether uninformed choices were made, without directly asking the trainees for their views on this. The decision not to ask trainees directly whether they felt their choice of ITT was uninformed was based on Smithson's (1989) suggestion that anxiety around ignorance can lead to defensive behaviour and distortion of experiences. To address the assumption that trainees would be sufficiently self-reflective, the data collection methods were selected, and the research strategy designed to encourage complementarity, cross-referencing of answers, and the space for trainees to reflect on their application experiences. The research design instead takes a strategic approach to data collection that serves to boost the reliability of the overall process (Scaife, 2004).

However, as Merriam (1988) notes, data require an interpreter, a phenomenon is altered through observation, and representation is abstract, therefore the trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the research must be assessed in terms of interpreting the investigator's experiences. Merriam (1988) argues that accuracy in such research is based on the perceptions of the researcher and should be judged through the rigorous processes employed in order to represent the participants' constructions of reality. Hence, the latter half of this methodology chapter has been configured to provide a chronological commentary on the research process including sampling strategies, data collection and analysis together as they unfolded, reflecting how the methods were selected so that the focus groups facilitated (Hammersley, M., 2008) the interviews by providing initial exploratory data that the trainees could build upon. This serves to form an 'audit trail' that provides the reader with detail to support the confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the research process, rather than conforming to typical writing structures which treats 'Data Collection' and 'Data Analysis' entirely separately.

### 3.2.2 The logistical framing of the study – Selecting the approach

Given the level of complexity of the research topic and detailed insight required, an interview-based approach (Carson et al., 2001) seemed most fitting to access and analyse the various nuances of trainees' experience of application and recruitment to ITT. The size of the research project and the limited scope that this affords prompted the decision to use one ITT provider from which to sample respondents (Harding, 2013; Yin, 2009).

A SCITT provider was selected on the basis of two important aspects. Firstly, due to the national political context, a SCITT provider appeared to be the most politically current site that would allow for new data to be surfaced on the application and recruitment practices of school-based providers. In this way, trainees are grouped neatly together within an individual ITT provider. However,

the SCITT applicants cannot be considered as a homogenous group themselves, they are united and framed only in their choice of teacher training route.

The second reason for a SCITT provider being chosen, was based on noteworthy local circumstances that warranted further investigation. The university where I had the role of Teacher Education Partnership Manager had recently made a change to its own ITT provision, instead choosing to work solely in partnership with a SCITT as the accredited ITT provider. Applicants to ITT in the region in 2016-17 would have been the first to note the effect that this had on their ITT options and choices. The research findings are therefore inductive, in that they are reliant upon an examination of the data to uncover new concepts and relationships around the ITT market and the trainees' choice of ITT pathway.

The final consideration when selecting the research approach was the timeframe for data collection. Within the space of a year, applicants become trainees, and then within another year, trainees become newly qualified teachers. As such, it was important to collect data within the academic year, to sample trainees that were all from the same cohort. This was deemed important because the research participants would have had the opportunity for the same experiences within the context of one application cohort. This allowed for a degree of generalisation *within* the case itself, which would not have been possible if the research had taken place with trainees from multiple cohorts over several years.

### 3.2.3 Selection of the methods and phasing of the research

Given the timeframe constraints mentioned in the earlier section, the phasing of the data collection had to be carefully planned. The research strategy was to facilitate discussion with a representative sample of current trainees from the SCITT Provider. Therefore, the methods that were chosen to support this drew strongly from the qualitative research tradition, and were structured so as to allow for facilitation (Hammersley, M., 2008) through exploratory focus groups, maximum cross-referencing, and clarification of concepts throughout.

The main research consisted of two phases – focus groups and individual interviews – with sampling supported by a short biographical questionnaire to recruit trainees into the focus groups. The data collection methods were chosen to allow for respondent triangulation throughout the analysis (Merriam, 1988; see also, Hammersley, M., 2008).

Taking into account the sociological dimension of consumption, particularly in light of Askegaard and Linnet's (2011) call for the expansion of epistemological context in consumer culture theory [CCT], the aim of the research is partly to access the 'lived experiences' of individuals but also to access the "conditions under which these experiences unfold" (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011:397). Focus groups were therefore used as a starting point to discuss and explore the trainees' collective experiences of the application and recruitment process.

These focus groups served to tease out the language and themes associated with SCITT and begin to understand the factors of choice for trainees, and the commonality or "structures of common differences" (Moisander et al., 2009:330) between their customer journeys. The method of focus groups addresses the epistemological production of data (Radnor, 2002) through a different lens –that of a shared knowledge or understanding (Rosa and Spanjol, 2005). Focus groups serve to access some of the common 'shared stereotypic impressions' (Ruscher and Hammer, 2006) of SCITT within a group. Drawing upon Ruscher and Hammer's (Ibid.) insights, shared impressions, particularly in relation to 'the other' – ITT routes and providers – allows for insight into how trainees make sense of their programme offer (Bond, 2000). This was evident when the trainees referenced their opinions on other routes into teaching during the focus groups, whereby a sense of group unity was illustrated in relation to their position as SCITT trainees, and not trainees on another ITT pathway.

However, the research design maintained an awareness that the nature of focus groups means it is potentially difficult to solicit differing viewpoints and opinions,

as human nature tends towards agreement in group situations (Krueger, 1994). Likewise, the group discussion can afford less opportunity for the individual to reflect on their own personal experiences and explore these in any significant depth.

The data from the focus groups was collated and analysed with the intention to conduct follow-up individual interviews with a sample of the focus group participants in a second phase. One-to-one interviews were chosen as a method that focuses on, “The centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social situatedness of research data” (Cohen et al., 2007:349), allowing me to access individual’s understanding of a phenomenon and further explore the concept of the internalised mind (Gallagher, 2008). The second phase used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of the SCITT trainees from the focus groups, to further drill down into their ‘customer journey’ experiences, their factors of choice when making decisions about their ITT pathway, and their engagement with the ITT marketing materials they encountered. This required the interview subjects to be extremely reflective and have a degree of self-knowledge (Ryle, 1994) that would allow them to comment on their experiences. This has epistemological implications for the production of data (Mayoh, 2015) with the potential for methodological double-analysis, wherein the research participants analyse and frame their answers during the interview, for the researcher to add their holistic analysis afterwards. Respondent validity played a part here in clarifying the meaning through an iterative process of confirmation with the trainees during both the focus groups and the interviews.

The phasing of the research in this manner required analysis to take place between the focus groups and interviews (between December 2017 and March 2018). To further serve the purpose of complementarity and cross-referencing, some of the initial themes, especially around the factors of choice, and other contextual answers that the participants gave, were fed into the interview question frame (Appendix G) to further drive the discussion and fully answer the research questions in a rigorous manner.

In total, 3 focus groups consisting of 3 hours of recorded data, and 8 interviews consisting of 8 hours of recorded data were conducted, which allowed for sufficient data sources to utilise ‘respondent triangulation’, such as the kind advocated by Mathison (1988, cited in, Merriam, 1988:169) through a sample large enough to gain a ‘holistic understanding’ of the situation to be studied.

### 3.3 SCITT Provider Context

The following section provides detailed insight into the context of the SCITT Provider, to help inform the reader and allow for judgements to be made regarding the transferability of the results (Gomm et al., 2000; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009)

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the national population of trainee teachers in 2017-18. The characteristics of the sample SCITT provider’s population are outlined in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 2 – Comparable demographic characteristics for all ITT in England, SCITT in England, and the sample SCITT provider, in the academic Year 2017 to 2018 (DfE, 2017a)

	Male	Aged under 25	Minority Ethnic Group	Declared Disability
Postgraduate ITT in England	31%	51%	16%	10%
SCITT in England	33%	46%	13%	8%
Sample SCITT Provider	28%	63%	12%	10%

Table 2 shows that the SCITT provider sample has a slightly greater proportion of female trainees and that the trainee population has over 10% more under-25 year

olds. The ethnic make-up of the trainees is also slightly less diverse than in postgraduate ITT in England as a whole. Whilst these attributes mean that the SCITT provider is not, to an extent, wholly representative (Cohen et al., 2007) of the nationwide SCITT population, none of these figures present a significant anomaly that would be of concern. As such, this context must be borne in mind when drawing conclusions and recommendations, as it relates directly to the transferability of the results (Yin, 2009).

According to the DfE's ITT Census for 2017-18 (DfE, 2017a), 53% of trainees in the national cohort were training through school-led routes - that is School Direct, SCITT or Teach First. Of this number on school-led routes, 23% were training through SCITT – equivalent to 12% of all postgraduate trainees in ITT for that year. Interestingly, the census notes that the overall percentage on school-led routes was down slightly from the previous year, from 56% to 53%. The rationale for sampling from a single SCITT provider is that it is a representative, typical case, or that it is something particular and significant which requires attention (Yin, 2009). SCITT trainees account for just 12% of all postgraduate ITT trainees in England in 2017-18 (DfE, 2017b). However, this rises to 15% of all postgraduate trainees in the same year in the local region and 31% of the local postgraduate trainee population within the six local authorities surrounding the SCITT provider's partner University (Ibid.). Therefore, a SCITT provider in this context may be considered representative, and the results significant for all ITT providers, especially those within the region. The characteristics of the SCITT Provider are summarised in the following tables:

Table 3 – Trainee demographic characteristics for the sample SCITT provider, in the academic Year 2017 to 2018, correct as of 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017 (DfE, 2017b)

Total number of Post-graduate trainees	Gender		Ethnicity		Age		Disability	
	Male	Female	Non-minority ethnic group	Minority ethnic group	Under 25	Over 25	No declared disability	Declared disability
90	25	67	80	11	57	35	81	9

Table 4 – Total number of training places provided by the sample SCITT provider, by subject in the academic Year 2017 to 2018 (DfE, 2017b)

Subject	Total
EBacc Humanities (English, Geography and History)	18
EBacc Languages (Classics and Modern Foreign Languages)	6
EBacc STEM (Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics and Physics)	17
Other Secondary (Art & Design, Business Studies, Design & Technology, Drama, Music, Other, Physical Education, Religious Education)	5
Primary	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>

The SCITT Provider, which has been given the pseudonym, 'Oak Wood Teacher Training' for the purposes of this study is based in the north of England. It is a partnership of primary and secondary schools, with sixth form provision as well. The ITT programmes that the SCITT offered in 2017-18 were split in the age ranges 3-7 and 7-11 for primary, and 11-16 with post-16 enhancement for secondary. This means that the research participants train in either primary or secondary teaching: at primary this is specialised according to age range, and in secondary this is specialised according to teaching subject.

Note the primary placements are structured differently to the secondary placements. In primary they have three 'blocks' and return to the first 'host school' after going somewhere different for their middle placement. The secondary trainees have two main placements, one from September to January, and one from January to June.

The lead school for Oak Wood Teacher Training is based in an affluent town, referred to in the study as Crowford, and this school has a good reputation in the local area, underpinned by its Outstanding Ofsted rating prior to its conversion to an academy in 2012. The SCITT partnership includes schools in more remote, rural areas, as well as more suburban districts of the nearby large city, referred to as Metropolis throughout this study. At the time of data collection (2017-18), the majority of the schools in the partnership were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' according to Ofsted for their education provision. The SCITT provider itself received a two-phase inspection in June and November 2018, with the Ofsted report being published in February 2019, rating the overall effectiveness of the Partnership as 'Good' (The reference for the report is not included to maintain the SCITT provider's anonymity).

Oak Wood Teacher Training began training teachers as a SCITT Provider for the first time in 2016-17. This means that the cohort of trainees that took part in this study were only the second cohort of SCITT trainees for the provider. Prior to this, the Oak Wood Teaching Schools Alliance had worked in partnership with several universities in two local cities as part of both School Direct partnerships, and providing PGCE placements for University-led ITT programmes. In 2017-18, Oak Wood Teacher Training chose to focus solely on its SCITT provision. However, Oak Wood offered School Direct places, accredited through the SCITT rather than a university partner, in order to maximise its exposure on the application system, UCAS Teacher Training. At the time, there were fundamentally no differences between these two pathways, but the strategy increased the number of programmes offered on UCAS Teacher Training. The provider would therefore appear in searches by applicants who were only looking for School Direct programmes. The schools in Oak Wood's partnership also continued to take trainees from other ITT pathways and providers. This is often the case as individual schools use ITT as a form of proxy teacher recruitment, and so the greater number of providers worked with, the greater the pool of trainees to draw upon for future recruitment.

When Oak Wood Teacher Training became an accredited SCITT provider in 2015, its relationship with local university ITT provision changed. A single partnership was formed with the University of Metropolis (its given pseudonym) to provide the Postgraduate Certificate in Education component of the overall ITT programme. This meant that the University provided eight days of teaching, on campus, to support the trainees' development of teaching pedagogy. Completion of this component through formal academic assessment leads to the award of a PGCE, which is equivalent to 60 Masters credits that could then be transferred into a full Masters programme if the trainee wished to pursue this option once they had gained QTS. The University had no role to play in the award of qualified teacher status, which is instead the role of the accredited SCITT provider. The circumstances of this partnership with the University of Metropolis were highly unusual in that in 2016, the University chose to relinquish its accredited ITT provider status, and no longer support either University-led or School Direct ITT programmes. This was due to ongoing recruitment pressures, uncertainty over training place allocations, and the resultant financial unviability of remaining an accredited ITT provider.

Whilst the ramifications of this within the local ITT provider community were significant, for the purposes of this study, the impact on the applicants to ITT was also felt. The research with trainees from Oak Wood, outlined later in this chapter, highlights the altered dynamic of ITT provision within the region. The abrupt nature of this decision to cease the University-led PGCE in June 2016, had a direct effect on applicants researching and applying to programmes in the recruitment window from October 2016, to begin their ITT programmes in September 2017. The trainees that participated in this study were amongst these applicants.

Utilising the University's SCITT partner also allowed for ease of access to research subjects. The provider was approached and they kindly agreed to be involved with the research project - allowing data collection to take place with its trainees in the current 2017-18 cohort, who applied throughout the 2016-17 recruitment cycle.

### 3.4 Sampling, data collection and analysis in practice

The following section outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the data collection and analysis methods, and how they worked together in practice to collect quality data for the research project. Merriam (1988) suggests that data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities in qualitative research and hence this section breaks from the tradition of noting the data collection methods and analysis methods under two separate headings.

The nature of the research topic is ultimately reliant upon individuals' experiences and their own judgements of the ITT application process. As Patton (1980, cited in, Merriam, 1988:72) notes, "We interview people to find out things we cannot directly observe, such as feelings, thoughts and intentions, and we cannot observe behaviours that took place at a previous point in time". Interviews were the main form of data collection method used for this project, and in practice this served to provide rich and detailed data about the trainees' experiences of the application and recruitment process.

#### 3.4.1 Exploring the feasibility of the research approach

Yin (2009) suggests that for similar, interview-based research, the analytic protocol should be strongly considered in advance, so as to avoid 'stalling' on the analysis of data and possible avenues to pursue. He also suggests 'playing' with the data in the first instance to understand aspects of frequency, chronology and cross-referencing categories of data. Two 'pre-pilot' focus groups with trainees from Oak Wood Teacher Training in the 2016-17 cohort were conducted in July 2017. This timing meant that the pre-pilot research population did not overlap with the main research population, which was the 2017-18 cohort of trainees. The purpose of this focus group was threefold; to explore the potential themes and content that might arise when discussing trainees' experiences of applying to ITT, to rehearse the logistics of conducting focus groups and interviews with trainees

in schools, and to assess whether the strategy of researching with current trainees to explore their experiences of application was appropriate and feasible.

Two 'pre-pilot' focus groups were conducted with the SCITT provider's trainees from the 2015-16 cohort - one with primary and one with secondary trainees at the end of their ITT course in July 2016. The question frame (Appendix B) for these groups was designed to be open and exploratory around the themes discussed in the literature review, and served to refine the procedures to be followed in the main data collection period (Yin, 2009). The sessions pointed to some important practical aspects that were taken into account for the main data collection period and my analysis of this data steered me towards a possible theoretical framework around the concept of Agnotology (Proctor, 2008) based on trainees' knowledge and understanding, or lack thereof, of the ITT system and the choices open to them during the application stage.

The experience of the pre-pilot focus groups taught me that whilst there is a sense of 'informant bias' (Mercer, 2007) – stemming from participants' knowledge of my position within the University – the focus group and interview environment that I fostered would allow for an open discussion of the pros and cons of the various ITT pathways, and the flow of the research conversation was not hindered due to my relationship with the University.

By reflecting on my pre-pilot question frame, and the subsequent data that it provided, I was able to develop a more informed approach to the main study. The literature review highlighted multiple plausible hypotheses and theories that contribute towards applicant behaviour when making their choice of ITT pathway. The pre-pilot illustrated that the research design allowed for the flexibility to uncover new angles in the research themes through the use of focus groups as a research method. A practical lesson was learnt to not schedule the research conversations too close to the end of term, as too much time had passed from the point at which the trainees' applied and their attention was elsewhere on their forthcoming roles as newly qualified teachers.

A pilot focus group and interview were also built into the research design for the main study. However, due to the prior planning and lessons learnt regarding the logistics and content from the pre-pilot, the main study's pilots served only to finesse the question frames. As this was part of the pre-planned, ongoing process of learning between research conversations (Carson et al., 2001), the data from these main pilot sessions were ultimately included in the overall research data, as the question frame in the pilot sessions did not vary significantly.

#### 3.4.2 A Short Biographical Questionnaire – Trainee Sampling Strategy

The questionnaire (Appendix C) served two purposes: as a form of sampling strategy to recruit volunteers for the focus groups and the interviews, and to act as a selective tool if over-subscribed; and to provide additional biographical information that would otherwise delay the start of the focus groups if asked at the beginning. The questionnaires were effective in providing basic biographical data about each focus group participant and facilitating the selection of participants and discussion during the one-to-one interviews.

The intention was to recruit trainees voluntarily from the entire population within the SCITT provider of 92 trainees, by means of a brief biographical questionnaire (Appendix C). Due to low response rates (only three trainees offered to take part initially), the primary and secondary Programme leaders lent their help in recruiting participants for the focus groups, and I also entered the University-based taught sessions to ask if anyone was willing to participate in the focus groups on the day. This approach had the advantage of generating more interest from trainees. However, I was mindful of the potential to introduce bias through this approach and hence the SCITT provider fielded trainees who, in their perspective had had mixed experiences subsequent to starting the ITT programme. Overall, a suitable sample of trainees was recruited from each of the three categories as structured by the organisation of the University timetable. The questionnaire was distributed at the start of the focus groups and the biographical

data was used to select participants for the second phase of data collection - the individual interviews.

### 3.4.3 The Focus Groups – Data Collection

The debates between the social sciences regarding the differences between group interviews and focus groups (Cohen et al., 2007) arose on consideration of the focus group method. On the one hand, group interviews can be used to uncover and explore views on a topic and then facilitate further discussion in individual interviews. Morgan (1997) notes that focus groups have a role to play in facilitating the development of interview schedules and question frameworks as well. This was the intention of the first phase of the research, as outlined in section 3.2.3. However, Cohen et al. (2007) note that focus groups allow data to emerge from the interaction between participants, which supports Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto's (2009) post-structuralist view that consumer activity is rooted in cultural and socio-political practice. The advantage of this was highlighted by the pre-pilot focus groups, where trainees noted the social influences on their choices. Likewise, Barbour and Schostak (2005) suggest that focus groups tend to be with peer groups or professional teams, which was the case with the groups for this project. In addition to this, the use of stimulus material in the session (Appendix F), and the use of focus groups to access a group's thoughts on one particular topic within the marketing tradition, in this case the recruitment process for ITT, has led me to refer to these sessions as 'focus groups' (Carson et al., 2001; see also, Morgan, 1997).

The SCITT provider was based at a local secondary school, and the trainees had 'university' days on campus. The research was designed so that the focus groups and interviews could take place at locations most convenient to the participants – to further encourage voluntary participation.

The focus groups were planned to take place on campus when the trainees were attending one of their 'university' days. The SCITT provider's timetable organised

these days to run separately for three different groups of trainees: Primary; Secondary Maths and Science; and Secondary 'other' subjects. This allowed me to recruit on the basis of maximum variation (Cohen et al., 2007) as a form of purposive sampling, to ensure that the split of trainees was reasonably representative of the subjects being trained for.

The intention was to present a holistic view of the experiences of all trainees with the SCITT provider. However, due to the sampling strategy aligning to the organisation of the university-based PGCE days, the focus group data were collected within sub-groups, namely; primary trainees, secondary maths and science trainees, and secondary other subjects trainees. Whilst it was not the intention to draw comparisons between the responses of these three subunits, the data analysis did present some trends that were worthy of comment in the following chapter.

In practice, four focus groups were originally planned – one pilot group to assess the feasibility of the logistical process and the question frame content using primary trainees, one main group with secondary maths and science trainees, one with secondary 'other subjects' trainees and a second with primary trainees. The primary trainees were selected as the pilot group as their University-based day came first in the teaching calendar. There was also no reason for directly separating the trainees by subject, other than for pragmatic reasons based on the sampling strategy. This sampling structure ensured maximum variation (Merriam, 1988) in experiences and backgrounds from the trainees, and also served a practical purpose of matching the organisational structure of the SCITT partner's 'university days' when trainees would be on campus.

Unfortunately, the final focus group with a second sample of primary trainees did not go ahead, as no trainees volunteered to take part. This was partly due to the time of year (December) and partly because eight participants from a cohort of around forty trainees had already taken part in the pilot focus group earlier in November. Due to the minimal adjustments made to the question frame between the pilot and the main focus groups, the decision was taken to include the pilot

focus group data with primary trainees in the main data analysis. A valuable lesson was learnt for future projects, with regards to the timing, size and sampling of participants specifically for a pilot focus group, ensuring that this does not impact directly on the viability of the main data collection.

