Student teachers' decision-making about working at Masters Level on their PGCE courses.

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Abstract

Decisions about different educational pathways have been linked extensively with inequality of outcome and explaining this link has been a focus of much recent research. The emphasis for such research has largely been at key transition points such as secondary school choice and entry to Higher Education. A key question has been the extent to which decisions are influenced by the structuring effects of social class and cultural background or individual agency.

This study examines the educational decision-making of graduate student teachers in relation to whether or not to take Masters level credits on courses of Initial Teacher Education. It uses a mixed methods case study approach to collect data from the staff, student teachers and documentation within an Initial Teacher Education department of a Higher Education Institution. The study draws upon a Bourdieuian theoretical perspective to understand the individual nature of the decision-making process and how it led to patterns of inequality. The process of decision-making is considered through the interrelated dimensions of agency, contexts and values.

The study reveals that the student teachers' decision-making was multifaceted, and demonstrates the different ways in which important factors were linked and dependent on the overlapping influences of socio-cultural background. The majority of student teachers decided not to take Masters level credits, in many cases seeing the Masters level pathway as too risky. The major influential factors included concerns about time and workload and fear of failure with perceptions of level of academic skills contributing towards this. For some student teachers the perceived value of Masters level for teaching and aspirations for personal progression were also important factors.

The study also demonstrates that inequitable patterns of outcome related to student teachers' characteristics could be aggregated from individual decision-making. The study draws the conclusion that the introduction of differentiated educational pathways should be accompanied by careful monitoring to ensure that the aims of widening participation are not compromised. Recommendations are made for the types of support that could accompany this particular case of

educational decision-making and lessen any stratifying effects. These recommendations could be transferrable to other situations where decisions have to be made about a particular educational pathway.

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"For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Dedication

To my parents to whom I owe my own education.

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List of Abbreviations

CoP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSU	Case Study University
EdD	Doctorate of Education
ENTEP	European Network on Teacher Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
H	Honours
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ITE	Initial teacher education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
M	Masters
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
MTL	Masters in Teachers and Learning
PE	Physical Education
PG	Postgraduate
PGCE	Professional or Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PGCE/H	Professional certificate of Education (Honours)
PGCE/M	Postgraduate certificate of Education (Masters)
QAA	Quality Assurance Association
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RAT	Rational Action Theory
RRA	Relative Risk Aversion
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
UCET	Universities Council for the Education of Teachers
UG	Undergraduate
VLE	Virtual learning Environment

Introduction

This thesis is about educational decision-making within a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)[1] programme at a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The decision-making was in relation to two possible qualification routes – the Professional Certificate of Education (PGCE/H) taken at Honours level and the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE/M) taken at Masters level. The key aim of my research was **to use a case study approach to develop a greater understanding of student teachers' educational decision-making regarding the Professional or Postgraduate Certificate of Education and how these decisions contributed to the reproduction of inequalities,** which I had previously observed at the Case Study University (CSU) and outline below.

At the time of this study, I was working as an academic course leader within the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) department at the CSU. The CSU is a large urban post-1992 University and the ITE department had just introduced an option to study at Masters (M) level on the PGCE. Despite no additional costs or length to the course programmes, this option had not been chosen by many of the student teachers. I thought this was surprising given the spiralling costs of postgraduate (PG) education, and the increasing numbers of students taking M level degrees because they see a higher degree as a means to stand out above everyone else (House, 2010). This thesis is submitted for an EdD programme, and in an early part of the course, before identifying my research topic, my personal and professional interest led to the collection of some data – some of which was for use in an earlier module assignment. Analysis of these data show that some inequality resulted from the students' choices, and this finding then informed my choice of research study for this thesis, its research aim and questions.

A strong motivation in undertaking this research stems from my firm belief in the need to widen participation from under-represented groups of students to all

[1] The PGCE is an abbreviation which can refer to either The Professional or Postgraduate Certificate of Education, both of which provide graduates with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

levels of post compulsory education and training. Having worked as an educator throughout my working life I have witnessed and participated in a range of widening participation projects, which have left no doubt in my mind of the enormity and complexity of the widening participation challenge. There were three main justifications for my research aim which are based on my previous experiences and on the observation (from data collected earlier in the EdD course) that the educational decision-making about studying at M level on the PGCE contributed to inequality. Firstly, I have witnessed, from working with students at key educational transition points, the potential stratifying effects of choice, for example, those related to the choice of subjects for study at GCSE, or pathways at school leaving age as well as routes of entry to Higher Education (HE). These effects have been widely discussed in the literature (see Section 2.2). Secondly, the numbers of student teachers taking the PGCE/M during 2007-9 at the CSU were very low. Through attendance at regional ITE meetings I knew that the CSU were qualifying lower percentages of student teachers with the PGCE/M than other local providers, which was in itself an inequality; moreover the CSU had higher than average numbers of student teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds when compared with other providers of ITE within the region (TDA, 2011). Finally, data collected earlier on the EdD programme had revealed that that the decision-making regarding the differentiated PGCE routes suggested inequitable patterns of engagement with the PGCE/M; certain groups of students were under-represented (see below and Table 1.1). Widening participation to teacher training, however, was a key principle for policy within the ITE department at the CSU. My concern was that this should be equally visible within the policy and practice for the introduction of the PGCE/M.

During 2007-8 the CSU Initial Teacher Education (ITE) team did not collect data about which student teachers were taking the PGCE/M. However, I knew as the course leader for PGCE science that none of the science student teachers, who predominantly declared minority ethnic backgrounds (75%), had opted to take the PGCE/M. Student teachers declaring a minority ethnic background could be described as non-traditional in that they are under-represented nationally on courses of ITE. The student teachers who decided to take the PGCE/M at the CSU came disproportionately from the secondary citizenship and English courses. The

other secondary subjects were represented in very small numbers or not at all. Suspecting that this might be part of a broader trend, the secondary PGCE team collected additional data in 2008-9 in relation to which student teachers were taking the PGCE/M. Analysis of the 2008-9 data for the secondary cohort revealed worrying differences between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M groups; student teachers with an educational background outside the UK and who declared a minority ethnic background were under-represented within the PGCE/M when compared with the total numbers of student teachers declaring a minority background as recorded by the Training Development Agency (TDA)[2].The proportion of student teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds taking the PGCE(M) was much lower than the proportion on the secondary course (in 2008/9, while 45% of the secondary cohort had a minority ethnic background, they made up only 14% of the PGCE/M group). Data collected for 2008/9 and 2009/10[3] show under-representation of minority ethnic students on the PGCE/M for both years but to different degrees (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Preliminary data for secondary cohort of student teachers

	2008/9		2009/10	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Student teachers who declared a minority ethnic background as a proportion of the secondary cohort.	74	45	49	31
Student teachers who declared a minority ethnic background as a proportion of the secondary PGCE/M cohort.	3	14	7	18

Source: CSU and TDA (2011)

Although it was still too early to tell what, if any, impact this division of the PGCE into differentiated pathways might have, for example, on the effectiveness of

[2] The TDA database records ethnicity as either white, minority ethnic, undisclosed or unknown.
[3] The data for 2009/10 was collected and analysed as part of the data collection for this research study (see Chapter 5 for full analysis).

training and future employment prospects, it seemed likely that the professional route (PGCE/H) would come to be seen as the poor cousin of the postgraduate route (PGCE/M). Jackson (2009) reported that the response from student teachers nationally suggested that they largely welcomed the move towards an M level profession with some high expectations and enthusiasm for its potential benefits. If it is accepted that the PGCE/M offers benefits, then it is important that graduate student teachers have equal access to the opportunity to develop their professional identity and potential as critically reflective teachers.

O'Donnell et al (2009) argued that the imperatives of the widening participation agenda (to enable full participation by all groups in society) are as compatible with the transition to PG study as with undergraduate (UG) study. They warned that without recognition of the heterogeneity of PG students:

> We run the risk of returning to a situation where the students who will succeed at PG level are those who are already competent, confident and metacognitive, and this is fundamentally at odds with the principles of widening participation. (p37)

This warning resonated with the trends revealed by the findings from my preliminary data collection. I was concerned that the policy and practice for the introduction of the PGCE/M at the CSU did not recognise and support the full heterogeneity of the student teacher cohort. Inequalities resulting from smaller areas of policy change can go unnoticed – doors which had previously been carefully opened are closed again, and thereby much of the hard work is undone. It is only through monitoring the outcomes of policy change that we can really judge whether the policy change has provided the equal access to educational opportunities necessary for widening participation.