Table 5 – The characteristics of the Focus Group participants

Source: Questionnaire responses (see appendix C)

Focus Group 1 – Primary Trainees – Conducted 16/11/2017	
Number of trainees participating	8 trainees in total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 training to teach the 3-7 age range</li> <li>▪ 5 training to teach the 5-11 age range</li> </ul>
Degree backgrounds of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Politics and Philosophy,</li> <li>▪ Outdoor Activity Leadership and Coaching,</li> <li>▪ Psychology,</li> <li>▪ Sociology,</li> <li>▪ Musical Theatre,</li> <li>▪ Philosophy</li> <li>▪ History</li> </ul>
Number of trainees that had worked full time prior to applying to ITT	4 trainees (all as Teaching Assistants)
Focus Group 2 – Secondary ‘Other Subjects’ Trainees – Conducted 23/11/2017	
Number of trainees participating	6 trainees in total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 Languages trainees, both training to teach Spanish and French</li> <li>▪ 1 History trainee</li> <li>▪ 1 PE trainee</li> <li>▪ 1 Art and Design trainee</li> <li>▪ 1 Geography trainee</li> </ul>
Number of trainees that had worked full time prior to applying to ITT	All 6 trainees in total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 had worked in school-based settings</li> <li>▪ 3 had worked for the University</li> </ul>
Focus Group 3 – Secondary Maths and Science Trainees – Conducted 30/11/2017	
Number of trainees participating	3 in total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 Maths trainees</li> <li>▪ 1 Biology trainee</li> </ul>
Number of trainees that had worked full time prior to applying to ITT	1 in total – neither in a school setting

In total, seventeen trainees were involved in the focus groups – eight primary trainees, six secondary ‘other subjects’ and three secondary maths and science trainees. Further characteristics of the sample, such as gender, ethnicity and degree background can be seen in Tables 6 and 7, with data collected from the questionnaire. The focus groups took place throughout November and December 2017, and lasted approximately 1 hour, consisting of a semi-structured discussion about the trainees’ reflections on applying to ITT programmes, including why they chose their current provider and what information they were looking for regarding their potential ITT pathway. Stimulus marketing materials from the SCITT provider and the national recruitment context (UCAS Teacher Training and Get into Teaching – see Appendix A) were used to promote discussion around the engagement with the information sources. The question frame for the focus groups can be seen in Appendix D.

#### 3.4.4 The Focus Groups – Data Analysis

I transcribed the focus group data and analysed this using NVivo qualitative analysis software to code and develop thematic concepts from the participants’ responses (Kuckartz, 2014). Transcribing the data myself allowed me to fully understand the detail of the data, to review and interpret multiple times, in order to present a comprehensive analysis in the next chapter.

Barbour and Schostak (2005:43) also note that focus groups are, “Fundamentally a social process through which participants co-produce accounts of themselves”. With this in mind, the focus group data was analysed to tease out themes and commentaries that could be replayed and challenged in the individual interviews, and bore sensitivity towards the group narrative that was portrayed.

The research design draws upon qualitative methods of data collection and analysis within a hermeneutic, interpretive philosophical framework (Creswell, 2013; see also, Kuckartz, 2014) – appreciating that the research questions address

the experiences of individuals within their own circumstances and situations (Heywood and Stronach, 2005). Merriam (1988) notes that research data should be classified based on the categories derived from the research questions, and that these categories should be internally homogenous but heterogeneous from each other. In the case of this research project, the categories or themes derived from the research questions were such as the application and recruitment process, ITT policy impact and Factors of Choice.

Some themes identified from the early literature review, such as the Communicative Act Paradigm (Campbell, C., 1997:341), were not surfaced in the data as originally thought, and hence this played a lesser part in the selection of evidence towards the research questions.

Nodes			
	Name	Sources	Reference
+	Application and Recruitment Process	5	9
	Career Change or Other Work Experience	8	33
	Communicative Act Paradigm - Construction of Iden	3	5
	Difficult or Negative Experience	7	43
	Experience on the Course	8	18
+	Factors of Choice	3	4
+	Ignorance or Knowledge	0	0
	Impact of time - reflection and chronicity	10	32
+	Information Sources	3	6
	Intentionality and Confirmation Bias	10	23
+	ITT Policy Impact	3	3
+	Marketing Feedback	0	0
	Positive Experience	7	33
	Pre-Application Decision to Teach	11	35

Figure 6 – Example top-level themes for the data

Some of these themes were then broken down into sub-themes to categorise the data against discrete aspects, as per the sub-themes of the “Application and Recruitment Process” in figure 7. If data from the focus groups or interviews

mentioned several themes, the data items were repeatedly coded against every relevant theme so that this was fully captured. Once all data were coded as per Yin's (2009) suggestion, each theme and sub-theme's data were reviewed and interpreted to build arguments and topics of interest to be outlined in the findings chapters four to six.

Nodes			
Name	Sources	Referenc	
Application and Recruitment Process	5	9	
Interview Experience	11	51	
Offer Acceptance	6	13	
Personal Contact and Customer Service	10	44	
Post-offer contact	5	9	
Premier Plus	4	10	
Rejection of places	5	7	
Time Pressures and Turnaround	11	39	
UCAS	10	25	

Figure 7 – Example sub-themes for the theme of Application and Recruitment Process

The themes identified in the focus groups were used to build the question frame for the individual interviews – making specific reference to responses given by participants during the focus groups and asking them to elaborate on their answers. This strategy was developed from the concept of facilitation by Hammersley, M. (2008) where one method informs the use of another method to provide a richer picture of research data. As such, the interview data were already grouped under certain topics, and these data were again coded back to the themes used to code the focus group data. In this way, data triangulation of information sources was used to strengthen the quality of the analysis (Yin, 2009). The strength of focus groups is that it allows for this form of triangulation by surfacing multiple voices in one session (Barbour and Schostak, 2005).

### 3.4.5 The In-depth Interviews – Data Collection

The trainees were asked if they wish to take part in follow-up interviews prior to the focus groups. Participants from the focus group sample were invited to interview based on any interesting or conflicting responses they gave during the focus group sessions – a form of ‘sequential, criterion-based’ sampling as noted by Goetz and LeCompte (1984, cited in, Merriam, 1988:51). From the focus groups, eight participants were invited to take part in follow-up interviews, and all accepted.

Sampling for the interviews was based on maximum variation from amongst the focus group participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 1988). There were eight interview participants in total, split across three primary and five secondary trainees. The numbering of participants relates to their seated position in the focus groups, hence they are not numbered 1-8 because there were another nine focus group participants who were not invited to interview.

The interviews took place throughout March 2018, with some on site at the University but the majority were conducted in the trainees’ placement schools. During these interviews, the participants were presented with a summary list, distilled from the focus groups, of the key factors of choice in decision-making around the ITT pathway (Appendix G). This allowed the opportunity for validation or disagreement against these points (Pring, 2015). The question frame for the interviews can be viewed in Appendix E.

In order to develop a rapport with the trainees, and not promote defensiveness when following my line of inquiry, the phrasing of questions around ‘why’ decisions were made, were turned into questions of ‘how’, as per the advice of Becker (1998:58-60, cited in, Yin, 2009:106). Construct validity (Cohen et al., 2007) was very important when discussing the factors of choice with the trainees, and in fact this was built into the research design by taking the list from the focus groups and clarifying that with individuals in the interviews.

Table 6 – General characteristics of the Interview Participants

Source: Questionnaires and interviews

Participant	Date of interview	Gender	Ethnicity	ITT subject	Degree Background
1	27/03/18	Female	White, English	Primary (age 7-11)	Musical Theatre
2	06/03/18	Female	White, British	Primary (age 3-7)	Sociology
6	20/03/18	Female	White, British	Primary (age 3-7)	Psychology
12	22/03/18	Female	White, English	Secondary Modern Foreign Languages (Spanish and French)	Russian Studies
13	29/03/18	Female	White, English	Secondary P.E.	Sport and Exercise Science
14	14/03/18	Female	White and Black Caribbean	Secondary Art and Design	Fashion Design
15	15/03/18	Male	White, British	Secondary Mathematics	Maths
16	21/03/18	Female	White, English	Secondary Mathematics	Biomedical Sciences

Table 7 - Prior work experience of the interview participants

Source: Questionnaires and interviews

Participant	Prior work experience
1	Worked as a Boarding Assistant in an Independent School
2	Worked as a Teaching Assistant for 1 year during the application cycle
6	Worked as a Teaching Assistant before and after University. Had also worked full time in a pharmacy.
12	5 years' work experience as a Teaching Assistant, and in Higher Education
13	Worked for 2 years as a Teaching Assistant
14	Worked as Graduate Boarding Assistant in an Independent School
15	Worked for 4 years in the recruitment sector
16	Worked as an Accounts Assistant for 2 years

### 3.4.6 The In-Depth Interviews – Data Analysis

The interview data were also transcribed by myself. The data were reviewed using NVivo analysis software and thematically coded using the themes identified in the focus group analysis, expanding upon these where required. For example, the theme of ITT policy impact was expanded between the focus groups and the interviews to include the sub-theme, 'Availability of Places'. This follows the phenomenological interview data analysis process laid out by Goulding (2005), whereby 'significant statements' are identified and the researcher works to reduce themes to essential structures that offer explanations of behaviour. The coding process was exhaustive, with all data coded from the transcripts against one of the themes (Merriam, 1988).

A substantial proportion of this thesis is dedicated to quoting the trainee voice in the research findings (Denscombe, 2003). Individual participants, ITT providers and places have been pseudonymised in the write-up. It was not possible to fully anonymise participants so that answers cannot be linked back to the respondent, due to the nature of the research topic needing to include contextual data such as subject choice and prior work background. Participants were free to withdraw their data up until the point of thesis submission.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The research has been designed to understand the similarities and variation in trainees' experiences of application to ITT. The intention is that by giving voice to those experiencing ITT at this point in time, and given a number of ongoing changes to the ITT recruitment system, the research can provide an insightful narrative that is relevant to all ITT providers.

Building on the research's intention above to give a voice to current ITT trainees, the most prominent ethical consideration was how to represent the trainees' data accurately. This thesis therefore draws upon a significant amount of quoted speech (Barbour and Schostak, 2005) as a means to convey the research conversations and allow the reader to see for themselves the tone of the content.

The design of the research also allowed for significant peer discussion and confirmation, and concepts were cross-referenced and clarified by following-up in the individual interviews. Care was taken throughout the research facilitation to maximise the opportunity for clarification and confirmation of the concepts discussed from the trainees' perspectives.

The research project received ethical approval from the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee within the University on 20 June 2017, prior to the pre-pilot focus groups taking place. With regards to ethical research protocol, as dictated by the University and laid out in the British Educational Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines for Education Research* (2011) all research participants gave fully informed consent and all data collection practices conformed to the University's data protection and storage policies. The full dataset will not be made publicly available. Both individual participants and the SCITT provider have been pseudonymised in the write-up. Participants were free to withdraw their data up until the point of thesis submission.

Whilst the research aims to comment on the implications for marketing and recruitment strategies, and as such is aligned to professional practice in this manner, it is not categorically funded or commissioned by a third party with an interest in the recruitment of teachers. In this sense, the research is able to avoid what Cohen et al. (2007) note as the dangerous setting of the research agenda by others, especially in the field of education.

## Chapter 4 - Research Findings – Marketing and Recruitment

The context of the SCITT Provider outlined in the previous chapter is important to bear in mind when analysing the research findings and discussing the implications. Not only does the study provide insight into trainees' choice of ITT pathway, it also serves to capture the impact of a period of intense government focus on school-led ITT, from the perspective of the trainees who were applying to become teachers during this time.

The research conversations focussed substantially on the trainees' experiences of the application and recruitment process. Through this, they both directly and indirectly identified the impact that ITT policy had on their experience of entering ITT. Trainees' developing knowledge of the ITT system was facilitated through the marketing and information sources that they encountered whilst researching and applying to ITT programmes. The data highlighted not only the marketing challenge of conveying the complex ITT landscape to an audience, situated within a competitive context through the medium of commercial marketing, but also the challenge of engaging with and interpreting this information on the part of the applicant. The dialogue with the research participants illustrated quite distinct phases in the process of applying to become a teacher. The first stage led up to the point of feeling ready to apply. The second stage covered the period up to submitting the application via UCAS Teacher Training. The third stage involved the interview process and subsequent follow-up prior to the trainees starting their ITT programme.

There are three chapters covering the research findings which collate data from across the focus groups and interviews to present a thematic analysis structured around the research questions. This chapter analyses the evidence for the developing understanding of the trainees as they moved through these stages, with a view to assessing whether they made informed decisions along the way.

#### 4.1 ITT Policy and Complexity in the System

As highlighted in the literature review, the DfE's recent policy to promote school-led ITT, combined with the introduction and subsequent continuation of the 2016-17 recruitment methodology, has led to circumstances in which applicants to ITT find themselves facing an increasingly complex offer of different pathways into ITT. The extent to which trainees made an informed choice arguably starts and ends with the framing of the ITT landscape through a policy of increasing numbers of providers, competition and hence choice. This sub-section demonstrates how the research participants highlighted aspects of national policy when discussing their choice of ITT pathway, and analyses the underlying themes illustrated within the data.

The complexity of the ITT landscape, with the number of routes, providers and programmes, was identified as a substantial compounding factor in creating confusion around which pathway to choose, as noted by Participant 1: "Initially I had to work out the difference between the SCITT and University-led because before I applied I think I just assumed they were all the same" (Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

It must be acknowledged that applicants would develop their knowledge of ITT – the content and the process – both whilst they applied and during the training programme. However, the extent to which the issue of complexity of routes into teaching was raised, suggests that it was a significant cause of confusion and misconception for applicants. This is summarised most succinctly by Participant 15 below:

I thought that I knew quite a bit but then when I started looking into it realised that I actually didn't. I thought it was almost still, you know, the PGCE option and go back to University for a year and go from there. And when you actually start looking into it you realised there are a lot more options available.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

The evidence suggests that the trainees all started with a basic knowledge of the process of teacher training, but a number identified that they were working on the assumption that ITT is conducted through Universities only. Often, the reference to a PGCE was used synonymously with this form of University-led training. The quotes above illustrate the dawning realisation for several trainees quite early on in their application that they were not aware of all the routes into teaching and therefore more research was required.

The more concerning aspect of this data notes how this confusion has persisted even once the trainees were on the ITT programme, suggesting it is not simply due to a lack of information at the application stage but a more fundamental symptom of the complexity of the ITT system:

- So what did you already know about the teacher training process then?
- Didn't realise there were so many different avenues, I don't think. I think when I was first looking, I was pretty confused about the differences between the SCITT, the PGCE and the, oh I can't remember, assessment only and Teach First....
- Yeah, Schools Direct...
- ...It took me a little while to figure out the differences between them and the benefits and the weaknesses or whatever you want to call them.
- I probably still don't know.
- Yeah, I don't know.

(Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17)

The impact of the DfE's focus on promoting school-led ITT (Department for Education, 2016a) was apparent in one participant's response to how they researched their ITT pathway options: "Initially I wanted to do a PGCE and when I

went to that teach roadshow, I just couldn't find a course that did PGCE around here... they seem to have been phased out" (Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17).

Whilst most of the trainees expressed a preference for school-based ITT, a strong theme amongst the research participants was the confusion between SCITT and the School Direct route. Both routes into teaching are school-based but not school-led, and the trainees regularly noted the lack of clarity between the two routes, as summarised by Participant 16 below:

Sometimes I think people get the School Direct and the SCITT mixed up and to be honest, I'm still not really a hundred percent sure. I think the fact that some schools do both SCITT and School Direct was really confusing... It was only until I started teacher training and in the school when they were saying oh, we've got some School Direct trainees coming, or we've got some PGCE trainees coming, and I was like ok, so they do both. I didn't realise that.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

Participant 16 was not the only one confused. Participant 1 noted the challenge of distinguishing between the school-led ITT routes: "To me they're still quite similar, I wasn't sure whether there was really a difference or if they're just called different things" (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

The naming of ITT programmes was noted on several occasions, both in reference to distinguishing between the different routes into teaching, as per the quote above, and in distinguishing between the different ITT providers: "Yeah, and they've all got ridiculous names like Oak Wood Teacher Training or Blue Bird Teacher Training, it doesn't give anything away" (Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17). This has implications for how the applicants engage with the marketing and information sources available to them as it

suggests a lack of clarity around the distinct propositions of the different ITT pathways.

The complexity of the ITT options not only relates to the multiple ways in which someone can train, and how these are articulated, but also in other aspects such as entry requirements and qualification outcome:

Why are there so many different routes, when actually you get the same end product? Or do you get the same end product? I probably still don't know the answer to that.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

As a result, Participant 13 notes that the clarity of the SCITT proposition was what made her focus on applying to SCITT providers during her second SCITT application cycle:

I felt confident that I knew what SCITT was because of it being school-centred and that made sense to me. I was going to be at school and that was central to it. The School Direct, I never really understood properly because I was aware there was paid and unpaid and different school direct routes. Different providers or school direct routes seemed to say different things in terms of the amount of time you'd spend in schools and the way the placements worked. I think even for some the number of placements was different. So I felt like there was more clarity with SCITT than School Direct.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

The evidence above demonstrates how confusion around ITT pathway choices has arisen due to both complexity in the market and the sheer diversity of the ITT offer. It was clear from the research conversations both in the focus groups, and again in more depth in the interviews that the trainees struggled to fully comprehend the full range of ITT pathway choices available to them. Regardless

of the information sources that they accessed as applicants, there appeared to be a consistent sense of confusion over the difference between the major routes into teaching. The research also uncovered an underlying assumption amongst some trainees that individual schools would only be involved with one route into teaching, or one ITT provider. The similarity of marketing messages and lack of clarity around the proposition – the ITT programme’s delivery and outcomes - also appeared to make it challenging for applicants to determine the differences between ITT pathways. The noted persistence of this confusion, suggests that the root cause is not simply a lack of information but a more fundamental challenge of providing a comprehensive picture of the ITT landscape on offer. The following section analyses the marketing of ITT to explore this challenge in more depth.

## 4.2 The Marketing of ITT

This section focuses on the marketing of ITT, which is split into two parts. The first considers how ITT is explained to applicants, and which institutions are responsible for the ownership of those messages. The second reflects on how the research participants received these messages and engaged with the information sources available in order to form a judgement about which ITT pathways they wished to pursue through to application.

### 4.2.1 Explaining the Offer

It has been established that there are a multitude of pathways into ITT, and that the trainees found these difficult to understand, as well as finding it difficult to navigate the process of applying to ITT. Once the trainees had decided to apply to ITT, they embarked upon a process of research to move their initial levels of understanding forward. It is at this point that they may have encountered government advertising campaigns, ITT provider marketing, and other information sources to draw upon when making their choice of ITT pathway. This section looks at the challenge of explaining the ITT *offer* – the offer meaning the entire range of ITT pathways and the variations within this. As stated in the

methodology, the scope of this study did not allow for direct research with those responsible for creating the marketing. Instead, the evidence is presented from the perspectives of the trainees who were exposed to the marketing during the application and recruitment process.

As highlighted in the literature review, ITT is different from other forms of higher education because it benefits from direct government investment in marketing campaigns attempting to attract and support new teachers into the profession. These are what I have termed, 'national-scale', which includes advertising campaigns and a DfE-hosted central website, at that time titled, 'Get into Teaching' to support applicants to the profession. The website (DfE, 2016a) contains an overview of the routes into teaching, the financial support available and providers are able to post details of their recruitment events. The key issue to note was that in 2016-17, the 'Get into Teaching' website did not link to any database of ITT providers. This aspect was instead provided by UCAS Teacher Training. This set-up in the content and ownership of the information available to applicants is key for understanding some of the criticisms levelled at the marketing for ITT.

It was clear from the individual interviews that some trainees had not engaged fully with the 'Get into Teaching' site, which may be attributed to the complexity of the ITT offer. The value of having a central, and crucially non-biased repository of information was highlighted by participants:

Maybe if there was somewhere that you could gather all the information that you needed for teacher training. I mean that may be on the Get into Teaching website and I've just not looked properly. But, somewhere that's not trying to promote themselves, and rather just actually giving you the raw facts of it all.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

In contrast, the participants in focus group 3 noted the use of the 'Get into Teaching' site in providing example candidate profiles that matched with particular training routes: "I think the Get into Teaching [site] was brilliant because it was just simple. They had those bubble icons, [saying] this is you, and you saw, oh yeah that is me, you've got me down to a tee there." (Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17).

The challenge of national-scale marketing, especially as provided by the DfE, is to attract applicants to teaching without conspicuously supporting one route or group of providers over another. As such, the national-scale information was tailored to more generic messages around the benefits of teaching, and did not explore the ways in which you could train (see Appendix A for more details of the Get into Teaching advert in 2016-17).

In this context, the trainees reflected on cases of perceived deceit, as noted in the quote below, that contributed to the perpetuation of their lack of knowledge and understanding regarding their ITT pathway choices. For example, participant 6 whilst noting her own knowledge of the bursary situation, reflects on the tactic of the DfE's marketing to advertise the highest bursary figures offered only to applicants with a first class degree teaching physics,

- In terms of the national level marketing of teacher training, the 'Get into Teaching' adverts that you might have seen, do you have any comments?
- Uh, deceiving. In that you don't get a bursary and it says that you do [laughs]... No, I knew beforehand that in primary you don't get a bursary. I don't know how I knew that. But I feel that that 'Get into Teaching', although it says, I think it's got some sort of strapline at the end of it which basically says you might not get it. But I think that's very much, you will get £26,000. Well, no you won't actually. I think that it quite deceiving.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

The evidence presented by the trainees in the study suggested that the national-scale marketing campaigns did not have a significant impact on attracting them to teaching, and in some ways these had a more detrimental effect on applicants' perceptions of the profession.

In comparison to the above, for some trainees, their first exploration of the routes into teaching was via the provider marketing, and this was often where they identified the confusion arose around the different routes into teaching:

I actually started with the University of Metropolis website. I didn't necessarily google where to train to teach I went on the University website to find out about the PGCE and that's when Oak Wood Teacher Training came up. I didn't see this [posters]. Because I was quite confused you know, what actually is Oak Wood Teacher Training? I thought they were part of the University actually but they're not. They're just a teacher training provider.

(Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17)

This was a common approach for both the secondary and the primary trainees, with both groups noting the difficulty of comprehending the concept of a SCITT provider. It was an unexpected result that most participants highlighted how their initial tendency was to search for a University-led provider, which they synonymously associated with the 'PGCE'. The context of the SCITT Provider comes into play in the quote below, where trainees note their confusion because the University's website had changed due to its focus on the SCITT partnership, and was no longer offering University-led or School Direct courses:

- I think because Oak Wood Teacher Training aren't a University. Usually you'll go on a University, well I found on a University page it had all this information about a University and then about the teaching course whereas with Oak Wood Teacher Training they did

have lots of information but I thought, well, what is Oak Wood Teacher Training?