The maximisation of potential benefits of the PGCE/M and its impact on social justice depends strongly on the policy implementation. The importance of diversifying the teaching force in the UK has been recognised (NFER, 2007)[4], but we must also ensure that the policies and practices through which student teachers access new opportunities in relation to any policy developments within teacher training do not privilege certain groups. Ball (2006) distinguished between first

[4] Report available at http://www.diversityinleadership.co.uk/uploaded/files/TDA%20-%20recruitment%20and%20retention%20on%20initial%20teacher%20training.pdf (accessed 24/8/12)

order and second order policy effects with first order policy effects being the 'changes in practice or structure' (p51) which become evident as a result of the policy change and the second order effects being 'the impact of these changes on patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice' (p51). It was these second order effects that warranted further scrutiny in relation to this policy change at all levels and the findings and analysis presented in this study are the result of scrutiny at a local level. A key aspect of this scrutiny was to develop an understanding of the decision-making made by student teachers in relation to the policy changes and how this contributed to patterns of inequality.

The policy at the CSU had ostensibly provided equal opportunity to access the PGCE/M through the provision of 'choice', but few student teachers decided to take the PGCE/M and those that did **not** were disproportionately from a minority ethnic background. Gilborn (2005) warned against the dangers of institutional racism and the need to place race equity at the centre of educational policy reform. Diversifying the teaching force and genuinely acting on the results of ethnic monitoring are two such measures. A concern that this two tiered PGCE award with disproprtionate numbers of teachers from a minority ethnic background on the 'lower' tier (PGCE/H) with the potential consequences of lower salaries and restricted chances of promotion was sufficient reason for an exploration of the policy and practice at the CSU. I believed that it was important that the factors influencing student teachers' decision-making about M level study on the PGCE were critically explored. Ultimately I hoped that my research would assist with ensuring effective and socially just policy implementation. Consequently this case study aims to unravel the different factors that impacted on student teachers' decision-making about whether or not to take the PGCE/M, with a view to thinking how an institution can best ensure that all groups are equally likely to take up opportunities for progress.

The following research questions were identified:

- **What was the relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions they made about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**

- **In what ways did student teachers construct M Level study as part of their Initial Teacher Education**
- **How did student teachers account for their decisions about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**
- **How did institutional policy and practice impact on engagement with M level study?**

My research builds on other studies which have explored the links between decision-making and educational inequalities and it provides original knowledge in relation to the introduction of the PGCE/M. Edwards and Pope (2006) highlighted that the key decision for many HEIs was whether to allow the graduate student to opt in (or opt out) of the PGCE/M, or if a PGCE course should be offered with two exit outcomes with the final grade determining whether M level credits were awarded. They suggested that such decisions seemed to be firmly tied to individual University regulations, an aspect explored within this research. However, missing from the literature and research about the introduction of the PGCE/M is data related to which graduate student teachers choose (or choose not) to engage with the PGCE/M and why; it has not questioned whether those who engage with the PGCE/M proportionally represented subject specialism, training sector and the increasing diversity of the teaching force, nor the potential social justice issues of different institutional policies and practices. I aim to address this gap by providing some understanding in relation to these issues at the CSU. In addition, my study is also about the transition from undergraduate (UG) to PG study; a transition highlighted as under-researched and under-reported (Bowman, 2005; Stuart et al, 2008; O'Donnell et al, 2009; Wakeling and Kyriacou, 2010).

In this thesis I identify and explore a professional problem which has required me to draw upon a sociological perspective. My own academic background is within science and so I have had to venture into different disciplinary territory. I have found the theoretical ideas that I have used very interesting but they are nevertheless new and unfamiliar to me. My theoretical perspective was informed by my reading of the literature on educational decision-making and its link with educational inequalities, for example on cultural reproduction and rational action theories. This is a small scale study and a key objective has been to better

understand at an individual level the ways in which student teachers at the CSU used and valued information, in their decision-making. I have made use of Bourdieu's relational concepts of habitus, field and cultural capital to explore levels of individual agency and conscious decision-making when thinking about my data, and to make sense of the emerging story of policy change and its impact at the CSU. These have been used in synthesis with other theoretical ideas such as learner identity and participation to help provide a more tangible expression of the dynamic, socially constructed and individual nature of the decision-making process.

The data was collected during 2009/10. In this introduction I introduce only the key points of my methodology. I chose to use a mixed methods case study approach drawing on qualitative and quantitative data with the collection of findings from multiple sources. The study was conducted within its real life context as student teachers engaged with their teacher training, drawing upon Yin's (2003) promotion of the case study as a means to cover the contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon under study. I gathered data through analysis of the dominant discourses within policy documentation and oral briefings to students; examination of institutional attainment data; through survey by questionnaire of student teachers' opinions; and through individual semi-structured interviews with student teachers and academic staff. In presenting the data I have drawn upon Simons' (2009, p147) argument that a case study should 'tell a story of the evolution, development and experience of a particular case'.

Chapter 1 of this thesis sets out the policy context in more detail and in Chapter 2 I fully discuss my choice of theoretical framework. The detail of my methodology is described within Chapter 3. Chapters 4 to 6 present the findings in a loosely chronological sequence; however, in the iterative development of the data analysis, there is a constant movement and linking between these chapters as each informs the other. The final chapter of the thesis summarises my conclusions and considers implications for professional practice.

1 The Context

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the national and international factors which have contributed to the emergence of the M level PGCE and its shaping within HEIs. This follows advice from Simons (2009) that a case study should be located in its socio-political context. I will provide some context for understanding the policy and practice at the CSU and student teachers' educational decision-making. A key trigger for the policy change in the UK was the 1999 Bologna declaration[5], although this coincided with the gradual trend towards a more highly qualified teaching force in the UK. I outline these changes in the first section of this chapter. I then consider some of the on-going debates about the professional identity of teachers within changing political contexts. I argue that the PGCE/M presents possible benefits for enhancing the professional identity of school teaching. My research explores aspects of the tensions inherent in the construction of a 'teacher identity' by student teachers when considering the potential benefits (or not) of taking the PGCE at M level. Finally I outline some contextual information about the CSU and its provision for ITE in relation to other HEI providers of ITE.

1.2 Moving towards a Masters level teaching force

The last 40 years have seen a number of reforms in the training of state school teachers in the UK, reflecting national successive political ideology and global trends. This section identifies the gradual trend towards a more highly qualified school teaching force and the role that the 1999 Bologna declaration played in precipitating policy change for the PGCE.

Prior to the 1972 James report, non-graduate teachers had been required to complete the Certificate of Education qualification to be able to qualify as school teachers. During the early 1970s it became a requirement for graduate teachers to undergo 'postgraduate' training to work as teachers in state schools. Postgraduate

[5] The 1999 Bologna declaration is a joint declaration by European Education Ministers and was designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications in Europe.

training then was a course of training taken chronologically after graduate studies, rather than identified as being at a higher academic level. This distinction is described by House (2010) as 'postgraduate in time' rather than 'in level'. Following recommendations from the 1972 James report, teaching became a graduate only profession (Robinson, 2008) and the old Certificate of Education was discontinued in the 1980s with the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) becoming the favoured option, at least, for those training to be secondary school teachers. The Bachelor of Education degree with QTS remained a major entry route for primary school teaching during the 1970s and 1980s, with the PGCE gradually becoming more common.

Although Masters courses in education were already a popular choice for qualified school teachers, the move towards Masters (M) Level on the PGCE was triggered by the Bologna declaration. It stated that there should be:

> adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years ... The second cycle should lead to the masters and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries. (Bologna Declaration, 1999 p8)

Originally the PGCE (the most common qualification offered within the UK for teacher training), although called the Postgraduate Certificate of Education, was a course taken by graduates but at Honours (H) level. It was essentially a type of conversion course – a professional course enabling graduates to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) so that they could teach in schools. However, following the 1999 Bologna declaration, to which the UK as a member of the European Union was committed, the National Framework for Higher Education qualifications (FHEQ)[6] in England, Wales and Northern Ireland stated that any PG award must show evidence of study at M level to be able to retain the term 'postgraduate' in their title (QAA, 2005).