- Yeah
- ... Are they a University? I was confused about, they're running this course but then Metropolis doesn't now do a course, but they're with Metropolis. I think that confused me and I wasn't quite sure if I was doing something that was like...
- There was the PGCE and QTS bit as well...
- ... yeah
- I felt like they could have clarified that a bit more.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

The University was also viewed as having a role in introducing new graduates to the concept of ITT: "I saw posters around because I went to Uni here so I saw the big banner that's on the front of this building, and we had some people come into our lectures and talk at the front" (Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17).

The provider websites were also critiqued for not distinguishing between the routes into teaching, further compounding any confusion or lack of knowledge about their ITT options that the applicants may have encountered:

So the PGCE, the SCITT and Teach First, you have a vague idea of what the differences are, but when you actually start looking into the Providers themselves, you have no understanding of, is this a better provider than that provider? What can I get by going with this [provider] rather than this provider? If you look at the websites they're all much of a muchness and it is really hard to decide.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

In the 2016-17 recruitment cycle, the main way to search for ITT providers was through the UCAS Teacher Training website itself. Trainees highlighted some of the challenges that this system presented, based on its search function, the information provided and its general layout. The information about providers on

UCAS Teacher Training did not appear to clarify the differences between routes for applicants:

I knew there were different routes, and I knew that some were more university-based and others weren't... So I went onto the UCAS website and there's a blurb-type thing. I read through those and compared it to ideas that I'd got from the open day and I think at that point I'd narrowed it down pretty much to Schools Direct and SCITT. I think I'd completely discounted all the other routes.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

UCAS performed the function of a centrally coordinated search database and application system that brought applicants' attention to different providers. But the challenge was still noted that the level of detail given on UCAS was not enough, and applicants were faced with having to navigate between multiple providers' website which separately presented a more singular view of their ITT pathway options: "UCAS doesn't really tell you much about the providers, they just point you in the direction" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018).

Throughout the research, the trainees reflected on their knowledge of the ITT application, the routes, the providers and the individual programmes. Some noted that throughout the research process, they stumbled across pieces of information: "Oak Wood was one of my last choices that I sort of stumbled upon... I was going through it alphabetically and I didn't even really look at it because it didn't say Metropolis Uni or anything like that" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018).

This returns to the challenge of naming ITT routes and providers so that applicants might distinguish better between them. The evidence from participant 15 above highlights how 'luck' had a role to play in applicants finding a suitable ITT pathway. It is arguably impossible to know whether applicants would ever be able

to build a comprehensive view of all the ITT choices available to them based on the volume of choice, the complexity of the offer and the evidenced need to research across multiple information sources.

#### 4.2.2 Understanding the Options

Building upon the reflections of the previous section, participant 6 noted she was not as thorough as she would usually be in researching her ITT pathway options, suggesting that she still had a lot of outstanding questions despite already being on an ITT programme. She raised ongoing concerns around the differences in outcomes of the various ITT pathways, which forms evidence to suggest an inconsistency of approach in terms of the information laid out by ITT providers. This section focuses on applicants' engagement with this information to make an informed decision, and questions the extent to which the trainees had an inconsistent approach as well:

I'd quite like to do a comparison. I normally would, I don't know why I didn't for this sort of thing. So, why is this one any different to this one? Are they actually different or are they just different providers? And then ultimately what you get out of it at the end? I think it was quite hard to find out whether it was important, or how many masters' credits you got for it. And whether that impacted on your employability.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

It is at the point of analysing the application process that the experiences between trainees becomes quite varied, with individuals working to different timescales. Some researched their options first, and then applied. Some noted the fact that in launching into their application via UCAS Teacher Training, this prompted them to do further research, such as participant 2 stating: "I think I registered [with UCAS] quite early on and then once I was registered, spent loads of time trying to work out which ones [to apply for]" (Female, Primary 3-7, 06/03/2018).

Recognising that each of the research participants entered ITT in a different and personal way, a number turned to the internet first to get an overview of their options: “Well, I just googled sort of, [laughs] it’s very amateur” (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018). Similarly for Participant 13, “I think it was mostly all kind of computer-based, you know like researching based on what was online about different providers” (Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018).

The concept of having a starting point in applicants’ research into ITT pathways became an emerging theme from the research. When this was followed up in the individual interviews, participant 6 best illustrated the challenge presented by inconsistent starting points for applicants:

I think probably, because there’s not one place to look that tells you all of the different options, and is explicit about them all. I think you kind of have to know about one, to then be able to research it. So I think if I hadn’t heard of Schools Direct, I wouldn’t know about it because I wouldn’t know to go and look for it. I don’t think I knew what a SCITT stood for before I sort of looked on the Oak Wood website.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

The concept of ‘unravelling’ ITT pathway choices, by researching one which then leads to another, is an interesting metaphor that will be examined in more detail in the proceeding Discussion chapter.

The printed materials included as part of the marketing of the SCITT provider appeared to be used as a secondary source of information, with participants exposed to them at the open days: “I didn’t see any brochures or fliers prior to going to the open day... I don’t think I’d really seen or noticed it [the SCITT Provider], prior to being recommended it” (Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018).

Participant 1 noted the use of Facebook in using the images posted as a means of understanding what was involved in the SCITT Provider's course: "I didn't go to any fairs, no. I went on their Facebook page, and I liked looking at all the pictures to see that scope of what's going on" (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

The variation of approaches used by the trainees in the study demonstrates that all information sources were at some point called upon by different applicants. There is no data to suggest one form is particularly preferential over another. In fact, it is the combination of sources that provides a rich picture for applicants to base their decisions on. However, this plethora of information sources became a hindrance, especially if the applicant was short of time. This concept is expanded upon in chapter 6.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that trainees had found it necessary to research across several information sources to find all of the information they were looking for. In particular, they referenced a form of triangulation across the UCAS Teacher Training website, the DfE's Get into Teaching website, and the individual provider websites, noting the difficulty this posed: "It was really difficult to find that actually on UCAS [Laughs], as everything is on UCAS... it was mainly just looking at the schools and who they partnered with and Oak Wood kept popping up" (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018). The fundamental issue with this approach is perfectly summarised by Participant 12 in that:

...If you didn't know who you were applying for, which obviously I did but if you didn't, you'd then have to you know, write down names and then go to another page to find out [about it].

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

Applicant engagement with the information sources available was dependent on them knowing what they did not know to start with and using this as a basis on which to discover their options. In order to combat the disparate nature of the

published marketing materials, some trainees noted they had been into schools, or attended face to face events in order to form a more balanced judgement of an ITT provider and the course. The research participants had a mixed approach to what I have termed 'experiential research' during the application process. Participant 16 explicitly stated that she was not able to attend any events due to her work commitments, and hence all of her application research was done online. In comparison, some participants noted they specifically attended open evenings, to get a more rounded picture:

I went along and they gave loads of information about the qualifications you needed to get on the course and things like that. There you could tell that they were really supportive. They had trainees that were currently on the course... which was really nice because you got a true reflection of what it was like.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

Instead, participant 16 used the opportunity of the school experience programme to learn more about the routes into teaching from those in charge of the ITT programme at the school. It is interesting to note that her decision to apply to SCITTs only (see table 8, p.103) was the result of speaking with a different SCITT provider, who also gave an overview of the other routes into teaching. This raises a fundamental point highlighted by the research. The view of ITT that a trainee formed appeared to be completely dependent on their initial engagements with different providers, either through the published marketing or face-to-face, and how this positioned their frame of reference going forward:

When I went to St Lydia's in Buffton, they talked me through the different ways to apply... because their route was a SCITT, so the same as this one, and then they talked me through School Direct and PGCE and I knew straight away that a SCITT would be the best thing for me.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

This form of 'experiential' research was facilitated either through individual provider open days, or through nationally organised teaching roadshows, and in some part through the nationally organised school work experience programme. With this evidence it is therefore vital not to underestimate the effect and importance placed on these forms of face-to-face interaction and discussion with the ITT providers, their current teachers and their current trainees as a meaningful way by which to judge and decide upon an ITT pathway.

The quality of the information sources was referenced by all of the research participants in one form or another, particularly in the clarity of the messages that were given both in the local provider marketing, and the national teacher training marketing. Participant 12 highlighted the lack of detail in some of the ITT Providers' information that she encountered: "I definitely remember some providers I just couldn't really find information on the website it was all just bumph, you know, it didn't really tell you anything" (Female, Primary 3-7, 06/03/2018). Likewise, participant 14 expressed concern over a lack of a clear process for researching how to get into teaching: "What routes you can do to get into teaching, I don't think that's very explicit... Fair enough you can do the get into teaching or the website and all of that. I still don't think that's very helpful" (Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018).

It was apparent in the focus groups that the trainees had had to draw on a number of information sources when researching their ITT choices, and this affected the quality of their application experience. Several participants expressed a concern over the objectivity of the information presented on ITT providers' own websites:

When you go on the website themselves, that's obviously each provider selling themselves but you don't really know what you're buying into. Um, so, you know, by telling you how amazing their course is and telling you how many months or however mini placements or this that and the other. But in the grand scheme of things you don't know whether that's good,

bad or indifferent. Whether that's something all providers do or something that just that provider does.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

As highlighted above, the research participants referred to the various marketing sources of information in terms of the level of 'truth' or 'objectivity' they would get from them, specifically in comparison between consulting the printed word via fliers and online websites, to speaking to people at teaching events.

Some trainees demonstrated an understanding the potential bias in the information they were provided with, even at the teaching events, with Participant 13 noting:

Well I went to one of the UCAS open day type things, which I think was at the Hilton in Metropolis or something. It was kind of a jobs fair I guess. Lots of different providers, with lots of different leaflets telling you about themselves, which I found useful to a point, but I found it very, quite a surface level understanding of them. So it was good to get a broad idea, but I ended up finding that they were all kind of saying similar things. A lot of the leaflets and things they were giving out were all very similar apart from their branding, and I found myself kind of judging the whole thing based on the one person I was speaking to..., which I realised was pretty stupid as I might never meet that person again. So from there, I realised I need to get kind of a more in-depth feel of things.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

Through the research it became apparent that due to the different combinations of information sources that applicants engaged with, and the lack of a fully comprehensive database of the ITT routes and providers, the picture of ITT that the applicants were able to build for themselves could never be considered fully informed. There is also a degree of selective knowledge that arises as a natural part of the process of narrowing down options as decisions are made about which ITT pathway to take: "I kind of ruled out PGCE in my head anyway so I didn't really

look into the other options too much... I just sort of glanced at the others and what they would involve" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018). The evidence thus far balances the challenges of marketing a complex ITT system, questioning whose role it is to provide a comprehensive picture of the options available, against the challenges for the applicant in engaging with the vast amount of disparate information available to them. The final section of this chapter the trainees' experiences of application in more detail, to analyse how an informed decision is built over time throughout the recruitment process.

### 4.3 The Trainees' Experiences of Application and Recruitment

Every trainee would have had a unique set of circumstances and experiences that led them to the point of starting an ITT course. The research participants are unified in their decision to train with Oak Wood Teacher Training as the SCITT provider in this study. For further context, the split of ITT choices is summarised in table 8 in the research findings. This section reviews the trainees' experiences of application and recruitment, beginning with the circumstances which led them to feel ready to apply at a point in time.

#### 4.3.1 Feeling ready to apply

The question of, 'why choose to apply to ITT now' arose organically as part of the interview questioning development. This elicited some interesting and varied responses, highlighting the different pathways that trainees had taken prior to application. Participants 12 and 16 saw this more as a question of why they were ready to leave their current positions. Other trainees purposefully planned to spend a year working as a Teaching Assistant [TA] whilst applying to ITT, both as a way to confirm their plans and to gain paid work experience:

I think I was ready. I think I knew before I'd even applied to be a TA that my end result was going to be teacher training. Doing that for a year was

like, let's test the water but I think I knew, unless it went drastically wrong or I hated it, that was always going to be the aim.

(Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018)

Participant 6 also noted that her personal financial circumstances were conducive to starting the course within the year 2017-18, noting the particular burden of tuition fees on influencing that decision, and leading to a, 'now or never' mentality with regards to starting her teaching career. Participant 16 noted that her decision to apply to teaching at this point in time was more a question of the time being right to move away from her previous job, rather than specifically move towards a teaching career. This was highlighted by the pressures being placed on her by her previous employer to take professional exams and settle into a career in accounting. On the other hand, participant 13 noted explicitly that she had tried and failed to apply successfully to ITT to start in 2016-17, forcing her to take a second teaching assistant job whilst waiting to apply for 2017-18. In this sense, she was ready to apply much earlier, but external circumstances restricted this option.

The insight that arose from the question around being ready to apply 'at this time' and the detail provided in tables 6 and 7 help to build a picture of the SCITT Provider and its trainees for the study. Variation amongst the interview participants in terms of which types of ITT route they applied to feeds into the context around the factors of choice that the trainees considered in the proceeding section.

Despite the unique circumstances for every applicant that led to them applying within the 2016-17 recruitment cycle, it was notable how the majority of the research participants had prior work experience. Within the sample of focus group participants, only four out of seventeen had not been in full-time employment before applying to ITT. All of the eight interview participants had been in prior work, and six of these were previously based in education. This was either in the education sector, most often as a TA or in other sectors. When asked whether they considered themselves as career changers, there were varied

responses. Participant 15 clearly identified as a career changer moving into teaching from the recruitment sector. Whereas, Participant 16, despite switching from the finance sector to education, did not identify as a career changer, noting that their previous work experience in Accounting was never their intended career. Participant 6 had an interesting pre-ITT journey in that she worked in primary and secondary education prior to University, then went to work in a pharmacy to utilise her psychology degree, and then returned as a TA before applying to ITT. This prevalence of work experience may be attributed to the school-based nature of the SCITT course, which the trainees' themselves noted as an attractive feature of the pathway, especially if they had worked full-time previously.

Upon further analysis, some trainees took roles in schools in order to confirm their plans to apply for ITT:

Well I was going to apply, I set up my UCAS and everything the year prior ... and got the opportunity to go down and be a Graduate Boarding Assistant in a Boarding School. So I went for an interview and applied for that. It was just a year really to make sure that I feel, I wanted to make sure that I felt comfortable with students.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

On the other hand for Participant 12, prior experience of teaching and working in schools meant that the ITT year was seen not a training year as such, but as a means to build on her prior experience and receive further input on subject knowledge and pedagogy, in order to obtain the formal teaching qualification that they felt they had already earned:

So I see a lot of what I'm doing this year as putting a formal label to the experience that I've got and obviously adding to it. And a lot of it for me is about the pedagogical subject knowledge, so how you actually teach your subject and how you make it accessible to students.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

With almost all of the research participants having full-time, paid work experience prior to applying for ITT, this supports the self-reflections of the participants that their decisions to train as teachers had been considered over a long period of time. This evidence suggests those trainees with substantial work experience, particularly in a school setting, made well-informed decisions to apply to ITT. The research conversations highlighted very few aspects of the role of a teacher that came as a surprise to the trainee, confirming that the applicants entered the profession with their eyes wide open in this regard. However, it is the process of application, and the choice of ITT pathway that is under scrutiny in this research and the following paragraphs outline how uninformed decisions were evidenced, upon reflection, by the trainees in the focus groups and interviews.

#### 4.3.2 Trainee experiences of the application process

Table 8 shows the number of ITT programmes chosen by trainees within each route, when applying to ITT. Note this information is only available for the interview participants, and not the full set of focus group participants.

Table 8 - The number of ITT programmes chosen, by route into teaching, out of the three application choices for each interview participant.

Source: Interviews

Interview Participant	Routes into Teaching		
	SCITT	School Direct	University-led
1	1		2
2	2	1	
6	1 (only choice)		
12	2 (same Provider)	1	
13	2	1	
14	2	1	
15	2	1	
16	3		

This table shows the general trend amongst the SCITT research participants to focus their application choices on school-led ITT. However, participant 1 noted herself that she was bucking that trend, mostly applying to University-led courses, apart from in once instance, where the SCITT option was brought to her attention because the University-led course she had intended to apply to had closed. In contrast, participant 16, a Secondary Mathematics trainee, chose to apply to three SCITT programmes. Alternatively, participant 6 only applied to one provider following a recommendation, hence their research into the ITT pathway options was limited:

I heard about it from my Auntie, she actually knows people that run the course... It was sort of through word of mouth and I didn't apply to any others, I just applied to Oak Wood and thought, let's see what happens.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

The application system itself – UCAS Teacher Training - and the structures that this employed, meant there was evidence that some trainees had made uninformed choices of ITT pathway at application, simply to meet the expectations set by these application structures. Specifically, this is referring to the fact that the UCAS Teacher Training system allows applicants to select three ITT programmes to apply for. As a result, some of the research participants noted that they used their three choices on programmes that they were not necessarily interested in, or fully understood what these ITT pathways entailed. They were instead focussed on one particular choice, and the other choices were 'throw away' options, as highlighted by the conversation in focus group 3:

- I don't even know what I'm doing, like the ones that I applied for, I just had a third spot so I just put it down [Laughs].
- I think Oak Wood Teacher Training might have been my third one. I might have been like, I don't know who these are but I just put it down and they turned out to be the best one.

- I don't remember seeing anything at all. I literally just stumbled across Oak Wood Teacher Training. I didn't think they'd accept me because I thought the schools were too good but I just put it down.

(Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17)

This approach to selecting options on the UCAS system also transferred to attendance at interview, with participant 16 noting that they didn't go to one interview because the ITT programme was selected just to fill a spot on the application form: "I just chose not to go to that one [the interview], I didn't really know anything about it, I just put it on the application. So yeah, I withdrew my application for that" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018).

The confusion of applicants was exacerbated by the marketing that they used to research ITT. The applicants were faced with situations where they had to explain their choice of ITT pathway in their interviews, which emphasised the lack of substantive distinction between the different routes:

I remember going to a Schools Direct interview and they asked me why would you want to do a School Direct as opposed to a SCITT, and I didn't have a succinct answer because I couldn't really distinguish between them very well... For me it looked like on the face of it, what I'd be doing day to day and the number of days you'd have in different places looked broadly similar.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

Participant 12's confusion between School Direct and SCITT based on reasoning that the number of days in the school, and the day-to-day classroom focus are similar, is perfectly justified. It is not necessarily the content of these programmes that distinguishes them, rather the distinction is between the providers that have the responsibility of recommending the trainee for qualified teacher status. In fact, as noted in the introduction to the context of the study, a SCITT such as Oak

Wood Teacher Training could also offer School Direct places in order to maximise its recruitment opportunities. As such, participant 12 evidenced that she was unaware of this organisational distinction and that this was highlighted to her directly through the interview process.

The analysis identified patterns amongst the responses between those trainees who attended all of the interviews that they were offered, and those that only attended one - the one for the Provider with which they ultimately gained a place. This sparked an interesting notion of where on the applicants' 'customer journey' is the tipping point – the point at which they cease to research their options and finally submit their application choices, handing over the decision-making power to the ITT provider? At this point, the subject of the selection process is switched, from the applicant selecting which providers to apply to, to the provider selecting which applicants to make offers to. This pivotal moment occurs naturally at the point of application submission, and the evidence below highlights how the applicants' experiences developed beyond this point of submission.

#### 4.3.3 Trainees experiences of interview

A positive interview experience was most often cited as the reason for choosing to train with that particular provider: "It was just because the way that it came across at interview and things" (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018). Conversely, the trainees noted a number of negative interview experiences that specifically put them off other ITT providers, either in the way the interview day was organised, or in the way that trainees were made to feel about their experience of interviewing:

They'd asked me to prepare an interview for a task and for a ten minute presentation. So I spent a lot of time planning and when I arrived again there was like an unprofessional feel to it... Within the interview, I'd felt like they'd kind of rushed through it... And then it got to the end and they were like, right that's it. And I said, oh are we not doing the presentation?

And they were like, go on then, yep. So I had planned with props and all this kind of stuff and I felt almost a bit stupid.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

This experience was not unique to one trainee. Participant 12 had an equally unwelcoming experience at interview. Both participants 13 and 12 noted they received offers from these other ITT providers, despite their difficult experiences at interview. It is therefore interesting to note that both rejected these offers based on their experiences. The interview had a pivotal role in influencing an applicants' decision:

I went to the Blue Bird interview first... Maybe people were in a bad mood on the day but I just felt really, like a bit of an inconvenience. And they kept saying, oh because you applied late, we can't do this and we can't do this... I guess it's an indicator of how well I might have been looked after later on. And then the interview, one of the interviewers she was just really, she was really rude to me and I left just thinking oh no, I don't know if I want to be a teacher after all.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

Whether trainees attended all of the interviews that they were invited to varied between the individuals, but Participant 14 identified a potential underlying cause for this variation. She acknowledged that some applicants had 'firm' choices at the point of application, rather than after the interview:

I'm like, why didn't you go to all three [interviews]? Why wouldn't you? It's like an opportunity for you to go and see what the school is like... I know a lot of people said that Oak Wood was their firm anyway so they weren't bothered and that but I think for me anyway I think I kind of knew who I wanted to go with but I still wanted to go and experience other interview days.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

The turnaround of applications on the part of the ITT provider, was used by applicants as a determinant of their overall quality, as highlighted through: “I also applied to Gotham University and that took ages. They told me as well that I had an interview but that was quite far away which ended up in me rejecting that offer” (Focus Group 3 – Maths and Science Trainees). Building upon this concept, for some trainees their ITT provider preference was forced to change based on these external circumstances. For participant 16, timescales meant that Oak Wood Teacher Training became their primary choice after the point of application, due to a slowness in processing the application, and the impression this gave of the professionalism of the ITT provider:

They took so long to get back to me that I already had an interview at Oak Wood and needed to accept the position....That’s the one that I wanted yeah, I sort of knew by the fact that they hadn’t been able to get my application sorted and the other two had been on it straight away that I was, well, if you can’t deal with the application, how can you deal with anything else well.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

Alternatively, the impact of the DfE’s recruitment methodology meant that trainees’ options were limited based on what point they had applied in the recruitment cycle:

- I applied for this one obviously and Ecclesia University but that one had already filled by the time I applied, which didn’t leave me much choice... This one was my first choice anyway.
- I went to Ecclesia University for my interview and that day they sent us all home with a letter saying they were full.
- I sent mine off, I think it was even November and I think it was already full... you’re hearing all these stories like I was literally at my interview and I didn’t get seen... I went home thinking, obviously I’d already sent my application and I was just waiting for these responses. I knew

my Oak Wood Teacher Training interview for example wasn't until December and I was thinking it's going to be full by December, I think that's where that pressure comes.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

All applicants to ITT must go through an interview when applying to a programme. As a result, all of the trainees had at least one experience of interview, and so were able to use this as a source of information when engaging with the ITT providers that they were applying to. For some, this part of the customer journey served to confirm intentions to accept a particular offer if successful, whereas for others, the slowness to invite to interview was seen as an overall mark of quality for the ITT provider, and hence intentions to accept offers were changed on this basis. The final decisions of the trainees to accept one offer and reject others is outlined in chapter 5, before moving into the facilitators and constraints on making an informed choice in chapter 6.

#### 4.4 Summary: Marketing and Recruitment

The rich data from the trainees' reflections on their experiences has served to provide detailed insight into both the processes of application and recruitment, and the role that the marketing and information sources had in supporting this.

It was evident that the trainees in the sample collectively had substantial knowledge of the teaching profession and this was a contributing factor to them feeling ready to apply in 216-17. However, it was apparent that once they had decided to apply to become teachers, there was a significant amount of research required to understand the process of ITT and the variety of pathways available – here termed the complexity of the offer.

The trainees' experiences varied depending on their starting point in their research: whether this was pitched at the national-level information sources such as the Get Into Teaching website (DfE, 2016a) or more local ITT provider marketing. However, the trainees were mostly unified in their experience of having to triangulate across multiple information sources apart from participant 6

who only selected one ITT programme and admittedly did very little research into her options.

The data highlighted the balance between published marketing materials such as websites, and the need for more interactional contact, with alternative sources such as the experiences of friends and family members. This draws into question the objectivity and quality of the information sources that the trainees used to make their decisions. The trainees' own assessments of the marketing acknowledged the tension between aiming to inform and to persuade applicants to select their ITT programmes.

The customer journey reaches a crucial tipping point when applications are submitted and the applicants await the invitation to interview, which also served as a source of information on which the trainees based their final decisions.

Throughout this entire recruitment process and onto the ITT programme itself, it was noted how there remained persistent misunderstandings over some aspects of the ITT offer, such as the value of the PGCE, and the differentiation between the routes into teaching. Based on this, it is possible to assert that the trainees were not able to make fully informed choices. The next chapter presents the second theme of the researching findings, that of the factors considered by the trainees in their choices of ITT pathway.

## Chapter 5 - Research Findings – Trainees' Choice of ITT Pathway

As part of the research process outlined in the methodology chapter, the trainees in the focus groups were asked to reflect on all of the factors they considered when applying to ITT. This list of factors was then shared again with the individual interview participants who were able to give their own thoughts on the extent to which these factors played a part in their decision making. In doing this, it allowed for a rich discussion around why trainees chose their particular ITT pathway, and helped to uncover the aspects in which they might have been considered uninformed.

The study is framed as such that the research participants were all successful applicants to ITT, and seemingly all happy with the choice of ITT pathway that they had made since starting on the programme. However, each trainee identified a unique combination of factors that they based their decisions on when applying to ITT.

The analysis of the responses drew a clear distinction between factors that were related to the trainees' personal circumstances. This highlighted where choices were made based on where the trainees were, literally and figuratively, in their lives at the time of application. The other set of factors related more to the ITT programmes and the points of differentiation they offered, which determined where the applicant wanted to be by the end of their training. The following section is therefore split along these lines but first the analysis of the data noted an important distinction in terms of which choice was made first – the route into teaching or the provider – and the implications this had for the 'customer journey' of the applicants.

## 5.1 Choosing the route or the provider first

A significant aspect of variation amongst the research participants was whether they decided upon the route into teaching, or the ITT provider first, and consequently which way round their understanding of the ITT options and choices was developed. The significance of this is vital to anyone attempting to recruit trainee teachers, as it differentiates between two types of recruitment conversation: the first being if the applicant understands the routes into teaching but wants to know more about the ITT provider, and the second if the applicant is interested in the ITT provider but does not understand the differences between the routes into teaching. I did not expect the two divergent approaches to be quite so distinct amongst the trainees participating in the research. Of the eight trainees who took part in the interviews, it was split down the middle, with participants 1, 6, 12 and 14 noting they focussed on providers first, and then learnt what routes into teaching they offered. In contrast, participants 2, 13, 15 and 16 emphasised their research into the routes into teaching first, and then their quest to find providers that offered those routes.

All but one of the eight trainees were adamant that the University-led route was not for them. Quite often, this was accompanied by language that referred to the ITT year as ‘doing the job’ already, as illustrated by:

I’ve always wanted to go straight into it and get straight into a school and do the job that you’re going to be doing and learn from the people that are already doing it, I suppose. So going back to the University side just wasn’t for me.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

Likewise, participant 14 serves as a good example where the trainee focussed on the route into teaching first, and then they searched their desired location for ITT providers offering that route:

I practically looked at the schools in my local area because I wanted to be able to teach, or train to teach in my local area. And who the providers, who they were with, whether they were SCITTS or School Direct.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

For others trainees, such as participants 6 and 12, the focus was very much on an ideal ITT provider from the start, based mostly on location and personal connections, and then this was followed up with the understanding about the route into teaching that was offered by those providers:

I knew some of the schools and I had this vague awareness of Oak Wood teacher Training as an alliance... and then just had some personal connections here at the school and at a few other schools as well. And then it just so happened that it was a SCITT.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

The role of the ITT provider in giving a personalised level of support through the actual application process was notable. Even to get to the point of making their choices on UCAS, the trainees reflected on the extent to which they relied on the information and support provided by the SCITT provider that they had finally chosen: "I just rang them, which probably annoyed them but if I did want more information in terms of my application, it was just easier to pick up the phone" (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018). Similarly, for participant 13:

I can remember having a question about something and I emailed Oak Wood, and I remember him emailing me straight back, or potentially even calling me back and that made it feel a little bit more personal, and that you were going to be a bit more valued rather than trying to trawl through a load of literature about them and whatever.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

Linking into the theme of personal contact and quality of customer service, this had a significant effect on the final part of the trainees' 'customer journey' – that of making the decision of who to train with. This decision took a lot of factors into consideration.

The following section analyses the factors of choice that the trainees contemplated when applying to ITT. This is broken down into the factors associated with the applicant's personal circumstances at the time of applying, where they came from and their experiences prior to application; and what the trainees wanted from their ITT programme, the future outcomes.

## 5.2 Considerations Based on Current Circumstances

Location was noted as a key factor in determining which providers the trainees were likely to apply to. Location, as a concept in discussion, was very much centred on the location of the schools in the partnership, and not necessarily the main school registered as the 'home' of the SCITT provider: "I knew I wanted to be in Metropolis. And, I knew that Oak Wood offered a lot of Metropolis schools" (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018).

Location, therefore, had a close association with the reputation of the schools and the opportunities that this would afford for placements in desirable locations: "Ultimately I made my decision based on geographical location and the schools themselves. I knew that Oak Wood has a lot of outstanding schools" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018).

In terms of location of the ITT partnership, this was split between those wanting to move back to the area: "I guess the location, it being in Metropolis and Crowford because I knew I needed to move back to Metropolis" (Participant 2, Female, Primary 3-7, 06/03/2018), and likewise: "I definitely wanted to move back up north again to do my studying" (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018). For others who were already based in the city, it was a

question of staying in a place they knew: “I think I was drawn in by the fact it’s Metropolis based because I’d just graduated this summer so it’s nice to stay” (Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17), or similarly the location was close to family and other support networks: “I knew it had a really good reputation because that’s where I live... I think I was quite fortunate because I’ve got Crowford as a very firm reference point” (Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages, 22/03/2018).

Likewise in the primary trainee focus group, the discussion centred on local connections to the area, meaning the decision to train to teach in a particular location was not necessarily an individual one, but linked to other family factors:

- OK, so were there any other personal factors that worked into your decision?
- My parents live relatively close to Metropolis, they live in Hoppington, so it was quite nice to stay around here
- Um, friends live in Metropolis. My boyfriend lives in Metropolis
- My boyfriend did a year in industry last year so I was planning to move up to Metropolis anyway, whether I was doing teacher training or not.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

Not all factors of choice are necessarily positive. Some considerations that trainees expressed were centred on either negative factors, or potentially off-putting criteria. For participant 16, the schools in the partnership and the perceived quality and competitiveness of the course, made her raise questions over her own eligibility to apply, and her chances of success:

I actually didn’t think that I would be able to get onto the Oak Wood course because on the website they said they would like a degree in that subject, it was a really competitive course, and I was thinking because all the schools are really good schools, you know, there’s quite a lot of

grammar schools and outstanding schools. I just didn't think that I would be able to get onto that course.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

In the same way that location was a factor of choice reliant upon the applicants' personal circumstances, finance was also a significant consideration, although it did not appear to have the same bearing on choice of route or provider. This was partly due to the lack of differentiation across tuition fees as discussed by the STEM subject secondary trainees:

- The fact that it's £9k a year is a little bit off-putting, but then the bursary offsets that.
- But that's the same with all providers isn't it?
- Yeah, it's across the board with all providers. If you want to do it you've got to pay, basically.

(Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17)

Whilst the value of the government bursaries varied between teaching subjects, these were applied consistently across the country, making this less of a significant factor for trainees who knew precisely which subject they were qualified for and intended to teach. In this sense the bursary was not a determining factor in the choice of ITT pathway:

I remember being a little bit frustrated that there was such a big disparity between PE and Maths for example but it's one of those things. I knew it was the same for every training provider, I felt pretty confident that I was never going to get a salaried School Direct route so I didn't even consider the idea to be honest.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

Some trainees were happy to add to their existing student debt to finance their continued training as a teacher: "Yeah, the money side, it's not really a factor for..."

because I'm fresh out of Uni it's just the norm to add whatever to my debt and I'll just pay it off" (Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17).

Finance was an especially interesting factor because although it did not determine choice of route or provider per se, it was an enabling or limiting factor closely associated with the observation that many of the research participants had been working prior to their ITT year, and hence their choice of route and provider was strongly influenced by a desire to train 'on the job.' Participant 14 emphasised the impact of a break in continuity of work, equating the lack of income to taking a hiatus from her career, which she explained was financially difficult for her:

It has been difficult to take a year out and not really get paid for what you're doing... I know that for a lot of student trainees now on the alliance or whatever, have come at it from university so it's nothing different for them. But if you're a mature student... I'm not getting an income from it so for me it does feel very much like taking a year out.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

Whilst age data were not collected as part of the initial questionnaire (see Appendix C) and therefore not noted in the methodology section, the demographic of the trainees in this SCITT's context was skewed towards applicants with around one to three years' prior work experience. This was highlighted by themselves in relation to their preference for a school-based ITT pathway, with some of them referring to themselves directly as 'mature students' such as participant 14 in the quote above. As would be expected of applicants from all backgrounds, this meant that the factors considered in their choice of ITT route and provider were influenced by their experiences to date. With the SCITT Provider only offering a postgraduate route into teaching, the trainees' undergraduate university experiences played a part in determining their choices, associating a University-led course with a return to the student lifestyle: "I'm past going to University and wanting to get into the student life and all that. No it definitely was straight into the job almost for me" (Participant 14, Female,

Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018). Equally, the trainees had a determination not to be seen as students:

You're school-based. I mean, I feel it is like having a job. I don't feel like a student. And I think especially for me, not that I'm old or anything, but I was out of Uni for two years working. So to just suddenly go back to student life was not really something I wanted to do.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

As outlined at the start of this chapter, the evidence shows that applicants determined their route into teaching or their ITT provider first. With regards to the association of the University-led course with being labelled a student, this either drew the applicants to the SCITT route, or confirmed their initial choice of provider.

With a number of the trainees having prior experience in schools, the link with the amount of time spent in schools associated with SCITT was a significant factor of choice: "Having worked in a school before, I just thought, get me back in. I don't want to be sat in the lecture theatre sort of thing" (Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018). The SCITT model of training was therefore linked to the trainee teacher's role in school during the training year, and for those research participants that had prior work experience in school settings, their 'teacher identity' was a distinguishing factor of SCITT and this particular provider, as one trainee noted: "For me the whole school community experience is really important... You are actually working alongside colleagues and not just someone who parachutes in for a few months and then leaves halfway through a term" (Focus Group 2 – Secondary Other Trainees).

Location, finance and the desire to be school-based were all factors determined by the trainees' personal circumstances or prior experiences. A large proportion of those interviewed had prior work experience, particularly as teaching assistants, and therefore the SCITT provider's programme was seen as an

especially attractive proposition to 'train on the job', despite the lack of formal salary for all trainees. Whilst the desire from trainees to be school-based was closely associated with their current circumstances prior to application, they also discussed the amount of time spent in school as a distinguishing feature of the SCITT model of ITT. This factor was therefore a consideration based on both where the applicants had come from, and also how they saw themselves training and working in the future, outlined in the next section.

### 5.3 Considerations Based on Future Outcomes

The second grouping of factors of choice covers what the applicants were looking for in terms of their experiences on the ITT programme and the associated outcomes.

Closely linked to the concept of student and teacher identity, the amount of time spent in school, and spent in the classroom, was a key factor in trainees' assessment of their choices around ITT route and provider. Almost all research participants identified this as significant, and closely associated a greater amount of time spent in school with the SCITT model of training. For several, having worked in the education sector previously led to a desire to complete training in school:

The whole thing of just the amount of time that you get to spend in school and I think being part of a school community when I worked in Tirecross, the EAL role, I just really enjoyed that. And, when you think longer term, that's what you're going to spend your whole life being part of as a teacher, and so getting into that whole headspace and that environment quickly, for me it was really important.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

This observation was true for other trainees, especially in comparison to their perception of the University-led course and the associations with their prior university experiences: “I’d spent two years making sure that I was progressing, I didn’t want to feel like I was regressing... I didn’t want to go away and hear about teaching in a lecture hall, I wanted to be in the school” (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018). This was the explanation given by the majority of the participants when asked about the reasons why they chose School Centred ITT.

In contrast, one focus group participant highlighted that for them, the desire to be based in school was borne not from personal circumstances, but a recognition of the need to have time in schools to train: “No mine’s the opposite because I hadn’t really had much experience in school I knew that I really needed it so I wanted to be in school straight from the start” (Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17). It is interesting to note that at no point did the trainees involved in the research acknowledge that University-led ITT involves a substantial amount of time training in a school environment as well. Whilst it is not possible to definitively say that SCITT attracts one type of candidate over another, the research has highlighted that applicants are judging whether an ITT programme is right for them based on their experiences up until the point of application. The focus tended to be introspective, on assessing their own training needs, rather than focussing on what they need to do to get onto the course. This may in part be due to the fact that the research participants were all successful applicants, rather than sampling from a broader range of applicants some of whom might not have been eligible to apply.

In relation to the SCITT model of training, the trainees were quite specific about their comparison to the University-led model of ITT:

I started on the training days before all the students arrived... So I felt like I was actually a member of the team. I didn’t want to do a PGCE where I spend four to six weeks learning about theory and what you’ve learnt in

your first week you can't remember by your seventh week because you've just had an overload of information.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

This comparison was used by other trainees as a basis on which to eliminate other ITT routes: "I ruled out PGCE because I knew that with the SCITT you start straight away and that you're in the classroom from day one almost" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018).

Trainees also illuminated their perceptions of the University versus school-based training models by referring to their preferred learning styles, and how they believed they would train to teach. Participant 13 noted in the focus group how university-style written assessments put her off the University-led course: "I always found the practical seminars much, much more enjoyable and appealing. And I also always learnt a lot more from them" (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018). Trainees with different subject backgrounds shared similar thoughts on why a University-led course was not for them:

I think that might be what put me off doing the PGCE. My previous experience [at University] was you go in, you listened to lectures and you do your coursework. I don't want to be told a teaching strategy one week and then not be able to try it for four weeks. I want to be able to learn it and then try it the next day, while it's still fresh in your mind.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

The other two significant factors of choice relating to the outcomes of the course were qualification and employability. However, much like finance and location, the qualification at the end of the ITT course seemed to be taken as a given by the research participants, and employability was viewed as the distinguishing factor determined by which route and provider the applicants chose.

The first focus group highlighted how the PGCE is often synonymous with the ITT course itself:

- PGCE as well, that was a massive thing.
- I didn't know you could do it without a PGCE, it wasn't something that I had really looked into... Because people, I don't know if any of you think the same but I often think that when people refer to teacher training they say, oh are you doing a PGCE? They don't say are you doing a SCITT, are you doing this or that?
- They refer to it as a PGCE
- No one says, are you doing your QTS? [Laughter]

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

The PGCE was considered a desired outcome of the ITT course: "I did really want a PGCE. I mean, I still don't know if it's a myth or not whether, I've heard that if you don't have a PGCE then you can't go and teach out of Europe" (Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018). The link with the accredited provider of the PGCE qualification was therefore seen as important in terms of quality of the course outcome:

University of Metropolis PGCE sounds a lot better than some of the other University PGCEs... I want to try and teach at least for a couple of years abroad at some point, and having a PGCE will set you up, as opposed to some courses now offer the SCITTs without the PGCEs as a cheaper option.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

However, the ubiquity of the PGCE qualification amongst most ITT courses meant that for many trainees, whilst it was a desirable aspect of the course, it was for the most part not a distinguishing factor: "I knew that was just the package that you got, because I knew that I wanted to do a SCITT, I get QTS and I get a PGCE with credits towards a masters" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018).

The conceptualisation of the PGCE qualification, was interestingly evidenced in discussions with the trainees during the research interviews. It appeared that, due to the ubiquity of the PGCE qualification amongst SCITT programmes, and the format of the University PGCE partnership, trainees evidenced a sense of trivialisation towards this aspect of the course. It might even be interpreted through their answers that their perception of the full range routes into teaching is skewed, with some participants implying the taught input they received for the PGCE element of the SCITT programme was equivalent to the totality of the experience for other trainees that selected a University-led programme. That the entire University-led ITT programme is similar to the eight days University-based training that they receive towards the PGCE, and that their substantial time in the classroom is an aspect of SCITT that trainees on University-led programmes do not experience. As such, they appeared to imply that the SCITT course is 'fuller' based on the amount of time spent in school, which is exacerbated by the synonymous reference to this route as 'the PGCE'. Participant 12 demonstrated a good understanding of the QTS and PGCE relationship within Oak Wood's SCITT partnership model, but her reference to the 'bolt-on' indicates this sense of trivialisation:

A lot of people have asked what is a SCITT and how does that differ from a PGCE sort of thing. And as far as I understand and I might be completely wrong, Oak Wood as the provider gives us QTS, and then the University of Metropolis gives us the PGCE. And I think I probably see it [The PGCE] as a bolt-on because of the percentage of, proportion of time we've spent doing University assignments based-stuff and spending time at the University of Metropolis.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

Related to the qualification gained at the end of the course, the likelihood of employability was identified by the research participants as an extremely significant factor in their choice of ITT provider and route.

... But if you think about it, the whole point of SCITT. Well, especially in an alliance like Oak Wood Teacher Training or Blue Bird is that you're hoping to get a job within the alliance. Because the alliance already knows you very well. And then you get trained on the inside and they've invested time in you so hopefully you get a job in that school after, the same school you've worked in for a year and the kids know you, the staff know you. I was geared towards School Direct salaried for this reason but I just didn't have enough experience for it.

(Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17)

Employability was therefore strongly associated with the schools in the partnership of the ITT provider: "I put it down I think because I recognised a lot of the schools in it... I figured if I did my training in one of those schools I would likely get a job in one of those schools" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018). Therefore, training in a partnership with a higher number of good or outstanding schools, with a good reputation, was considered likely to give you the competitive edge when applying for jobs at the end of the ITT course. This was the case for participant 15 as a Secondary Mathematics trainee: "The [lead school] has the regional maths hub, so that was a massive thing. I've still got that guarantee that I'll be able to get a job somewhere but I want that edge to get a better school" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018).

There were a number of factors that the trainees suggested were indistinguishable between providers, either due to the information available, or the genuine similarity between pathways, and therefore the trainees paid less attention to these details when applying to ITT. This particularly applied to what I summarise as the format of the ITT programme, that is the placement structure, pace of learning, level of challenge in the school and the format of the ITT assessments: "Placement structure, again I wasn't aware of this when I was picking my options. I don't think I knew how many placements there were" (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018). Part of the disinterest from

the research participants at the time of applying was down to the lack of detailed information in this regard:

Placement structure, that's one that it's really hard to judge from what the providers tell you on the website. You know, they tell you you'll get two main placements, you'll get a group of mini placements, but it's generally pretty vague.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

For other applicants, they were aware of the general course format but were less concerned about variation in this regard between providers:

Things like format of assessment and format of course delivery and perhaps level of challenge and pace of learning. All of those I feel wouldn't differ that much between different providers... I think all of those are kind of a given.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

There was a definite sense of assumption amongst participants that all University-led courses are homogenous, and likewise all SCITT courses are similar in their model of delivery. The ability to flex the pace of learning was seen as a particular attribute of the SCITT model of training, regardless of provider. Participant 16, who noted she applied only to SCITT courses on this basis, summarised her view below:

I think, I was told quite early on [by her school experience provider] that the pace of the course is very much designed to suit you. As opposed to doing your PGCE, you do the University part and then you do a block of training, and you've got to go straight in. Whereas with the SCITT you're almost building up. Almost a lesson at a time really. And if you want to drop back or add more on then you can just do it at your own pace.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

Another factor of choice distinct to the provider, was the size of the partnership and therefore the number of places on offer for each subject. Whilst this did factor into the applicants' thinking regarding their chances of success, none of them appeared to consider the impact on themselves whilst training, in terms of size of the cohort:

I do remember reading on the website that they'd only have places for four maths trainees. That worried me at first because I was like, right this is super competitive... But yeah, the number of people [whilst training] on it didn't really matter to me.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

Finally, for some trainees, the support on the course was a differentiating factor and something they actively looked for when applying to ITT: "I feel like if I had any immediate problem I could contact four or five people who could definitely help because you're going to learn about teaching wherever you go. It's about the support you get alongside that" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). For others, this was seen as implicit based on their post-ITT employment statistics: "I think I probably just assumed that... because of their employment rate... that all of these things are in place for that [support] to be happening" (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

In summary, these final factors of choice were for the most part given less weighting when trainees discussed their choices during application. In some ways, this was due to an acceptance on the applicants' part that things such as assessment, programme delivery format (such as 'Oak Wood SCITT days' and so forth) and level of challenge, would be the same across most SCITT routes, if not all ITT pathways. In other regards, applicants appeared to not have enough information to make a meaningful comparison between providers and programmes, for example with the structure and focus of the placements.