A joint statement (QAA, 2005) set out guidance in relation to assigning an appropriate title for the PGCE which would represent accurately the expected level

6 The FHEQ prescribes the achievement represented by Higher Education qualifications. It was first published in 2001, and revised in 2008. It can be accessed from https://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/FHEQCreditStatement.asp (accessed 19/03/12)

of achievement of the qualification and which would be aligned with the FHEQ qualifications framework. The two outcomes were The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE/H) for those qualifications which were pitched at H level and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE/M) for those qualifications which were pitched at M level. Consequently to retain the title of Postgraduate Certificate of Education, HEIs had to introduce M level credits into already tightly packed courses which necessitated restructuring and revalidation.

Teacher educators were concerned that the removal of the PG status from what is one of the main routes into teaching would undermine the professionalism of teacher education and of the teaching profession itself (Jackson and Eady, 2008). By September 2007 most HEIs had introduced two differentiated outcomes: PGCE/H and PGCE/M. Sewell (2007) reported that the parameters of such courses remained unclear; FHEQ had provided only a framework of outcomes rather than identifying a credit structure and correspondence with Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)[7], Teacher Development Agency (TDA), and the Higher Education Funding Council had resulted in guidance only that 60 credit points at M level would seem an appropriate rating. A survey (UCET, 2006) showed that the response from HEIs was varied: 18% of ITE institutions were planning to offer only the PGCE/M with 77% planning to offer both levels and 5% the PGCE/H only. The survey also highlighted variation in the number of M level credits offered (typically between 60 and 100 credits) and policies with respect to regulations and potential qualification outcomes.

The joint statement (QAA, 2005) issued by Universities UK, the Quality Assurance Association (QAA), the Standing Conference of Principles, and UCET recommended changes to PGCE courses in order to ensure that the levels of achievement of beginning teachers in the UK had comparability with those in other European countries. The overarching goal of the Bologna declaration was:

> To create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education. (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p4)

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7 UCET exists as a national forum for discussing policy formulation relating to ITE. Its members include UK universities involved in teacher education, and a number of colleges of higher education in the university sector. http://www.ucet.ac.uk (accessed 19/03/12)

The European Network on Teacher Education (ENTEP)[8] developed a profile of the European teacher concordant with professional training at M level (Schratz, 2005). This included the need for teachers to assume greater responsibility for their own professional development in a lifelong learning perspective and highlighted that it was important for teachers to engage with current research and to be aware of general social changes as part of their continuing professional development (CPD).

However, the policy change within ITE cannot be considered necessarily to have enhanced the employability and mobility of citizens within Europe. Iucu (2010) stated that that although reforms in the organisation and structure of ITE had been implemented in most European countries, there remained considerable diversity of ITE structures and systems with visibility, readability and comparability of respective qualifications still problematic. For example, the PGCE with or without M Level credits in England and Wales is also a professional qualification which includes the award of QTS within the UK and so it may not be transferrable to other European countries. The base line for QTS is to meet the professional standards for teachers[9], a set of performance indicators as defined by the government's body, the TDA (TDA 2007a). There are also QTS only routes into teaching and so graduates can enter teaching without a PGCE. Consequently, academic qualifications at M level for teaching in the UK may be seen as desirable but are not essential for entry into teaching.

Government discourse (DCSF, 2007) indicated a firm belief that a teaching force at M level would lead to a better quality of education in the classroom and a world class teaching force, stating that:

> to help fully fulfil our high ambitions for all children, and to boost the status of teaching still further, we now want it to become a Masters-level profession (DCSF, 2007, p24).

Proposals and policy development followed: HEIs introduced M level credits within the PGCE; CPD courses at M level expanded, some with government funding and

[8] ENTEP promotes cooperation among European Union Member States regarding policy developments which facilitate the mobility of students, teachers and teacher educators to enhance the European dimension in teacher education and improve the quality of education.
[9] There are also QTS only routes into teaching, e.g. School-centred ITT, Graduate Training Programme, Teach First. http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/teachUniversity Council for the Education of Teacherser-training-options.aspx

support for teachers as researchers; the professional qualification for teachers, Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) was introduced from September 2009 with central funding provided for some categories of newly qualified teachers.