## 5.4 Offer acceptance

A question was posed in the interviews about why the trainees ultimately chose this particular SCITT provider. Whilst the responses to this question were intended to support the analysis of the factors of choice for the applicants, the answers also provided insight into the final stages of their 'customer journey', that of accepting and rejecting ITT offers.

As noted in chapter 4, for most participants the interactions throughout the recruitment and interview process served to confirm the final acceptance of a place to train with the SCITT provider. This is highlighted by the circumstances of participant 14: "They made it more personalised and more individualised... Not like it's just another person to add to their pool of trainees. But how they looked into my course and seen whether it would be employable afterwards" (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018).

Building on the earlier analysis that identified the concept that trainees had a 'firm' choice at the application stage, this was also referenced when discussing the acceptance of the offer from the SCITT provider after interview, such as: "I went into the interviews knowing, my expectation was that Oak Wood was always going to be my top choice, so I just needed the interview to go well" (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

The impact of the timeliness of providers making offers was noted, with several of the trainees highlighting that they were made offers before they left the school on the day of the interview. Whilst for some, such as participant 1 in the quote above, this was a timely confirmation of a 'firm' choice, in comparison for others, this gesture from Oak Wood was contrary of their previous beliefs about the chances of their success:

I didn't think that I would get the interview for there, because I didn't think that I had enough experience, nor had good enough qualifications

for the course, so I was really surprised when I did get an interview... I just got a really, really good impression of it... so they offered me the position on that day and I just thought actually this is probably a better provider than the other one.

(Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018)

The data outlined in this section demonstrates how the ITT interview is a pivotal point in the transactional aspect of the recruitment experience. It determined whether the applicants became offer holders, but was also used by the research participants to finally determine which ITT pathway to choose. For some, this process was the successful confirmation of an already 'firm' decision made at application, and for others the interview served to change the anticipated course of their application – acknowledging the value of attending the interview. The evidence from participant 16 above is similar to that from participant 2: "They told me there and then that they'd accepted me, so I knew that that was the one I wanted so I didn't go to the second part of the other interviews, I just accepted it straight away" (Participant 2, Female, Primary 3-7, 06/03/2018). The experience of participant 1 was similar, noting: "Same day offers from all of them" (Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018). Participant 13 noted the same experience but illustrated the reasoning on the part of the provider to follow up with the outcome of the interview quickly: "After the interview here on Friday, they'd said that they'd let us know on Monday. I got home and Bert called me on my mobile saying, I don't want you worrying all weekend, we'd love to offer you a place" (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018). If these statements are viewed alongside the earlier discussion in chapter 4 around whether applicants attended all of their interviews, the practice of offering a training place on the day may be viewed as an inhibitor of making an informed choice. The final part of this analysis explores in more detail the facilitators and constraints on applicants making an informed choice of ITT pathway.

## 5.5 Summary: Trainees' Choice of ITT Pathway

Despite the complexity of the ITT offer outlined in chapter 4, the research conversations with the trainees on their factors of choice tended towards dichotomous characterisations. For example, in discussing the appeal of SCITT and the links to training 'on the job', the trainees often juxtaposed their responses with the reasons they did not opt for a University-led model. In discussing locations and the link with 'good' schools, some trainees noted their decisions were based on where they definitely would not like to train based on the location of challenging schools instead. In part this may have been due to the balanced question frame (appendices F and G) but it was notable how the trainees referenced decisions based on negative factors, or those things they did not want, as well as those they did want.

Analysis of the data highlighted those factors of choice based on current personal circumstances of the applicants such as location and finance, and the intended future outcomes such as qualification and employability. Whilst the exact combination of factors was personal to the trainee, they were aligned in referencing factors which fell into these two sets of consideration.

The trainees' experiences varied depending on whether they selected the route into teaching or the ITT provider first. It was also evident that for some, the acceptance of an offer of a training place was an assumed given, if the ITT provider made one, whereas for others, the experiences in the interview and quality of interaction with the provider was a determining factor in itself.

In discussing the factors of choice with the trainees it became evident that there was a blurring in their distinction between ITT and teaching itself, hence the factors of choice for an ITT pathway were intertwined with the selection of future employment opportunities.

Likewise, it became apparent that the PGCE was considered differently amongst trainees, some of whom positioned it both as an outcome of the ITT programme, and also synonymous with the University-led route into teaching itself. As such the PGCE formed a sort of contested concept that supports the argument that trainees were subject to a lack of information whilst applying to ITT.

Finally, a group of factors relating to the programme itself, its structure, delivery format and so forth were for the most part disregarded by the trainees. This was perhaps a symptom of poor quality information or evidence of the trainees' assumptions that all ITT programmes within the main routes into teaching would be homogenous. The final chapter of the research findings outlines the facilitators and constraints on making an informed choice.

## Chapter 6 - Research Findings – Facilitators and Constraints on Making an Informed Choice

This final chapter of the research findings builds on the previous two, to outline the evidence that answers research question three: “To what extent did the SCITT trainees make an informed choice about their ITT pathway?”

As noted in the literature review chapter, the extent to which applicants made an informed choice of their ITT pathway is not a straightforward binary analysis. An applicant might not be fully informed, but have some of the information on which to base their decision. They may also hold misconceptions that have arisen for various reasons. The first part of this analysis looks at the direct evidence from trainees’ reflections to explore whether the trainees might be considered uninformed and on what aspects, at the point of their application to ITT. The latter sections analyse the facilitators and constraints to making an informed choice, as demonstrated through the data. However, this is also not a straightforward binary analysis. The evidence suggests that good practice in one regard, which facilitated the applicant making an informed choice on a certain aspect of ITT, may also have resulted in constraints elsewhere that led to an uninformed choice overall. The examples from the research participants illustrate that in several ways they made very well-informed decisions about their choice of ITT pathway, yet in other ways they remained unaware and uninformed about other factors, both prior to and once on the programme. This highlights the question raised in the literature review as to whether it is ever possible to be fully informed when making a choice, particularly in a complex market context such as ITT.

### 6.1 Applicants’ reflections on their decisions

One of the ways in which to identify ignorance noted in the literature review was that of *chronicity* (Croissant, 2014), or ignorance as highlighted by the passage of time. The following section synthesises the evidence from the focus group

discussions and the individual interviews, as the trainees reflected on their experiences of application. The aim in doing so was to highlight where trainees may have made uninformed choices, without explicitly questioning their judgements.

As is to be expected, there were certain things about the teaching profession itself that the trainees did not appreciate until they were on their ITT programme: “I didn’t really know how much CPD [continuing professional development] you would really do as a teacher, once you were qualified” (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). This was no surprise, given that participant 15 was unusual amongst the sample for not having done any work experience in a school prior to applying for ITT.

Some qualities of the ITT provider only became apparent to the trainee upon reflection, rather than them thinking to research these whilst applying. It was evident that once starting the ITT programme, the trainees’ knowledge had still not developed: “I couldn’t comment on the size of the partnership, I wouldn’t know whether that was a big or a small partnership of schools really” (Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018). This highlights two challenges; the first being the availability of information for comparison; and the second being the particular challenge arising from the ITT context, in that once trainees had selected one ITT pathway, they were highly unlikely to be able to experience another for comparison. This returns to the point of Wilden et al. (2010), that it is impossible to fully know what a job is like until you do it. Likewise, it may be considered impossible to fully understand what ITT is like, until you go through it. Even so, with the methodology established to research with trainees rather than applicants and allow for a period of reflection, there remained aspects on which the trainees were still uninformed.

It is also important to note, as raised in the methodology section, that the research participants were successful applicants to the SCITT provider. Whilst some of them expressed minor disappointment with aspects of their programme, all of the interviewed trainees expressed a high level of personal satisfaction with

the ITT pathway that they had chosen – the route and the provider. As such, the concept of confirmation bias (Smithson, 1989) was evidenced upon reflection of their experiences of application and once on the programme, as emphasised by the Maths and Science trainees: “...Quite a lot of teachers have said to me, if you want to be a teacher then the best way to do it is the School-Centred way, and now I’m teaching, I’m absolutely confident that I made the right decision...” (Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17). There were some aspects where the trainees noted they could have done better, but they continued to emphasise that they believed they had made the right decision for them:

I think at the time I wish I’d known a little bit more about the routes and I’d had a little bit of a better understanding of what was meant by School Direct in particular. It would have been really useful to see some sort of ranking, like a league table, but in all honesty I don’t think I would change anything. I’m happy with the route that I’ve gone down.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

Building upon these reflections by the trainees, the final part of this chapter is given over to untangling the facilitators and constraints on applicants making an informed choice. I use the term tangled, as it is not clear cut to separate facilitators and constraints into two distinct groups. The evidence thus far has highlighted that the trainees were successful and satisfied with their choice of ITT pathway. Based on the complexity of the ITT offer fostered by government policy, and the challenge of explaining this through the marketing, the trainees have highlighted how they attempted to understand their options and form judgements of the factors on which they based their decisions.

## 6.2 Factors affecting applicants' informed choice of ITT pathway

It was clear from the research conversations both in the focus groups, and again in more depth in the interviews that the trainees struggled to fully comprehend the range of ITT pathway choices available to them. Regardless of the information sources that they accessed as applicants, there appeared to be a persistent sense of confusion over the difference between the major routes into teaching. The research also uncovered an underlying assumption amongst some trainees that individual schools would only be involved with one route into teaching, or one ITT provider, again suggesting that the complexity brought about by ITT policy is having an impact on ITT applicants via their engagement with schools throughout the recruitment process. Two other process aspects of recruitment appeared to exacerbate the circumstances which gave rise to uninformed choices, these were; the timing of applications and the pressure to apply quickly; and the UCAS Teacher Training mechanism for application influencing applicant behaviour to make three ITT programme choices regardless of how informed these decisions were. Finally, the government's strategic prioritisation of guidance, advice and support, specifically through the availability of the Premier Plus Service for applicants to shortage teaching subjects played out in the disparity between trainees' experiences of recruitment. This purposeful inequity of support and guidance was also experienced by the trainees through the quality of their interactions with schools during recruitment. Trainees in shortage subjects noted a lack of interest and even hostility from some ITT providers who were unable to place them. This was the most explicit evidence to suggest that uninformed choices could result from a direct choice on the provider's part to support one type of applicant over another, and links back to the challenge identified in chapter 4 regarding the responsibilities of ITT providers to engage and provide information on all routes into teaching for potential applicants.

### 6.2.1 Time and Demand

A theme that played out strongly in the focus groups and the interviews was the notion of time and its relationship to demand for ITT places. A lack of time to engage with the ITT marketing and form a balanced view of the options available is perhaps the most obvious challenge for applicants.

The majority of the trainees interviewed had been working full time before applying to ITT, therefore personal circumstances imposed a degree of constraint for some by limiting the amount of time they could dedicate to researching their ITT pathway options through going to recruitment events and attending interview: “Because I was working full time it was really difficult for me to take days off to go [to careers events]... It just never really worked out so I just took all my information off the website” (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018). Linking back to chapter 4, the time constraint therefore limited the sources of information that the applicant could engage with and draw upon in order to triangulate their opinions and choices of ITT pathway. As an applicant working full-time, participant 16 may be considered as disadvantaged in this regard. Whilst she noted this limitation in the quote above, she did not indicate her own impression that her choice of ITT pathway was any less informed a result.

For participant 12, the rush of trying to apply in such a short timeframe created an incident where her misunderstanding of the different routes was highlighted at interview when she applied to a School Direct programme by accident:

My application was quite time sensitive so I think if I was, if I had another month I would have talked to a few more people or looked at a few more websites and things. But because I had a three month notice period on my job I had to know very, very quickly whether I had a place... I think I probably didn't look so much at Schools Direct and I still don't fully understand how they kind of differ from SCITT courses... I ended up applying to one because they looked very similar. The days in school and

the days out doing training and things like that. I still don't really understand what the fundamental differences would be.

(Participant 12, Female, Secondary Modern Foreign Languages,  
22/03/2018)

Time was therefore a commodity that the trainees noted they did not have when applying to ITT. Given that the majority of the sample research population had substantial work experience prior to applying to ITT, this in itself has significant implications for SCITT recruitment of applicants in full time work.

Beyond the simple lack of time for the applicants, deeper analysis uncovered the pressures of application timing and the demand for places as a further hindrance on making an informed choice. This was a challenge for two underlying reasons - the variation in places available for different subjects meant that some ITT programmes filled much quicker than others, and this was exacerbated by the recruitment methodology that was employed by the DfE in the 2016-17 recruitment cycle. Therefore, 'time' as a constraint on choice is linked to the ITT policy on shortage subjects. Due to this, 'demand' must be considered both ways: The demand for places from applicants looking to train in over-subscribed subjects, such as Primary, and the demand from ITT providers for suitable applicants to under-subscribed subjects, such as Mathematics. Both forms of demand had ramifications for applicants' abilities to make informed choices.

Inevitably, there are some teaching subjects which are usually over-subscribed with applicants, such as primary or secondary history, and there are some subjects which continually struggle to recruit their target numbers, such as maths and science subjects. The latter are often referred to as 'shortage subjects' in the literature. It was evident throughout the focus groups and interviews that the government and the ITT providers' support for applicants to non-shortage subjects varied from the approach to those wishing to apply for shortage subjects. This is evidenced in terms of monetary support provided through the government's bursary scheme, through additional application support provided

by the exclusive Premier Plus service, and in the general attitude towards applicants as encountered by the research participants.

Those trainees in shortage subjects appeared well aware of their 'in-demand' status: "In a way for maths, yeah, there's no pressure for jobs. They're out there. If you look online there's maths jobs everywhere" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). To the contrary, those in non-shortage subjects noted pressures that they felt to apply quickly: "I was getting a bit stressed... I remember looking at UCAS and seeing lots of the PGCE ones were full already and getting a bit panicky about that" (Participant 2, Female, Primary 3-7, 06/03/2018).

The pressure to apply quickly, supported by an awareness that there was a higher demand for places in some subjects, appeared to be a common theme amongst the primary research participants both in the focus groups and interviews:

I felt the pressure... Lots of websites say things like, interview will not be guaranteed if all places are full... I was told that if it's full by your interview date, your interview just gets cancelled... You've lost out.

(Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018)

Alternatively, those applying to non-shortage subjects, who were already in permanent, full-time positions, felt less concerned about the timeframe of their application: "I didn't have any pressures at all. I was in a job, a permanent contract, no issues earning money" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018).

The variation between trainees' experiences of application within the sample was therefore quite marked. In terms of the time pressure to apply, this was dictated both by their personal circumstances but also the impact of the ITT recruitment methodology in 2016-17 as noted in the literature review, and the differentiation between shortage and non-shortage subjects. This impacted on the trainees'

ability to research and engage with the information sources available to them, and therefore whether they made an informed choice of ITT pathway.

Time was such a constraint on applicants' chances of being successful, and consequently their scope for making informed choices, that for some this affected the year in which they were able to apply. Two trainees in the sample of eight noted they would have preferred to train in the previous year but were unaware of factors that unfortunately delayed their progress. Participant 13 had a particularly difficult experience applying to teach PE, where she had been too late in her first application, and had to wait a year to apply in the following cycle. As a result, her approach to researching and engaging with the information sources available to her on the ITT options changed. However, this evidences the potentially uninformed and vague way in which an applicant might apply and gain a place on an ITT programme without fully understanding their options:

I actually applied [before] but I was unsuccessful that year. I think I'd sent my application off around Christmas time and basically got it straight back saying that they had actually closed... So that's why I applied for the HLTA role... and I went to various information evenings and open days and got as much advice and support that I could so that I knew I would have more chance of having a successful application...The first time round I literally read the blurbs and picked three based on that with very little input.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

For Participant 1, the recruitment methodology for Primary trainees meant she unnecessarily delayed applying, because the information available at the time led to her assumption that it was not worth applying to teach in the previous year 2016-17: "I considered applying before I went for my TA job but it was in about May. I sort of wrote it off because lots of places were full, whereas in hindsight... I probably would have applied the year before" (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

The circumstances of the ITT recruitment methodology, with Primary ITT programmes meeting their recruitment targets and closing earlier, meant that applicants were unsure as to whether their application would even have the opportunity to be successful:

I sent mine off in November and I think it was already full... You're hearing all these stories like I was literally at my interview and I didn't get seen, because we were later on in the day. I knew my Oak Wood Teacher Training interview wasn't until December and I was thinking it's going to be full by December, I think that's where that pressure comes.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

Throughout the focus groups, the trainees evidenced a sense of collective understanding that was borne out of a form of ignorance about the application process, which in some circumstances led to misinformation, perception and panic over their chances of being successful:

- Yeah, because you just didn't know, that's the thing. I wish perhaps there was a more clear indication of how many spaces were left because that's the thing. There would probably be more pressure but at least you're aware of what situation you're in.
- I think there's loads of myths around it as well because I was told, if you don't get it in by November you're not going to be able to do it, you're going to get a rubbish place.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

For some, the attempts by ITT providers to be more transparent and provide more information to applicants, in effect further perpetuated misconceptions based on assumptions that it was not worth applying to a provider when there were limited chances of success: "They said on their website there are only four positions for maths trainees and that made me panic a little... if I get on that's great but also a bit of a gamble, you know, is there any point applying" (Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17).

Time was therefore an ever present factor in the trainees' customer journeys through the recruitment process. In the context of ITT, the demand for teachers, and the demand for ITT places further compounded the pressure to speed up the application process. Whilst at the end of chapter 5 it was noted that speed in responding to applicants after interview was a beneficial factor in them accepting the offer, this efficiency might be viewed as a facilitator of teacher recruitment but a constraint on applicants' informed choice.

### 6.2.2 Access to Information

Having the opportunity to explore further with the trainees in the interviews, it became apparent that there was a significant disparity of information available, both as part of the formal marketing and in addition to it, depending on the sources that each individual applicant had access to. For different reasons, some of the trainees had separate and distinct avenues for further insight into the application process and format of ITT that were not universally available through either local or national level marketing.

Understandably, some trainees had a greater network of family and friends who were able to give a clearer picture about what teaching would entail, and help them to form judgements about the best ITT pathway for them such as participant 15: "One of my best friends is a chemistry teacher and he was probably one of my bigger influences, so someone who is actually in teaching already and been through the teacher training process recently" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). Whilst for participant 15 to be able to speak to someone directly in the profession was noted as a significant influence and facilitator of an informed choice, participant 1 also highlighted how this might be considered a constraint because as a result of this network they chose to engage less with the formal marketing from ITT providers and the national 'Get into Teaching' website: "I think to be honest I didn't really go into [the published marketing] because I'd grown up with a teacher and I'd been in schools. I think I

already had a good gauge of what teaching is about” (Participant 1, Female, Primary 7-11, 27/03/2018).

Participant 6 presented the most interesting example in this regard, noting that she went on the strength of one family member’s recommendation for an ITT programme, a family member who was not involved in the education sector herself, but who knew the Primary PGCE programme leader for the SCITT provider. As such, this participant completely disregarded any published marketing and applied just to one provider, which she was fortunate enough to secure a place to train with. This approach is interesting because in some ways, it confirms a successful and serendipitous approach to applying to ITT. However, in the context of fully researching the ITT pathway options and making an informed choice, it is safe to say that this participant did not do this, of her own volition, and not necessarily due to any other factor identified previously other than lack of willingness to engage with more than one provider:

- So, in terms of, you’ve already said that you just went for Oak Wood...
- Yep
- So the question in terms of what efforts did you make to understand all of the options that were available to you.
- I didn’t really.
- You said you went on the strength of recommendation.
- Yep
- So you didn’t want to know that much about your choices?
- No, not really.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

In addition to the network of family and friends, the trainees were able to utilise their networks of colleagues from prior school work experience to understand their options. This emphasises the significant role that experience in schools has to play, particularly through positions such as teaching assistants, for applicants making informed choices. As noted in chapter 4, the published marketing can only go so far to explain the process of ITT. It is this ‘experiential research’ that trainees

leveraged in order to understand how teaching and ITT works and make what could be considered an informed decision in this regard. The disadvantage to this, as noted with participant 6 above, is the risk of choosing one ITT provider without first exploring all possible options. Participant 12's experiences further support this concept: "A lot of it was word of mouth. I spoke to various people within school; colleagues, members of SLT and just kind of asked them about their experiences and how they'd got into teaching and if they had any recommendations" (Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018).

However, one final form of experiential research which represented a significant facilitator of informed choice, and good practice on the part of the ITT provider, was noted through the recruitment process itself. The focus group participants identified early on in the research project that the interview was an opportunity to corroborate their opinions of the SCITT provider and ultimately accept the offer that they received to train with them: "At our interview we actually spoke with trainees who were currently on the course and they left us in the room...So again you had an open conversation and the other provider hadn't done that" (Focus Group 3, STEM subject secondary trainees, 30/11/17).

The use of networks of family, friends and colleagues to inform choices of ITT pathway is understandable. Whilst it is outside the bounds of the more formal support on offer, there is always likely to be an inevitable inequality of experiences between applicants based on the access they have to these networks. Access to current trainees on interview days was an aspect of good practice that Oak Wood Teacher Training was praised for and could be beneficially replicated elsewhere.

However, the research highlighted a purposeful inequity of access to information through the Premier Plus Service, imposed by the government's investment in resource for shortage-subjects only, which served as both a facilitator for some, and a perceived constraint for others in making an informed choice. Five out of the seventeen research participants in total made use of a Premier Plus Advisor – a service designed to provide additional advice and support to those applicants in

shortage subjects. The eligibility criteria for the Premier Plus Service in 2016-17 was that the applicants must want to train to teach in 2017-18, hold at least a 2:2 classification degree, and want to teach a shortage subject, which at the time included Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Computing, Geography and Modern Foreign Languages (Williams et al., 2016:112; see also, ELTSA, 2015). One interview participant was eligible but did not make use of the service.

This disparity of access to support and information surfaced in the focus groups when trainees discussed their experiences of application and some learnt for the first time about the availability of Premier Plus advisors:

- I found that the provision from the government or whoever teaching, assigning someone who would phone you up and tell you exactly what you needed to do was amazing! I don't know if anybody else had that?
- What was that? I didn't have that?
- ... Did you not?!
- Did you have that, like, was it a person who helped you through the process?
- Yeah!
- Because it was a more high demand subject for languages and well, geography
- Yeah
- ...So they gave you a tutor?
- Oh, that's grand isn't it?
- Really?

(Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17)

For participant 14 applying to Art and Design, the exclusivity of the Premier Plus service was a particularly sore point, with her own reflections on the challenges and lack of knowledge that resulted from this differentiation of support: "I hadn't a clue that that even existed... You do feel very much alone when you're doing

your application... Maybe there needs to be a way that makes it accessible for all..." (Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018).

The trainees noted they used their Premier Plus advisors to work through different aspects of the application process, focussing either on the decision over which route and provider to train with: "I was torn between the PGCE and the SCITT programme... So I spent a lot of time talking through [with my advisor] what courses to apply for, which belonged to which schools" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). Alternatively, participant 16 made greater use of their Premier Plus Advisor's knowledge of the teaching profession to gain an understanding of potential course outcomes, and also to advise on the application itself: "She was really helpful with my application and just information in terms of salary bands, the different [career] paths and stories of other trainees and what they've gone on to do" (Participant 16, Female, Secondary Mathematics, 21/03/2018). Whilst Participant 15 notes how he benefited from the support of a Premier Plus advisor, he highlighted how the absence of that support would be a significant disadvantage to others: "She was able to say, have a look at this provider, they have schools in your area... That's the sort of thing that you're not going to actively know unless somebody tells you" (Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018). The intentional bias of the DfE in supporting some applicants over others therefore represents both a facilitator and constraint on making an informed choice, and a remarkable example of purposeful inequality brought about by ITT policy.

The participants had used a varied number of information sources to research their ITT pathway options, but recognised the need to cross-reference sources and maintained an awareness of the context of the market in which they were operating – one in which the applicant is in demand and the information aims to persuade. What came across more strongly than anticipated at the outset, was the extent to which the research participants had relied on the word of mouth of colleagues, friends and family when applying, to supplement the information they had either read in published marketing or heard at teaching events.

Throughout the research, the trainees referenced a number of encounters that they had either with teachers, or with other ITT related advisors, that served as valuable sources of information when making their decisions about an ITT pathway. When analysed as a whole however, this again evidences an inconsistent approach across the board for all applicants to ITT. These one-to-one sources of information were often quoted as one of the primary sources on which applicants based their decisions. The final section of this chapter highlights how the quality of these interactions either supported or constrained informed choices by the trainees.

### 6.2.3 Quality of interaction

A deeper analysis of the trainees' reflections on why they chose their ITT route and provider highlighted the final determinant of whether trainees made an informed choice of ITT pathway. This is best summarised as the quality of the interaction with the marketing, which includes the face-to-face encounters with the provider. The data provided in this regard evidence examples of good practice on the part of the SCITT provider that might be used elsewhere, alongside examples of good practice on the part of the applicant which serve to inform how ITT providers should seek to engage with potential applicants in future.

On balance and up front, there are also examples of poor practice that constrained applicants' access to opportunities and limited them from making a wider, more informed choice. Participant 13 acknowledged the variation in how Providers treated her as an applicant to teach Secondary P.E. In this case, the impact of national ITT recruitment policy was only understood once she was on the ITT programme and knew more about the political drivers within teaching:

I can remember the lady delivering the presentation asked all of us what our subjects were... So as soon as I'd said PE, not that she became hostile but it was, you know, very little interest from her... that's why I like Oak Wood because they specifically said we know this is the case with PE [being over-subscribed], and this is what we do to combat the problem,

whereas other providers you kind of felt either ignored by them or, not valued as much because you weren't Maths or ICT or Physics.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

For most of the research participants, their choice of subject and teaching level, primary or secondary, was already determined when they applied for ITT. However, for two of the trainees interviewed, participants 6 and 14, the SCITT provider had a role to play in advising on and therefore changing the programme that the trainees ultimately chose:

I initially applied for 7-11, but when I went for my interview they just said we're happy to let you on the course with the 7-11 but we feel the skills that you've shown have been more the 3-7. So I just said well yeah, you're the expert, if you see something... And I love it, I think it was the right decision.

(Participant 6, Female, Primary 3-7, 20/07/2018)

Similarly, the SCITT Provider played a role in determining participant 14's teaching subject, advising in advance of the interview with regards to the employability and opportunities to teach one subject over another:

- OK, so in your questionnaire you noted that your degree was in Fashion Design and now you're teaching Art and Design, so how did you make that decision?
- I was initially going to do Design technology but you have to teach all of technology, so that would be food tech, woodwork, resistant materials and all of that. I would have then had to do another catch-up session almost if I wanted to progress with this. But alongside Oak Wood, I also applied to Ecclesia and various other ones, so they accepted [me] for DT after my interview process. But here we said going forward we'd go for Art and Design because the GCSE's changing a little bit so that could possibly include textiles and we thought it would make it more accessible if I were to teach possibly

textiles lessons and teach some art lessons. But the main thing that I'm doing is art and design.

(Participant 14, Female, Secondary Art and Design, 14/03/2018)

With this evidence, it is clear that in making the decision about which route and provider to train with, and also what programme to choose, the provider itself had a role to play in negotiating this decision along with the applicant. The quality of this interaction with one particular provider both served to affirm the applicants' choice of ITT pathway, but also returns to the concept noted in chapter 4 regarding the starting point for applicants' research into ITT. Whilst in that section the role of the University was highlighted as a conduit for information and graduates, it is interesting to note that participants 6 and 14 used their contact through the SCITT provider as a significant source of information to guide them in making choices about how to train as a teacher, specifically which subject to teach. This emphasises the conflict between impartial, national level information on teaching, and more partisan, marketing information circulated by ITT providers. It is clear from the evidence that trainees were drawing on both sources to make their decisions. It is also clear that thoughtful, personalised and hence quality information provided by Oak Wood SCITT was instrumental in converting their applicants to trainees. The trainees were able to make an informed decision based on this one-to-one interaction, yet this might also be considered a constraint on informed choice because the advice was provided by the recruiting party, which taken alongside an environment where high-calibre applicants to ITT are in demand, suggests the potential for coercion and pressure to accept a place without exploring options elsewhere.

It is clear from the interviews that participants 14 and 6 benefited from the advice of their SCITT provider, and it may seem a leap to infer that this evidence of helpful practice could be construed as having a detrimental effect on choice. However, the evidence from participant 15 demonstrates how interactions with single ITT providers, without balance against others, could be significantly biased. He noted a particularly dubious approach to interviewing candidates ahead of their application – something that was later denounced by the DfE:

So in the end I applied for MTSA only because I did some of my, you can go in and do some trial days in schools, so I did a couple of those with MTSA. They were a little bit dodgy in that they actually interviewed me and offered me it before sending off my UCAS application... It was a nice little, oh well I've got something for when I send my UCAS off. Whether they're allowed to do that or not is a different matter.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

In contrast, the professional and honest experience delivered by the SCITT provider stood out as a factor of choice for the trainees, and a counter argument to the recruitment bias encountered elsewhere:

I felt that the Oak Wood one was really, really professional... Never felt like they were trying to hide anything away it was very much, this is us, we're open, come have a look... The MTSA one was pretty similar, but they were definitely putting pressure on me to go with them which I found quite unprofessional and that put me off in a way. They kept saying, look, we can't force you to make a decision but can you make a decision...? They were just trying to build up numbers.

(Participant 15, Male, Secondary Mathematics, 15/03/2018)

Besides the quality of active interaction with ITT providers as sources of information, the research data also highlighted that the quality of information available through the published marketing also left them with gaps in their understanding. There were certain aspects where this constrained their abilities to make informed choices. One focus group noted the lack of league tables and comparative data for ITT providers. Whilst some were aware of Ofsted reports based on inspections of ITT providers, the absence of 'league tables' was explicitly referenced in comparison to the higher education sector more generally, which has numerous rankings and data comparators for Universities and their courses. In attempting to judge whether an ITT provider was right for them, the focus

group participants highlighted this lack of a comprehensive assessment of ITT provider side by side:

- I looked at the quality of Oak Wood Teacher Training and the schools that were within it, and the quality of Metropolis Uni, but I don't think I would have known how to look at the quality of the whole thing.
- Yeah, there are no league tables for SCITTs.
- You know about the quality of the individual bits but not actually the whole provider do you?

(Focus Group 2, non-STEM subject secondary trainees, 23/11/17)

The primary trainees also noted a lack of clear information about programme options and entry requirements, which had significant financial consequences for one trainee who was unaware of the fact they could have trained with a maths specialism:

I teach primary with maths so I was really lucky because I do get a big bursary but I don't think it was made clear that that route was accessible for us otherwise other people would have applied. Another guy on our course was saying he wished he'd done that, knowing that I don't have an A-Level in Maths and he is better at Maths than me.

(Focus Group 1, Primary trainees, 16/11/17)

The example above may be blamed on how well the applicant engaged with the information available, but this returns to a key theme of this analysis, which questions the responsibility of the individual ITT providers in having to explain all permutations and options within ITT to every candidate they encounter. Any omissions or lack of clarity in information was in some circumstances overcome again by face-to-face interactions:

I can remember Bill being really honest on the interview day and saying it's really hard to get PE jobs, which isn't necessarily what you want to hear just as you're about to go into the interview but he said, I'm gonna

be honest it's really hard and we're only going to take on the number of candidates that we feel we'll be able to get jobs for. And I sort of respected that about Oak Wood, it would be really easy to take £9000 from 20 different candidates and only three of them get a job or whatever, but they set out at the start that this is what they were doing and this is why. They were quite transparent.

(Participant 13, Female, Secondary P.E., 29/03/2018)

Participant 13 emphasised that in her case, the SCITT provider's honesty about the likelihood of getting a PE teaching job after the training year was a deciding factor for her ultimately choosing to accept their programme.

### 6.3 – Summary: Facilitators and Constraints on Making and Informed Choice

Overall, the evidence shows that all of the research participants were uninformed in one regard or another about multiple aspects of ITT that they were signing up to at the point of application. This is perhaps summarised best through the model of input, throughput and output. Trainees identified that in terms of input – the aspects of ITT recruitment - there existed confusion about the full range of routes into teaching, the variation between ITT providers, which schools they could train in, and their teaching subject options. With regards to throughput, or the ITT programme itself, the trainees evidenced that they were sometimes uninformed about the format of the ITT programmes that they were signing up to, how they would be taught and what this would entail, and how the school-based part of the programme dovetailed with the PGCE input from the University provider partner. In terms of the output, the research conversations often flitted between referencing the ITT year itself, and the teaching profession more generally, which the trainees were yet to experience. The evidence suggested that in this regard, the participants were not fully aware of the value of the QTS and PGCE qualifications that they were working towards, but that due to the majority having had prior experience of working in schools, most were relatively well informed of what a role in teaching would be like for them once they were qualified.

The underpinning reasons behind these uninformed choices were differentiated by scale. Constraints on making an informed choice were brought about either as a result of national-level ITT policy that has created a complex system which applicants struggled to understand fully, and in which they feel pressured to apply using a system that actively constrains their choices to three ITT programmes. On top of this, government policy to prioritise support for shortage subject applicants in 2016-17 is evidence that some applicants are being disadvantaged in their ability to make an informed choice by policy decisions taken at the national level.

Further to this, applicants engaging with marketing and information sources at the provider-level struggled to differentiate between their ITT pathway options in part due to the natural tendency to promote one ITT pathway over another, and due to the vagueness of the published messages from ITT providers. With UCAS Teacher Training as the only database, the research participants indicated this was a significant constraint on their ability to search for ITT providers and programmes, linking back to the evidence in the previous customer journey chapter that suggested applicants were forced to triangulate across multiple sources of information because of the insufficient detail given through UCAS.

Finally, the individual circumstances of applicants presented personal constraints that challenged their ability to make a fully informed decision of ITT pathway. For the SCITT applicants, this mostly centred on time to research and engage fully with the information sources, and particularly the teaching events, due to already being in full-time work. This also links back to the previous chapter on factors of choice, in particular how location of the ITT provider and the schools in its partnership played a large part in determining choice of ITT pathway. The constraint this posed was that for some applicants, location was such a large factor that they based their decision on this above all else, without fully researching alternative options, even within the region. This returns to the divergence noted in the customer journey chapter around applicants who chose their route into teaching first, and then researched potential providers, versus

those who landed on one ITT provider to begin with, and from there researched what their ITT offer entailed.

The next chapter builds upon the research findings outlined in these last three chapters to discuss the significance of the data and how this addresses the gaps in the literature, answering the research questions in turn.

## Chapter 7 - Discussion

The research provides a deeper insight into the 'customer journeys' of SCITT trainees when they were applying to ITT. The data generated has highlighted the similarities and variation amongst trainees' experiences of application and recruitment, which provides fresh perspectives on their decision-making processes. The findings outline the impact of ITT policy and the behaviours of individual recruiting providers on trainees' choice of ITT pathway at a particularly precarious point in time (Schoolsweek, 2016; Vaughan, 2015). The synthesis of the literature in Chapter 2 allows for new theoretical insights into the choices made by applicants to ITT. This chapter assesses the significance of the research findings in the context of the literature review, with a view to potential publication of three papers as a result of the thesis' findings. Specifically, the thesis makes a contribution to the marketing field through consideration of ignorance within choice-making; the ITT policy field by examining the impact of local and national circumstances in the 2016-17 recruitment cohort; and provides insight into the use of reflection as a methodological tool in accessing examples of trainees' ignorance.

### 7.1 The Research Questions and Aims

The three research questions outlined in the methodology were designed as part of the research strategy to complement each other so that their collective insights could be used to determine the implications for ITT marketing and recruitment strategies. These questions were asked to provide insight on how the trainees researched ITT providers during application and recruitment [RQ1]; why they chose their ITT pathway [RQ2]; and to what extent they made an informed choice [RQ3]. This section evaluates the extent to which these questions have been answered by the research.

### 7.1.1 Research Question One: Research and Engagement with ITT Providers

The first research question asked how the SCITT trainees researched and engaged with ITT providers during the application and recruitment stage. The findings clarified the stages within the application and recruitment process that apply to all. However, within these stages, trainees' approaches to engaging with ITT providers, their published marketing materials and other information sources in order to make a choice of ITT pathway varied substantially.

This variation was based on the starting point for the applicant in their research into ITT, which was a concept brought to light by the data analysis (section 4.2.2). This occurs after the individual has made a decision to become a teacher, and is the starting point from which they begin their engagement with the information available on which they base their decisions around what route into teaching is right for them, which ITT provider and which programme to choose. Figure 4 (p.39) in the literature review highlights this point within what I have termed the 'possibility space' during application. This is the point at which an individual becomes a potential candidate for ITT, and continues once they become a formal applicant, prior to becoming an offer holder.

The research has therefore not only provided insight into the customer journey, but has also elaborated on the second part of this research question, regarding how the trainees engaged with ITT providers throughout their decision-making process. The insight showed that each trainee drew from a different combination of sources of information, either formally published, or what I have termed 'alternative' such as the advice of friends or colleagues, in order to make their decisions. Hence, the plethora of marketing materials identified in figure 3 (p.34) in the literature review are expanded upon in figure 8 (below). All of these formats are required because each applicant has a different 'way in' to their research on ITT. Those sources outlined in green in figure 8 were not included at the outset as they do not constitute formal marketing mediums. However, the extent to which they were used by the trainees to choose their ITT pathway warranted their inclusion based on the research findings. Likewise, some of the materials considered at the outset of this study did not come up at all in the

research conversations, such as YouTube videos, yet they have been retained as they may still be useful for applicants even if they were not discussed by the participants in the sample. The breadth of information sources and marketing materials in figure 8 may be considered representative of an ecosystem, from which one element cannot be taken away without upsetting the balance for the rest. This ecosystem analogy stretches further in that the evolution and adaptation of new species, or types of ITT programme within the current policy environment is prolific, and hence each of the ITT providers is likewise competing for the same pool of potential trainees, leaving applicants to attempt to discern the relatively minor variations between the programmes.

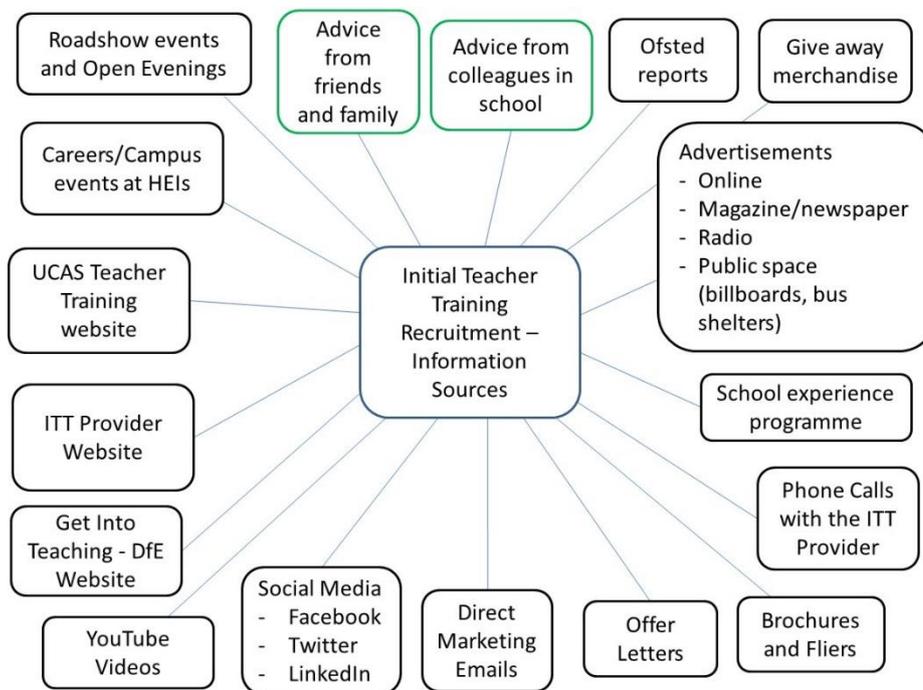


Figure 8 - Revised sources of ITT information based on research findings

However, it was apparent that the trainees gave more credence to some information sources over others. The trainees themselves appeared to be aware of a potential bias or lack of comprehensiveness that information sources such as provider websites presented, and instead formed relationships with preferred providers, using these considerably as sources of information and guidance throughout the application process (section 4.2.2). The implications of this were evident in aggregate, where it was apparent that these forms of one-to-one

interaction proved most fruitful in converting potential candidates for ITT to applicants and eventually trainees for the SCITT provider within the sample population. This links to what Lovelock and Wirtz (2001) refer to as the 'service encounter stage' and the research findings strongly supported this distinction between 'pre-purchase' (ibid.) research into ITT, and engagement with ITT providers in order to provide greater information than published marketing could afford.

#### 7.1.2 Research Question Two: Choice of ITT pathway

The second research question of why the trainees opted for their SCITT pathway identified has two parts to its answer. The first considers why they selected SCITT as part of the application process, and what attracted them to this ITT pathway, and the second is why they chose to accept the offer from the SCITT provider with which they eventually began their training.

The simplistic answer to research question two is that the trainees selected their ITT pathway based on a matching of current circumstances whilst they were an applicant, and the future outcomes that they wanted from their ITT programme. On the one hand, this supports the policy of the DfE to proliferate providers and routes into teaching so that applicants have more options, and a greater number of those options are within the vicinity in which they wish to train. However, the evidence suggest this has also given rise to a common understanding (Rosa and Spanjol, 2005) amongst the trainees that there are different outcomes depending on the pathway that you select. These differences relate to both experience on the ITT programme, and employability at the end of it. The differentiation of QTS and the PGCE appeared to factor less in the trainees' consciousness due to its ubiquity amongst ITT programmes in general. The bias of government resources and marketing to favour school-led routes into teaching, as identified in the literature review (section 2.1.1), has perpetuated a split, such that the narrative implies there is a right way to train, and a wrong way. The responsibility is then placed on the applicants' shoulders to determine which the, 'right path is for them'.

The main theme that came through in the research was that the trainees were looking for a sense of training 'on the job', and hence the school-centred route into teaching was favoured in their applications. The sample of participants, taken to be representative of the wider trainee population for this SCITT Provider, have a substantial proportion of work experience either in schools, or in other sectors. This was a significant driving factor behind their decisions to select the ITT pathway that, to them, presented a more direct route into teaching. In comparison, the university-led route was seen as a 'regression' towards a student identity, or a slowing down of the pace of the training process, where trainees would receive more theoretical insights rather than hands-on professional experience in the classroom with a SCITT. The trainees' strong aversion to being labelled as 'students' in the research conversations is aligned to Campbell's (1997) work on the communicative act paradigm. The data strongly suggested that the trainees were defining their own identity as future teachers through their selection of a SCITT pathway over a university-led pathway. In fact, participant 12 almost disowns the training process in this sense, arguing that her substantial prior experience in schools means her ITT year is a mere formality to acquire the relevant subject pedagogical knowledge and teaching qualification. The work of Lovelock and Wirtz (2001) is also relevant here in that the purchase of a service, or in this case an ITT programme, is used by the consumer [the applicant] to convey their identity. The research conversations gave a clear indication of this relationship, with trainees noting their circumstances during application, and the reasons that they found SCITT appealing, meaning that they could think of themselves as a teacher sooner than they believed they would do on the alternative routes into teaching. The concept of becoming a teacher 'sooner' by being in the classroom from day one with SCITT may also be linked to the concept of co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) and the context of ITT in that the trainee is both consumer of the training and simultaneously producer of themselves as teacher. The trainee is receiving training by labouring as a *de facto* teacher for the ITT provider. This theoretical context provides a fresh perspective in the field of ITT research, as for SCITT trainees especially, the concept of learning 'on the job' was widely considered the most appealing aspect of the SCITT route into teaching.

The research findings highlighted that there were two aspects in relation to choice of the SCITT provider, as determined by the Provider itself; whether they could attract applicants as per the points above, and whether they could convert applicants to offer holders. The research conversations also provided detailed insight into why the trainees chose their ITT pathway following the initial application submission. The question of why applicants chose the SCITT provider is in part determined by the decision of the ITT provider as well. Whilst the first step of adding the SCITT programme to their UCAS Teacher Training application is solely at the discretion of the individual, whether or not they were successful in making it to the position of trainee was also dependent on whether they were made an offer to study on the programme. Hence, the interview process was a significant point of discussion within the research. The interview was found not just to be the means of selecting participants, but had a strong role to play as a marketing tool based on Foskett's (1999) concept of 'external relations'.

The trainees involved in the research noted how the interview was an opportunity for them to confirm their preferences of provider, which in some cases changed their mind from what they thought would be a 'firm choice' during the application stage. The trainees' experiences of interview demonstrated the variation in how different providers appeared to treat the interview as a tool for marketing. From the trainees' perspective the successful recruiting SCITT Provider used the interview to demonstrate the character and ethos of their ITT programmes, and the schools in which the trainees would be working. In contrast, where trainees turned down offers they noted the interview process appeared to be a hassle for the provider, or the interview was simply treated as an opportunity to test the applicants, and not as a chance for the provider to demonstrate their value to them as a potential future employee. The trainees noted how such negative experiences altered their previously good perceptions of the providers that they applied to, and how this influenced them to decline those offers they received.

### 7.1.3 Research Question Three: Informed Decisions

The NAO Report (2016:11) noted that, “Potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to make informed choices about where to train and the plethora of routes has been widely described to us as confusing.” These comments formed the stimulus for this research. The evidence has highlighted how this has been found to be true with regards to how applicants researched their ITT options and engaged with the information sources available. The trainees commented that overall the number of formal information sources was too great, with each provider attempting to cover the same points, but that the materials themselves lacked the detail on which trainees could base their decisions.

This research question was the most difficult to research directly, as it is nuanced with the challenges of the standpoint of the researcher (Merton, 1972). To judge whether someone is informed or not, implies the person making that judgement has a greater degree of knowledge than the person making the choice (Smithson, 2008). To some extent, this is inevitable given my previous position as responsible for ITT recruitment within this context. For example, in focus group 2, the trainees stated that the fees for ITT programmes were always £9000, despite me knowing this was not the case. However, the format of the research design meant that the trainees involved in the research were themselves quick to identify where they were unaware of certain aspects of ITT at the application stage, and whether any confusion persisted. For example, participants 2 and 12 raised the challenge of distinguishing between SCITT and School Direct, and participant 6 questioned whether the qualification outcomes were comparable across the various routes, even after these participants had all taken up places on the ITT programme. This begs the question of what ‘uninformed’ truly means in this context. An assessment of the extent of an informed choice needs to consider what aspects of ITT the trainees were aware of at the application stage. This is summarised in the research findings chapter (section 6.3) as input, throughput and output: the recruitment process and options available, the ITT process itself, and the qualification and employability opportunities following the ITT programme.

The topic on which the trainees were unexpectedly most informed was the question of what it was like to be a teacher. The sample of trainees interviewed from the SCITT provider had a substantial amount of work experience in schools between them. It was noted that the trainees entered ITT with their 'eyes wide open' regarding what the teaching profession involves and their role in a school environment, as evidenced by the fact that when questioned during the interviews, trainees noted no surprises regarding what it was like to work with children in a teaching context.

The other topic on which the trainees presented themselves as reasonably comfortable, was the practicalities of application, with one trainee explicitly noting its similarity to the university application experience through UCAS. Whilst the research demonstrated that the trainees found the application process somewhat onerous, none noted that it directly hindered their progress. The trainees emphasised more of a learning curve regarding what the ITT programme would involve, and what the expected outcomes of training to be a teacher were. Participant 2 highlighted she had not specifically thought about what it meant to train as a teacher in the classroom, and participant 12 noted she had not given thought during their application to employment within the provider's partnership of schools once qualified (section 5.3). This suggests the product, promotion and physical setting aspects of the Kotler and Fox's (1995) marketing mix were operating well. In contrast, the trainees evidenced that the explanation of the process of ITT was not as clear, admitting they had some surprises regarding the content and format of the programme once they had started. It is possible that this skew of insight on the part of the trainee may have been due to the substantial amount of work experience in schools that they had, rather than the quality of the ITT marketing *per se*.

The topic on which the trainees demonstrated they were least informed was the differences between the routes into teaching, with some noting that this lack of understanding persisted even once in a training position. This links back to the concept identified in the literature review of a 'blind spot' within the Johari window in figure 5 (Chandler and Munday, 2016), yet in this case the trainees

were fully aware of their potential ignorance, noting this in the research conversations. However, it must be noted that this ignorance was not perceived by the trainees to have been a disadvantage, aligning with Proctor's (2008) conception of ignorance that it is simply a lack of knowledge, and not necessarily a detrimental quality.

## 7.2 New insights from the research

The research has provided new insights based on both the timing and context of the SCITT Provider's circumstances with those trainees recruited throughout 2016-17. The synthesis of literature in chapter 2 has also not previously been drawn together to analyse this research topic, and hence provides new theoretical insights for the field of ITT, based on the discussion of the marketing theory. This section outlines how the research has provided an original contribution to knowledge with regards to the methodological employment of reflection as a research strategy for accessing ignorance; the insight into ITT policy's impact on applicants; and the role of ignorance in choice-making within the ITT market.

### 7.2.1 The Use of Reflection: Evidencing Ignorance

Jennifer Croissant (2014) in her analysis of Agnotology notes the concept of Chronicity – that is, the revelation of ignorance over time. Croissant (2014) argues that time must be taken into consideration when contextually analysing the existence of 'non-knowledge', as it can sometimes only be upon reflection that ignorance is identified. As such, I selected trainees to be my research participants, and built my research design around employing reflection as a key methodological tool to generate data and access evidence on trainees' ignorance at the point of application to ITT. The limitations of this approach are acknowledged in section 8.2.

As outlined in the research design, there were advantages to researching with current trainees rather than applicants. However, the conclusions must be understood in the context that they are drawn from the experiences of those who were successful in applying to an ITT programme and do not reflect the views of those who, like in Williams *et al.*'s (2016) study, were 'lost' in the application process.

The research design was crafted on the assumption that Proctor's concepts of Agnotology can be directly investigated with subjects. In contrast, the examples in Proctor and Schiebinger (2008) of the formation of ignorance relate to large-scale, historical case studies such as the tobacco industry and smokers and rely upon secondary analysis of documentation. This study demonstrates how the presence of ignorance can be evidenced by directly interviewing subjects and relying upon their own assertions and reflections about their experiences of researching and making decisions relating to initial teacher training. As Smithson (2008) notes, ignorance itself cannot be directly accessed, but individual's portrayals of their own ignorance are a useful source of data. This thesis highlights how recent examples of non-knowledge or ignorance can be explored directly with research participants.

#### 7.2.2 ITT Policy and Structures: The Impact on Applicants

In analysing whether the trainees made an informed choice, there came to light evidence of the facilitators and constraints on making those choices. The research has served to highlight the impact of teacher recruitment policy, and the mechanics of application, and how for the trainees these created an environment in which the experiences of individual applicants were markedly varied. For example, the research has provided hitherto undocumented evidence of the impact of the 2016-17 ITT recruitment methodology on successful applicants to teacher training such as those participants in the study. The data show how

differently even the eight interview participants were treated based on their chosen subject, and the subsequent support they received at open events, interviews and via the exclusive Premier Plus Advisor Service which is only available to Secondary applicants in shortage subjects.

Bearing in mind that the research was conducted with trainees in the 2017-18 cohort, who applied throughout the 2016-17 recruitment cycle, they were the first to experience the effects of the recruitment methodology applied by the DfE (DfE and NCTL, 2015). This methodology lifted the cap on recruitment numbers so that institutions could recruit as many trainees as they preferred, until a limit was imposed nationally on a subject by subject basis. This coincided with the unusual circumstances which applied to the SCITT's university partner, in that the University chose to end its role as accredited provider of ITT in its own right. Consequently, the impact of this was felt amongst the trainees in the sample population and highlighted especially in the focus groups. Several participants noted how they had approached the University as their starting point for their research, assuming that a University-led PGCE was their preferred or even the only way to train to become a teacher. The circumstances in 2016-17 led them to discover that this particular pathway was now closed to them through the University, and that other school-led options were instead available. This evidences an enduring and significant role for Higher Education institutions to play in recruiting trainee teachers, even if not to University-led ITT programmes.

However, the significance of this research beyond anything covered in the literature review, is that it addresses the direct impact that the DfE's recruitment methodology has had on trainee recruitment within the local area. The insight was surprising in that several of the trainees who eventually chose to train through a SCITT route, initially sought out university-led routes instead, and were dissuaded from this choice. This can be viewed as evidence that some applicants begin their research process with a limited view of the ITT landscape, often referring to the 'PGCE' as synonymous with a university-led programme, and that their choices were therefore driven towards SCITT because in this context it was the university's partner. However, if we consider the bigger picture of ITT, and the

DfE's policy of proliferating routes into teaching, this may be considered evidence counter to the arguments of Kotler and Fox (1995) that the market responds to the consumer and serves to shape the product. In this instance, the market has induced the consumer to make a different choice to the one that they had originally intended when they began the pre-application research process.

The DfE's policy of growth amongst accredited ITT providers up to this point in 2016-17 was therefore complicit in producing the circumstances that gave rise to any confusion that applicants experienced over their choices of ITT pathway. The points raised by the NAO (2016) regarding applicant confusion have now, to some extent, been acknowledged in the DfE's (2019) Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, as noted in figure 9.



Figure 9 - The 4th challenge regarding ITT and recruitment addressed in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019).

Crucially, the strategy states that, "The ITT market is overly complex, causing inefficiencies and incentives that can prevent good teachers from working where they are needed most post-ITT" (DfE, 2019). Where this strategy falls short, and where this research has helped to highlight the issues, is around the impact of the ongoing recruitment methodology on the applicants themselves within the market. Added to this, the applicant behaviours elicited by some of the application mechanisms such as UCAS Teacher Training, presented continued constraints on them making an informed choice of ITT pathway.

### 7.2.2 Applicant Choice: Process and Assumptions

The most differentiated finding of the research in response to why the trainees opted for their ITT pathway, was the concept of whether they selected the route into teaching, or the specific provider first, and the point from which they started researching their ITT options and embarked on their customer journey. In attempting to understand why the trainees selected SCITT, and then the specific SCITT provider, it became apparent that some had identified SCITT as their preferred training model and then searched for SCITT providers that met their other criteria. Alternatively, some applicants simply discovered the provider first, either through researching local schools, or via the university website, and from there began to unravel what the SCITT training route meant in comparison to other options. This was discussed as a challenge by some trainees who noted they struggled to comprehend what the SCITT provider was as an organisation – whether it was a school or a University. This highlights the contrast in the literature review between the marketing of Universities as single institutions (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009), in comparison to marketing SCITT providers, which evidently have to do more to develop a brand that identifies their ITT partnership within the context of a group of schools and University institutions (Gewirtz et al., 1995) so that prospective applicants understand the organisational set-up. Either way, this has significant implications, as it helps to structure recruitment conversations that providers may have with potential candidates to ITT. Those involved in recruitment conversations might consider whether applicants have knowledge of their ITT provider, but not what the routes into teaching mean. Alternatively, they may question whether applicants are aware of the routes into teaching, but want to find out more about their specific provider. This differentiation will better help recruiting providers to target their resources.

The research also served to surface an assumption amongst applicants to ITT that has so far not been acknowledged in any literature reviewed as part of this project. Some of the trainees interviewed highlighted how they assumed during the application stage that schools work with ITT providers on a one-to-one basis, and that these relationships are exclusive. This is a significant assumption to have

sight of, as it has implications for ITT provider marketing strategies. Some trainees were selecting a school - often a high-performing school - and then researching which ITT providers they worked with, rather than beginning their research from a list of ITT providers. Whilst the DfE's new application service might link providers and routes into teaching more clearly, it would be a significant challenge to maintain a database that covers all of the schools within the partnerships of each provider. These partnerships are often complex and subject to change themselves within the market. There is a risk that if a potential candidate for ITT starts their research from the point of individual schools, and uses this as their 'way in' to explore the providers, and ultimately the routes into teaching, they may derive a very incomplete picture of their ITT pathway options. For the trainees in the research sample who were successful in their applications, this method of research into ITT was almost serendipitous. However, the inference is that there are other potential applicants engaging with ITT in this way who are put off applying altogether. This develops Williams et al.'s (2016) work which notes the reasons for drop out in the customer journey to ITT.

The data presented by the trainees in answer to research question two related strongly to the work of Wilden et al. (2010) regarding information asymmetry in recruitment and how it is not possible to know another's experiences of a job. At the application stage, the trainees clearly made assumptions about the different routes into training, some noting how they ruled out anything other than SCITT from an early stage. Two trainees noted how they had friends who had recently trained to teach suggesting this provided them with greater insight into what ITT would involve. In fact, the recruitment process of the SCITT provider was praised for allowing the applicants to speak to current trainees and ask questions without the interviewers being in the room. Once on the ITT programme, some of the trainees highlighted how they were now able to talk to their peers in school who were training on other routes with other providers. Therefore, whilst the research participants demonstrated how they attempted to take their personal circumstances, turn this into criteria for a training route, and then select the ITT pathway that they felt was right for them, there is evidence to argue that they could not fully know the details of what they were choosing until they had started the programme. This is why the research methodology was particularly insightful

by researching with trainees and allowing for a period of reflection on their choices, rather than asking the questions directly of applicants to ITT in the moment.

### 7.2.3 Uninformed Choices within the context of Agnotology

The data collected in answer to research question three raises a challenge to the principles behind the statement of the NAO (2016), which is developed within the theoretical context of Agnotology (Proctor, 2008) as the study of ignorance. The evidence in the research supports the NAO's assertion that the information is not suitable to make an informed decision on the routes into teaching. However, in other aspects such as the role of the teacher in the classroom, the trainees were well informed and noted they had no surprises once they began their training. This links to the finding that in this example, the challenge was not attracting applicants to teaching *per se*, but in persuading them to choose the SCITT pathway at both the application and offer stage. Developing Proctor's (2008) point about ignorance, there are circumstances where it can be acceptable to be uninformed. For example, participant 16's selection of the SCITT route early on meant that she did not research or engage with other ITT options at all. Building on Berg and Gornitzka's (2012) concept of consumer overload in a complex marketplace, it may be considered necessary, even advantageous for the applicant to remain ignorant of some ITT options in order to make a choice in the first place.

Participant 6 was an interesting example within the sample population as she chose not to explore other training options altogether but chose to apply with a very narrow view of the ITT market. This links to the theory of Proctor's (2008) 'Lost Realm' and the idea that people can be ignorant, in that they lack knowledge of a topic, due to either the choice to forget, or the conscious decision to remain ignorant of something despite being aware of its existence. The evidence suggests that for some trainees, such as in the example of participant 6, the 'Lost Realm' constitutes the entire ITT offer apart from the one SCITT provider they chose to apply to. This was not necessarily a state of ignorance imposed upon the trainee

as per Proctor's (2008) examples but rather an acknowledged choice by the applicant to ignore the other ITT options available.

Expanding upon the concept of agency around ignorance, it has never before been discussed how the UCAS Teacher Training application system can facilitate and drive uninformed choice of ITT pathways by allowing up to three different choices of ITT programme at application. The data highlighted how some trainees had already settled on the SCITT provider as their 'firm' choice and hence any 'spare' places on the application form were filled by other programmes from providers that the applicants were not interested in, as demonstrated by the reference to 'throw away' choices by participants 12, 15 and 16. Whilst this did not occur across the board, and some trainees noted they were keen to explore all of their options through to interview, it is interesting to note how the system has given rise in the application process to what Croissant refers to as "intentionality" (2014:4) within ignorance. Intentionality is the concept that an individual remains ignorant of something on purpose, because they see no point in developing greater knowledge of the topic or phenomenon. Much like Proctor's (2008) concept of the lost realm, the knowledge of other ITT pathways was lost to some applicants because they chose not to explore these in detail. However, with Croissant's (2014) conception of intentionality, the agency lies directly with the applicant who is capable of learning more but stops at a certain point. This was evident amongst the trainees' responses. Whilst they were cognisant of the fact that they chose to remain ignorant of other ITT pathways, this was justified by them in terms of either time, or geographical constraints. This research therefore strongly supports the theory from Berg and Gornitzka (2012) of consumer choice overload. The data provided by the trainees support the assertion that complexity in the ITT market is making it a challenge for applicants to comprehensively know the variation between the ITT pathway choices that they make.

Finally, the impact of the teacher recruitment shortfall (Coughlan, 2018) on ITT providers is highlighted for the first time through data on the trainees' experiences of recruitment practices, exemplifying Proctor's concept of 'Strategic Ploy' (Proctor, 2008). The idea that an ITT provider is circumventing the proper

process for application and interview, by interviewing candidates during their school experience programme and offering places prior to formal application on UCAS Teacher Training, is primary evidence of 'strategic ploy' (ibid.) being used to foster applicants' ignorance of other ITT pathways. In this example, the ITT provider attempted to directly constrain participant 15's expansion of their knowledge of their options beyond the one pathway, so that they would accept the offer presented to them. This is powerful evidence to highlight to both other ITT providers, and the DfE, the marketing and recruitment context in which they are operating.

### 7.3 The Implications for Marketing Strategies

The implications for marketing strategies are considered at two scales: The national scale highlighting the role of marketing within the context of ITT recruitment, and the local scale in terms of where ITT providers should focus their marketing efforts. In the context of the insights discussed in section 7.2, the evidence demonstrates how choice-making based on ignorance is prevalent in applications to ITT. The existence of ignorance, linked to a lack of sufficient quality information evidences the failure of a fully operational market system in ITT. The following paragraphs highlight how this was observed through the data and what the implications are for the field of marketing in initial teacher training.

The trainees noted from their experiences of application that the quality of the information - its level of detail and the coherence between different providers' messages – was lacking when they attempted to discern between ITT pathways. This supports the conclusions that Brown (2011) draws of marketing information in Higher Education but not due to the delayed benefit of education being difficult to articulate at the point of purchase as Brown (2011) suggests. Instead this is based on the challenge of articulating the variation of the offer between providers, which supports Brown and Carasso's (2013) later assertion that poor quality information is the result of a failure to fully employ the market dynamic within education. This presents somewhat of an ethical dilemma for providers in how they articulate the benefits of their programme without inferring that other

routes, or even providers are lesser than theirs. Arguably, this is the result of a market context that encourages competition between ITT providers, and supports Slater's (1997:90) concept of 'producer anxiety', not because of fear that without marketing, the demand for ITT would diminish, but for the fear of being conspicuously absent and underrepresented in a crowded market. This anxiety can only be exacerbated by the DfE's recent policy to proliferate the number of ITT providers.

This raises significant questions around the effectiveness and value of each individual ITT provider having to explain the entire ITT application process and the various routes into teaching, as well as promote the benefits of their particular programme. From the trainees' perspective, it was evident that this presented a challenge due to the inconsistency of messaging from different sources. Whilst the 'Get into Teaching' website provided a useful overview of the routes into teaching for some but not all trainees, it was noted how this did not then link through to the UCAS Teacher Training website which listed the providers that offered these routes. The trainees were thus faced with having to triangulate between different information sources, and with the marketing materials of the ITT providers, in order to make their various choices of route, provider and eventually select three programmes to apply for on UCAS Teacher Training.

Likewise, it should be acknowledged that smaller scale providers such as SCITTs and school direct partnerships, and even individual schools themselves, are shouldering the burden of being the first point of contact for potential candidates for ITT. This research suggests more can also be done to support schools that are operating on a face-to-face basis with potential ITT candidates, to feed those candidates towards a centrally coordinated information and recruitment system. The impact of this has been tacitly acknowledged by the DfE in their 2019 "Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy" (released after the research was conducted) in noting the launch of, "A new one-stop application service for ITT, which will be easier to use and designed to better meet the needs of potential trainees" (DfE, 2019:33). The implications for ITT provider marketing and recruitment strategies is that less of their resource can be invested in marketing

the *concept* of ITT, and instead focus on attempting to persuade applicants to choose one particular programme. The streamlining of the information sources at the national level should have future benefits for providers who can instead focus on the aforementioned relationship building which was evidently valued by applicants.

For ITT providers at a local scale, the research findings demonstrate that it appears easier to influence an applicant to select the provider as their preferred choice following the recruitment process, than it is to get them to select the provider on the application form in the first place. This is because, based on the trainees' insights, the initial application process appears to be less targeted, with candidates attempting to choose from a sometimes overwhelming number of options and distinguish between ITT programmes. The inference from the research data is that teaching events and follow-ups should be considered as a significant and worthwhile use of their time in managing the relationships with potential 'customers' of their programmes, aligned to the customer-oriented model of marketing in HE noted by Maringe and Gibbs (2009). The research with the trainees in this study suggests the focus should be on instigating and fostering one-to-one relationships with potential candidates. The evidence highlights the positive effect this can have on securing applicants, and advising them to make the right choice of ITT pathway based on their circumstances.

The speed with which the SCITT provider responded to the trainees following their interviews was noted as a positive representation of the care and efficiency of the provider. It was clear from the trainees' discussions that the SCITT provider had given thought to the applicant experience at interview, and this was noted amongst the trainees as one of the main reasons for ultimately choosing to train with this SCITT provider. The 'promotion' element of the marketing model (Kotler and Fox, 1995) was carried through into the recruitment process following initial application, so that the interview and subsequent follow-up was an opportunity to further influence the choices of applicants.

To draw this chapter to a close, the recent publication of the 2019 teacher recruitment and retention strategy (DfE, 2019) goes some way to addressing the concerns raised by the trainees in this research. However, the contribution of this research is valuable in that it presents a detailed view of the variation between trainees' experiences and highlights the distinction between applicants' research into ITT during the application stage, at which point the providers are looking to attract potential candidates, and separately the choices that take place following the application submission, at which point the ITT providers are looking to convert the applicants that they select into offer holders (p.38).

The DfE's (2019) proposed refinement to the system to provide a 'one-stop application service' (Figure 9) would be welcome, based on the insight of the trainees, but it does not address the contact that potential applicants have with schools prior to application. This links back to the challenge of defining roles and responsibilities in the marketing of ITT between partnership schools, ITT providers and the DfE. A compounding factor in this challenge is the complex market in ITT in England and hence the strategy's (DfE, 2019) suggestion to review the market is strongly supported by the research findings around the impact the current complexity is seen to be having on applicants' experiences of choosing their ITT pathway. The following chapter builds on this discussion to formulate recommendations for ITT policy and marketing practice.

## Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This final chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the significance of the research outputs and making recommendations based on the findings. A discussion of the limitations of the current research is presented, which lead to suggestions for further research in this field.

The stimulus for the research was the NAO's statement that, "Potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to make informed choices about where to train and the plethora of routes has been widely described to us as confusing" (National Audit Office, 2016:11). The evidence demonstrated that the trainees were relatively well informed about some aspects of ITT and not about others such as the role of the PGCE. The reasons behind this were threefold. The first is rooted in national policy challenges of complexity in the ITT market. The second is based on challenges around the responsibilities to inform applicants of the wider ITT market at the national scale and more locally with individual ITT providers. The third is drawn from challenges for the individual applicant around the desire to research and engage with providers, versus the acceptance of ignorance when making their choice of ITT pathway.