Since the time of the data collection for this study (2009-10), there has been a change of government in 2010 and a series of reforms to the policy for Initial Teacher Training (ITT)[10] and Continuing Professional Development, for example central funding for the MTL has been discontinued. It remains to be seen how these proposals will affect the PGCE qualification (M level or H level) and its current status as the main entry qualification route for gaining QTS. Nevertheless, the movement towards a teaching qualification at M Level for school teachers reflects the widespread introduction of formal postgraduate teacher education courses at M Level for educators who work within the health professions and Higher Education sectors as outlined by Robson (2006).

1.3 The professional identity of school teachers

In this section I consider aspects of some of the key tensions inherent in different constructions of a professional identity for teachers and argue that ITE at M level offers the potential to enhance the professional identity of school teachers. The construction of a professional identity for teachers has changed over time. McCulloch et al (2000) stressed the importance of locating the idea of teacher professionalism in relation to changing historical, political and social contexts. They understood teacher professionalism as a form of ideology, one that has helped to legitimize controls over teachers but has also provided them with some autonomy of their own, arguing that contestation between rival groups and interests has led to adaptation and development of its meaning. The successive reforms in the training of school teachers in the UK over the last 40 years have reflected the on-going debates about the professional identity of school teachers which have

[10] I have used the term Initial Teacher Training (ITT) when referring to government policy since this is the official term used in England and Wales by the TDA to describe the various programmes designed to support entry into school teaching (Hobson et al, 2009). However at all other times, and in relation to this research study my preferred term is Initial Teacher Education (ITE). I believe this is a more appropriate term to describe the nature of learning on the PGCE (see p71) and is the official term used by the CSU and many other HEIs.

occurred within different political contexts. Student teachers will form individual constructions of a 'teacher identity' based on existing discourses and prior experiences. Moore (2004) identified three dominant discourses of a good teacher, two of which he claimed as 'official' discourses: the 'competent craftsperson' and the 'reflective practitioner' and one which he described as a 'popular' discourse – the 'charismatic subject'. Student teachers' constructions of 'teacher identity' will be shaped by the training route they take, but also, their choice of training route (including whether to take an M level route), may reflect their existing notions of teacher identity.

ITE in England and Wales, since 1998, has been increasingly shaped and driven by a set of competency based professional standards (QTS statements)[11] for teachers. The professional standards have provided a means by which the quality of student teacher can be measured, and therefore, the quality of the provision of training can also be judged and compared in keeping with the effects of marketisation and globalisation (Raduntz, 2005; Ball, 2006). These have stressed accountability, competitiveness and the more 'intense scrutiny of the work force' (Jackson and Eady, 2008, p2). Jackson (2006) noted that the revised form of QTS standards, due to come into effect in September 2007, used the word 'professional' in relation to teachers over 50 times, but questioned the use and meaning of this term by teachers, particularly new qualified teachers who were very uncertain about their professional identity. Her paper also highlighted the move towards a new type of managerial professionalism, where teachers are held accountable by measurement against performance indicators, which has replaced a professional identity based on earned trust through qualifications and expertise.

The competency based model of ITE has been criticised by many (Ball, 1999; Bottery and Wright; 2000; Mahony and Hextall, 2000; Ozga, 2000; Gewirtz, 2002) as encouraging adherence to government prescribed performance indicators rather than personal critical reflection. Ball (1999) presented a disquieting discourse of the

[11] The QTS standards can be downloaded from https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/tda0600.pdf (accessed 17/5/12)

'reformed teacher' whose professional judgement and ethical values have been displaced by the new imperatives of competition and target achievement:

> This shift in teacher consciousness and identity is underpinned and ramified by the introduction in teacher preparation of new forms of de-intellectualised, competence-based training. The student teacher is re-constructed as a technician rather than as a professional capable of critical judgement and reflection. (Ball, 1999, p13)

The introduction of an M level PGCE may provide the scope for lifting the professional training beyond this more narrow conception of teaching. Jackson and Eady (2008) argued that the introduction of M level credits within ITE was a potential means to move beyond the competence model and to restore professionalism by enhancing capacity for a critically reflective teaching profession. They argued that there was a fundamental link between the professional attributes of teachers and the requirements of M Level study, as illustrated by the QTS standard which calls for all teachers to:

> have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified. (TDA, 2007a, Q7)

and the descriptor for M level which called for:

> a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice. (QAA, 2008, p20)

The changing UK political scene with the introduction of the Coalition government in 2010 has triggered further adaptations in the notion of a professional teacher identity. These can be attributed, in part, to the inherent tensions between the desire for a highly qualified teaching force and the view held by Michal Gove, Secretary of State for Education under the coalition government 2010. Gove's[12] view is that teaching is a 'craft' learnt best by observing other teachers, particularly within the context of a withdrawal of centralised funding for further M level study and a reduction in the time spent at University as part of ITE. The tension between the ideas of teaching as a 'craft', albeit with an academic and intellectual core, and teaching as an academic profession informed by research reflects the long standing debates concerning the notion of teacher professionalism

[12] Gove on BBC Radio 4's Today programme 24 November, 2010
http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/nov/24/michael-gove-tough-targets-secondary-schools

and its perceived erosion (e.g. Ball, 1999). For example, Barker (2007) reported that some experts believe an M level PGCE will lead to classroom craft being devalued and an over-emphasis on academe, whereas King (2008) argued that Finland has a strong M level emphasis for its teachers and was generally accepted as having a high quality education system which must surely be based on a high standard of teaching. She saw this as evidence for promotion of the M level route within the PGCE. Teaching as a 'craft' seems to take precedence over teaching as an academic profession for the Coalition government in relation to their proposals for ITT (DFE, 2010), but arguably this is a result of economic constraints as much as pedagogical principles.

I concur with Jackson and Eady (2008) that moves towards an M level teaching profession could promise ultimately positive developments for teachers and learners alike. This view also echoes that of Noble-Rogers (2011) who presented a strong case for establishing teaching as a Masters qualified profession with criticism of the Coalition government's removal of funding for the MTL (TES, 2010). He argued that more highly qualified teachers are better equipped to disseminate new techniques and information based on research findings, at a time of rapid change in public education policy and suggested a chartered programme with teachers achieving chartered status on completion of a relevant Masters degree. He highlighted that the 60 M level credits on a PGCE programme could facilitate progress of new teachers towards full Masters.

1.4 The institutional capital of the Case Study University

This section outlines the context for the provision of ITE at the CSU at the time of the policy changes for the introduction of M level credits into PGCE courses within the U.K. The context is outlined in terms of some of the differences between other providers of ITE, and where the CSU is situated with respect to those differences. Providers of ITE in the UK are differentiated by their origin and reputation (e.g. as a prestigious Russell group University, a pre-1992 University, a post-1992 University, or as a former teaching training college), by their OFSTED grades and other data

produced by the TDA[13]. These differentials can be regarded as part of the CSU's institutional capital, and considering where the CSU sits within the hierarchy of ITE providers in relation to these differentials can be regarded as a mapping of the field (see Chapter 2 for a theoretical discussion of capital and field). The CSU is a large urban post-1992 University (see Section 3.5). The CSU is ranked towards the lower end within University ranking tables. The ITE department at the CSU has a smaller cohort of student teachers when compared with the average cohort for other regional providers (TDA, 2011). The CSU ITE department has received similar OFSTED grades to other local providers of ITE, but is not typically regarded by potential applicants as a first choice institution. In shortage secondary subject areas, e.g. science, maths and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) the CSU does not always recruit its full allocation of student teachers. Locally there are other providers of ITE that can claim a strong research profile for ITE with national and international reputations within this field. The CSU ITE department cannot make such claims. The school partnership base is, of necessity, shared with all other local providers and the CSU has fewer long term and stable partnerships with local schools than other providers within the region. It can struggle to find sufficient good quality school placements for its student teachers. It can therefore be considered to have less 'institutional capital' than other local providers of ITE. This study collects findings in relation to the institutional policy and practice for the introduction of the PGCE/M at the CSU. These are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

1. 5 Concluding comments

This chapter has set out some of the key historical and developing contexts for ITE/ITT in the UK. I have outlined the emergence and enactment of policy for the introduction of M level credits into the PGCE showing how this is linked with the developing European context. I have also brought together as part of the context, various aspects of the institutional capital of the CSU. Nationally, according to Graham-Matheson (2010), opinions about the introduction of M level credits on the

[13] The TDA publishes statistics to aid comparison between providers of ITE. http://dataprovision.education.gov.uk/public/page.htm?to-page=publicOpencmsStaticPage&cms-page-id=tta-public/en/publicSearchForACourse/index.html (accessed 1/6/12)