The data collected through the research design provides an account of how current trainees engaged with the marketing and other information sources available to them during their application, and why they chose their particular ITT pathway. This illustrates a rich picture of how individual applicants have different ways into the process of researching ITT pathways and developed their understanding of the routes into teaching, the ITT providers, and the programmes available. Through the research conversations with the trainees this was discussed in detail, allowing for substantial data to be collected that describes the process of developing applicant understanding, and the variations in experiences of the different trainees. The research has also provided a comprehensive list of the factors that the trainees considered when applying to ITT. The research scope was never to measure or rank these factors, but the list in itself, and the qualitative

discussion surrounding the decision to train through SCITT gives insight into how these factors are considered when making the choice to apply and accept offers.

The significance of the proposed research investigation is evident within the current context of ITT. Within a complex landscape of different, but not necessarily differentiated, training providers and programmes, combined with marketing messages that were noted for lacking in detail, the research design served to unpick the trainees' sense-making of the situation. Even if the SCITT Provider's context does not apply to other ITT providers directly, this outcome should be of interest to all stakeholders involved in recruiting and training new teachers. The fact that the applicants had a spread of choices when they applied to ITT (Table 8, p.103) indicates that the sample population, despite all training with one particular SCITT provider, were not homogenous in their approach when applying to ITT. Therefore the insight into how they engaged with the marketing and ITT information from the sample is more broadly relevant to all ITT applicants.

## 8.1 Recommendations

There are three recommendations for policy around ITT marketing and recruitment based on the insight and evidence in this research. The first is to simplify the complex ITT market. This complexity is double-edged, in terms of the variation between routes into teaching and the volume of providers. The fact that providers often offer multiple routes into teaching, and schools work with multiple ITT providers, has evidently contributed to the choices of ITT pathway seeming overwhelming to applicants. This inevitably results in a disjointed and in some regards uninformed approach to application by applicants who are attempting to navigate and discern between their options. The value of this research is in building the case for simplifying the ITT market for the benefit of the applicants and trainees and not for the schools themselves which, as established in the literature review, appears to be the DfE's purpose in proliferating the number of providers and routes into teaching (Department for Education, 2016a).

The second policy recommendation is for the DfE to define the responsibilities of individual providers in marketing ITT. This research acknowledges the significant role that providers and individual schools have as the contact point for potential applicants. The distinction between informing potential candidates of the varied routes into teaching, versus marketing a specific ITT programme must be addressed and supported by the DfE. This appears to be the intention of the 2019 strategy (DfE, 2019) in proposing a new application system. However, a true marketing strategy in this regard would give clear direction to the different roles that provide information sources (partnership schools, ITT providers, Universities), and support individual providers to focus on marketing their own programmes.

The third recommendation would be to give greater parity of access to support for application for potential trainees in all subjects. At the time of conducting the research, services such as Premier Plus only provided advice to applicants in certain shortage subjects. The evidence is not available to comment on the impact at application of the differentiated financial support for trainees, given the framing of the research around trainees who were successful applicants to the SCITT programme. Whilst finances were commented on by the trainees in the interviews and focus groups, with some noting their disappointment at unequal treatment, it did not constitute an absolute barrier to them taking up a place on the ITT programme.

There are also three implications for professional practice, and the marketing and recruitment strategies of ITT providers. The first is to note that all schools are potential recruitment sites, based on the evidence that the trainees often used schools in their local areas as a starting point for exploring their ITT pathway options. This is linked to Foskett's (1999) understanding of external relations for schools, with the function of marketing performed through relationships with the wider communities in which the schools are located. The recommendation would therefore be for ITT providers to consider their recruitment strategies on this basis by supporting all schools within their partnership to capture and funnel potential applicants to their appropriate information sources.

The second recommendation is based on the insight that the trainees either selected the route into teaching, or the provider first during their decision making process. Understanding this differentiation will help to guide recruitment conversations with potential applicants.

Finally, and linking to the first recommendation for professional practice, it appeared from the research that it was sometimes more luck than judgement if applicants stumbled across particular ITT providers. Therefore, supporting all schools in the partnership to direct applicants to the new 'one-stop application system' (DfE, 2019) will allow ITT providers and lead schools in the partnership to focus more on applicant conversion to offer holders. Based on the experiences of the trainees, this is where real value can be built from investing in one-to-one contact and support for applicants once they have made their decision to choose the provider on their application. ITT providers should invest their time in making the interview process smooth and positive for applicants, and following up on interview outcomes as soon as possible, as this had a significant impact in converting applicants to confirmed offer holders.

## 8.2 Limitations of the Research Design

The limitation of the research must at this point be acknowledged. Researching with current trainees was the right approach for the research's aims and within the scope of an EdD thesis. Conducting research with trainees, whilst having the advantage of allowing for a period of reflection, also has the disadvantage of representing the views of those who 'made it' onto one particular ITT programme. As a result, the reasoning behind why the trainee accepted the SCITT programme offer is perhaps more established since the subsequent training, which highlights the potential for confirmation bias (Proctor, 2008; Smithson, 1989). A potential enhancement of this study would be to repeat it with the same parameters, but focus solely on why the trainees did not select other programmes, rather than why they chose the programme they ultimately trained with.

Due to this research design, the trainees' ability to recall information may have focussed the research conversations on more recent aspects of their customer journey, such as the interview, over the initial contact with ITT providers. However, the trainees' discussions of their research starting points was sufficiently detailed to answer the research questions, even if they could not recall the specific point at which they first encountered the SCITT provider.

The questionnaire did not serve as fully as I had intended as a method of selecting participants for the initial focus groups. With hindsight, I would have circulated this in September at the start of the term when trainees may have been more receptive to taking part and their experiences of application were even more recent. However, I was authorised to progress with my research at the end of September 2017 and I was bound by the cyclical nature of the research population, meaning that to delay on this occasion would have stalled the research and instead moved the data collection window to take place with the 2018-19 cohort of trainees. This would have devalued the insight into the direct impact of the changes that occurred in the SCITT Provider's context in 2016-17.

The broader biographical information collected by the questionnaire on the focus group participants did serve to select trainees for the follow-up interviews. Age data on the SCITT provider's trainee population was gathered from the ITT Census (DfE, 2017a) but if the study were repeated, specific age data would be collected via the questionnaire as well.

The research findings on the facilitators and constraints of an informed choice (chapter 6) were partially limited by the trainees' ability to recognise where they had not made informed choices throughout the application and recruitment process. It is possible that there are further factors not identified in the findings as they are not tangible or visible to the trainee. For example, data could not be collected on aspects of funding for ITT marketing, hence there is scope to expand the parameters of the research design to overcome these limitations, as outlined in the next section.

### 8.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This chapter therefore concludes with suggestions for further research. The project was limited in its scope by constraints on time and output, and given the success of the research methodology, the first proposal would be to repeat the same study but expand to a greater number of cases with ITT providers offering different routes into teaching. This approach would serve to develop Yin's (2009) analytic generalisation to support the application of the research findings to other ITT contexts. Extension of the research parameters to include other providers' partnerships would continue to add to the body of knowledge on teacher training at this point in its history, with changing ITT allocation methodologies (DfE and NCTL, 2015) and growing concerns over teacher shortages (Coughlan, 2018). Most importantly, it would capture the voice and insights from a greater number of trainees who are subject to the influence of policy-makers in this area.

Given the scope of the project, I made the decision on this occasion not to extend the research design to include the SCITT provider's voice because it would have diluted the focus on the trainees' experiences and informed choice within the restricted word limit. However, the research findings on the facilitators and constraints of informed choice would be enhanced by including the voice of the relevant ITT providers. Collecting this supplementary data would allow for triangulation (Blaikie, 1991) between the perspectives of government through DfE strategy documents and reports, the perspectives of recruiting providers, and the experiences of trainees to further support the recommendations for professional practice.

If the research scope was unlimited, the recommendation would be to blend this study's methodological approach on trainee reflection, with that of Williams et al. (2016) in researching with applicants at the point of application. A longitudinal study would allow collection of data from participants as they progress from potential candidate, to applicant, to trainee (p.38). As there is also a clear relationship between teacher recruitment and teacher retention (DfE, 2019), a longitudinal study which extends beyond their period as trainees, and further into

their careers as teachers, would serve to examine how making an informed choice of ITT pathway impacts on teacher retention in the future. I was clear at the outset that this study would not be framed to comment directly on aspects of teacher retention. However, the recommendations resulting from the research have identified where there are inefficiencies around the marketing of ITT, and how areas of duplication, especially in explaining the routes into teaching, are presenting constraints on applicants making an informed choice. Whilst this research provides valid and standalone recommendations for the marketing of ITT, it could also serve as the starting point from which to analyse the long term effects of uninformed choice on teacher retention. Building on this study in this way would present an opportunity to develop research-informed ITT policy based on considerations of the entire applicant-trainee-teacher lifecycle.

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## List of Abbreviations

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DT	Design Technology
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
NAO	National Audit Office
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
PE	Physical Education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SCITT	School Centred Initial Teacher Training
TA	Teaching Assistant
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service  In this context referring to the separate initial teacher training system known as 'UCAS Teacher Training'

## Appendix A – ‘Get into Teaching’ advert 2015 (used 2015-2017)

Source: youtube.com, Published by the Department for Education, 28 October 2015.



### Full advert speech

“What does a good teacher make these days?  
 They make the complex understandable, and the mind boggling-magical.  
 They make sense of matter, and of what matters.  
 They make engineers, scientists and nurses,  
 They make students look again and change their perspective  
 They make eyes widen and mouths drop  
 They make the unmotivated ambitious, the interested, passionate,  
 And they make the curious expand their horizons [in Mandarin]  
 They make inert bodies, react.  
 They make skies bluer and horizons broader.  
 They make futures into reality.  
 And if you really want to know what else a good teacher makes,  
 It’s probably more than you think.”

### On-Screen Text

£22k - £27k **minimum** starting salary  
 Up to £30k tax-free to train  
 Up to £65k as a great teacher  
 Teaching: Your Future, Their Future  
 Search: getintoteaching

## Appendix B - Pre-Pilot Focus Group Question Frame

**Date:** Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June

**Timings:** 11:00 – Secondary Trainee Focus Group

13:00 – Primary Trainee Focus Group

1. Tell me why you chose SCITT over other ITT training routes

- What were you looking for when you applied to ITT?
- What interested you about the SCITT route?
  - Did you choose to apply to multiple routes? (Is there a consensus on this?)
- What was it about Oak Wood Teacher Training that made you decide to apply? And accept?

2. Thinking about your journey into teaching, how did the marketing help you to decide how and where to train?

- Thinking about the application process, did anyone have to persuade you to become a teacher? Who?
- How did you explore the options around ITT routes and Providers?
- Did you see any of the national “Get into Teaching” campaigns?
- How did you find out about Oak Wood Teacher Training? – As SCITT or School Direct?
- Did you use any of Oak Wood’s marketing to make your decision?
  - Give examples: Website, UCAS profile, social media (Which?), brochures, open days, recruitment fairs?
- When you attended the interview for Oak Wood Teacher Training, what did you experience that influenced your decision to accept the offer?

3. The next section focuses on the “student experience” of ITT and your expectations of the course – what does “student experience” mean to you?

- When you were applying to your ITT programmes, how much thought did you give to the “student experience”? – i.e. the quality of the course and support for your study?
  - Did the Oak Wood Partnership with the University of Metropolis influence your decision?
- How much thought did you give to “value for money” for the courses you applied to?
- How much did you consider future employment opportunities following your ITT year?
- And how did you picture your role in school during your ITT year?
  - Did the opportunities for placement schools influence your decision to train with Oak Wood?
- [Elaborate with follow-up questions. Elicit whether there was variation in expectations depending on which route was applied to.]

4. Finally, what was your experience like once you had received offers to train as a teacher?

- What contact did you have with the ITT providers you had applied to post application? And post-offer?

## Appendix C – Participant Questionnaire

If you wish to take part in the doctoral research project exploring how trainee teachers chose their ITT pathway, please answer the questions below as fully as possible. This data will be used to select a sample for the following rounds of data collection.

Following this, you may be invited to take part in a focus group and further one-to-one interview throughout the course of the 2017-18 academic year. Full details of the research project and consent are provided in the participant information sheet attached.

Identification Questions – these will be used to help the researcher identify responses. All responses will be anonymised in the write-up.	
Title:	
First name:	
Last Name:	
Teaching Questions – These relate to the research topic.	
Please describe any previous work experience before your ITT year:	
Please explain why you chose to become a teacher:	
How have you found your SCITT course so far?	

Demographic Questions – These will help to select a sample for the next stage of data collection.	
Teaching Age Range:	
Teaching Subject:	
Degree Subject:	
Gender:	
Ethnic Group (please highlight one option that best describes your ethnic background):	<p><b>White</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British</li> <li>2. Irish</li> <li>3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller</li> <li>4. Any other White background, please describe :</li> </ol> <p><b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. White and Black Caribbean</li> <li>6. White and Black African</li> <li>7. White and Asian</li> <li>8. Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe:</li> </ol> <p><b>Asian / Asian British</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Indian</li> <li>10. Pakistani</li> <li>11. Bangladeshi</li> <li>12. Chinese</li> <li>13. Any other Asian background, please describe :</li> </ol> <p><b>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. African</li> <li>15. Caribbean</li> <li>16. Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe</li> </ol> <p><b>Other ethnic group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. Arab</li> <li>18. Any other ethnic group, please describe:</li> </ol>

This data will be anonymised in all research writing and securely stored in line with University of Leeds research data policy.

## Appendix D – Focus Group Question Frame

### Part 1 – Open discussion around the application process and applicants' choice of ITT route and provider.

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View of ITT application process (sentiment-based)	
1.	How did you find the application process to ITT?
Applicants' prior knowledge of ITT	
2.	<p>Tell me about your decisions to become teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What did you already know about the ITT process?</li> <li>- What did you already know about the application process for ITT?</li> </ul>
Applicants' research methods for deciding on pathway	
3.	<p>How did you explore the options around ITT routes and providers? Expand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you choose the route or the provider first?</li> <li>- What were you looking for when you applied to ITT?</li> <li>- Did you choose to apply to multiple routes? (Is there a consensus on this?)</li> </ul>
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tell me why you chose SCITT over other ITT training routes</li> <li>- What interested you about the SCITT route?</li> <li>- What was it about SCITT A that made you decide to apply? And accept?</li> </ul>
Applicants' engagement with the marketing materials	
5.	<p>How did you find out about SCITT A?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you use any of SCITT A's marketing to make your decision?</li> </ul> <p>Give stimulus material: Website, UCAS profile, social media (Which?), brochures, open days, recruitment fairs?</p>
6.	<p>There are many sources of information about ITT - which ones did you notice during your application? And make use of?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did you see any of the national "Get into Teaching" campaigns? Which aspects?</li> <li>- Did you use any of the University materials or events?</li> </ul> <p>Give stimulus material: Website, UCAS profile, social media (Which?), brochures, open days, recruitment fairs?</p>
7.	<p>SCITT A's website offers a number of opportunities to get in touch with them to ask questions or to attend an event either an open evening or talk off site. How much did you make use of this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When you attended the interview for SCITT A, what did you experience that influenced your decision to accept the offer?</li> </ul>

Part 2 – Questions relating to information categories identified in the marketing materials	
8.	<p>What things did you consider when making your ITT application?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were there any other factors that influenced your decision?</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p>(Scribe onto flipchart paper for the group to see and reflect upon) (Krueger, 2015)</p>
Categories identified from websites:	
	Engaging with advice or events – Premier Plus
	Fees and Funding Structured payment of fees
	Course Outcome and Qualification Qualification outcome and assessment
	Employment Opportunities and Progression Post programme support and future employment opportunities in your school
	Eligibility – qualifications, right to work and skills tests Eligibility and person specification
	School experience Pre-application support and school experience opportunities
	Location Location and travel to placement schools
	Teaching subject and age range Subjects offered by the school
	Course structure and quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of teaching on the course</li> <li>- Course structure and pace of training</li> </ul> Course support
	ITT Route
	Salary and other benefits
	Trainee feedback
	Partnership with the University of Metropolis
	Your personal circumstances or stage in your career
	School placement quality and partnership
	Involvement in school life
	School policies

## Appendix E – Personalised Interview Question Frame – Participant 16

	Question	Focus Group Theme
<b>Part 1 – Bibliographical Data based on questionnaire</b>		
<b>1.</b>	Tell me a bit about yourself – what you're training for and your experience on the course so far. (Where have you been placed?) (Any positives or negatives?)	Ice-breaker
<b>2.</b>	In your questionnaire you noted that your degree was in Biomedical Sciences and you are now teaching Secondary Maths. How did you make that decision?  (In the focus group you mentioned you were a failed medic – what did you mean by this?)	Pre-Application decision to teach
<b>3.</b>	In your questionnaire, you mentioned that prior to applying for Oak Wood Teacher Training, you tutored A-Level Maths for three years. Could you tell me a bit more about this?  (Did you apply straight after University? Or would you consider yourself a career changer?)  (What level of school experience did you have before applying?)	School experience
<b>4.</b>	What influenced you to apply for ITT?	Pre-application decision to teach
<b>Part 2 – Questions based on personal experience and follow up to the focus groups</b>		
<b>5.</b>	There were many ways in which you could have trained to be a teacher, in what ways did you explore these options? (How did you research your options?) (What sources did you use?) (How much did you already know before you started the application process?)	Information Sources
<b>6.</b>	What efforts did you make to understand all of the options for ITT that were open to you? (How much did you want to know about all of your choices?) (Some people in the focus groups discussed how they were confused by their choices for ITT – do you agree or disagree with this based on your experience?) (Did you feel anything made this particularly difficult to understand?)	Information Sources

<b>7.</b>	In the focus group you mentioned that you just sort of stumbled across Oak Wood Teacher Training – can you remember how?	Information Sources
<b>8.</b>	Did you use all three of your choices on UCAS Teacher Training? (Which courses and providers did you apply to?) (Which came first – route or provider?)	Application Process
<b>9.</b>	Were there any providers or courses that you researched but chose not to apply to? (Why?)	To overcome confirmation bias
<b>10.</b>	Thinking back to your application, what made you choose Oak Wood Teacher Training on UCAS? (What made you choose the SCITT pathway?) (What made you choose the provider?)	Factors of choice at application
<b>11.</b>	These are the factors which participants raised in the focus group as their considerations during the application process [Hand separate sheet] Which ones did you consider? – Why? Which ones did you not consider? – Why? Anything missing from the list?	
<b>12.</b>	Did you attend any interviews as part of your application? In the focus group, you specifically said that you turned up to an interview for a different provider without knowing what School Direct was. Please could you expand on this? (Why do you think you ended up in this position?)	Recruitment process
<b>13.</b>	What made you accept Oak Wood Teacher Training's offer of an ITT place? (How many ITT offers did you receive?)	Factors of choice at recruitment process
<b>14.</b>	Timescales came up in the focus group as an issue – either the pressure to apply quickly or not – what were your experiences of this?	Time pressures and turnaround
<b>15.</b>	Is your experience on the course, as you expected it when you applied?	Reflection and chronicity
<b>16.</b>	If you had the opportunity to advise others during the ITT application process now, what would you say?	Reflection and chronicity

Part 3 – Direct feedback on marketing and recruitment	
<p>Do you have any other suggestions for the marketing of teacher training by Oak Wood? For example; The printed brochures or fliers, the online content, or the events</p> <p>(In terms of the format?)</p> <p>(In terms of the messages?)</p> <p>(In terms of the distribution?)</p> <p>(Was there anything that other providers did that you thought was particularly positive or negative?)</p>	
<p>Do you have any other suggestions for the marketing of teacher training nationally?</p> <p>For example the online content, the media advertising or events hosted by others such as Universities or the Government's Get into Teaching campaign.</p> <p>(In terms of the format?)</p> <p>(In terms of the messages?)</p> <p>(In terms of the distribution?)</p>	
<p>Do you have any suggestions for the recruitment process? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the pre-application contact,</li> <li>- support with UCAS,</li> <li>- the interview process,</li> <li>- The offer process,</li> <li>- Between the offer and starting the course?</li> </ul> <p>(Based on your experience with Oak Wood Teacher Training or with others?)</p>	
<p>Any final feedback on any part of this discussion?</p>	

# Appendix F – Example stimulus material for the focus groups

The image shows a screenshot of the 'Get Into Teaching' website. At the top left is the Department for Education logo. The main header is 'Get Into Teaching'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Eligibility, Explore my options, Funding and salary, Get help and support, How to apply, Life as a teacher, School experience, and Teaching events. On the right side of the header are 'Log in' and 'Create a profile' buttons. A search bar contains the text 'Search Get Into Teaching'. A large orange button with a hand cursor icon says 'REGISTER'. Below the button is a link that says '5 reasons to register'. A large banner image shows a male teacher in a suit and glasses interacting with three female students in school uniforms. To the right of the banner is a blue box with white text: 'You could get a tax-free bursary of £26k. Financial incentives for teacher training in 2018/19 have just been announced. Make a difference to their future – and make a difference to yours. Teach.'

UCAS Advisers Providers Corporate Contact Feedback

At the heart of connecting people to higher education

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Information and advice Search articles, information and advice by keyword

Planned maintenance: 17 - 19 November - Read more

Apply 2 is now available - Read more

# UCAS Teacher Training: Apply and Track

Apply through UCAS Teacher Training for postgraduate teacher training programmes in England and Wales, and track the progress of your application.

Relevant to Teacher Training

Making an application 2018 entry

UCAS Teacher Training applicant introduction - 2018 entry

### You may also like to read

- Training to teach in the UK
- Search for training programmes
- Filling in your UCAS Teacher Training application
- How to write your UCAS Teacher Training personal statement

### Related topics

Applying The application process

Advertisement

Search for training programmes now

## Appendix G - Interview Handout Sheet

### **Factors taken into consideration when applying for ITT (Raised in the focus group discussions)**

Amount of time spent in the school or classroom
Choice of the subject or level of teaching
Eligibility to apply
Format of course delivery
Format of assessment
Employability after training
Student Finance
Level of challenge on the course
Location
Pace of learning on the course
Placement structure on the course
Prior school experiences
Qualification and accreditation
Quality of provision
Reputation of the Provider
The Schools in the partnership
The size of the partnership
Support whilst on the course
Role in school whilst on the course (Teacher identity)
Previous experience at University