PGCE have been mixed and changing. This has resulted in a variation in local practice making it difficult to predict the broader outcomes for this policy change. I have presented a case for viewing the introduction of M level credits within ITE as a progressive step for the developing professionalism of teachers. Jackson (2006) argued that all teachers should be encouraged to define and embrace their own concept of teaching as a profession, which should itself lead to a more effective partnership with the state. However, I would argue, and this is the *key professional problematic* for this thesis, that the decisions made by individual student teachers in relation to a two-tiered PGCE award and any resultant inequalities of outcome may jeopardise the construction of a shared notion of professionalism by *all* teachers. To clarify, I refer to the construction of a shared understanding of what the QTS standard for professional attributes means, when it states, 'to have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified' (TDA, 2007, Q7).The potential benefits of a Masters level teaching force would be completely undermined by such inequalities of outcome. It is with this view in mind that the next chapter of this thesis critically explores theoretical frameworks for understanding educational decision-making and its links with educational inequalities.

2 Theoretical frameworks for studying decision-making in education

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature about decision-making within educational trajectories; to explore the role decision-making can play in reinforcing inequalities; and to foreground the theoretical approaches that have informed my research. Paton (2007a) pointed to the move by some writers towards use of the term 'decision-making' in preference to using the concept 'choice' since it allows for a degree of constraint, whereas choice suggest freedom from social structure. For this reason, my preferred term is also decision-making, but, since my literature search has included studies which have referred to both choice and decision-making, I use the term 'choice' if that was the word originally used by the author.

Two influential and contrasting theories have been widely used to explain the association between educational inequalities and educational decision-making: Cultural Reproduction Theory (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) and Rational Action Theory (RAT) (e.g. Goldthorpe, 1996), although, the extent of the contrasting nature of these two theories has been questioned (Hatcher, 1998; Paton 2007b; Wakeling, 2009; Smyth and Banks, 2012). Paton (2007b) highlighted the more recent use of hybrid models, which have drawn upon Bourdieu's work whilst recognising elements of rational choice (e.g. Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Ball et al, 2000; Reay et al, 2005).

I open this chapter by outlining some of the empirical work which suggests there are stratifying effects of decision-making in education contributing towards the persistent and patterned inequality of educational outcomes for people from different socio-cultural backgrounds. Secondly, I introduce the key features and methodological approaches of RAT and Bourdieu's theoretical framework, both of which have been used as approaches to explain the link between educational decision-making and educational inequalities. I then develop my exploration of theoretical ideas about educational decision-making through what I have identified as three overlapping and interrelated dimensions of the decision-making process: agency, contexts and values. Finally I conclude the chapter by discussing the implications for this research.

2.2 Stratifying effects of educational decision-making

Despite large scale expansion of educational opportunities at all levels over the last 50 years (David, 2010), inequality of outcome has remained largely persistent (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993; Pfeffer 2008); those with more disadvantaged social backgrounds tend to have lower educational attainment and to be less likely to continue with academic educational pathways, although there is evidence that the effects of social class decline with successive educational transitions up to PG level (Stuart et al, 2008; Wakeling, 2009). Educational decisions range from whether or not to remain in education, to, which school, college or University to attend and then within an institution about which qualification and subject of study. Decisions can be constrained by educational attainment levels, home address and finances, but empirical studies show that inequality of educational outcomes between people of different social backgrounds results not only from differences in academic achievement but also from the decisions made at various points along the educational trajectory, such as: the choices made of secondary schooling (Gewirtz et al, 1995); at the end of compulsory schooling (Ball et al, 2000; Sullivan, 2006; Jackson et al, 2007); entry into Higher Education (HE) (Archer and Hutchings, 2000) or choice of University (Reay et al, 2005; Smyth and Bank, 2012). These studies have demonstrated that social factors such as family background and ethnicity impact on the decisions made. Gewirtz et al (1995, p190) concluded that in relation to parental choice of secondary schooling, 'as far as equity is concerned, choice is a dangerous irrelevance.'

Transitions of entry into HE have been widely studied, (e.g. Reay et al, 2005; Gorard and Smith, 2006). Reay et al (2005) worked with data obtained from students, their families and teachers from different educational institutions. Their research showed class and racial inequalities and that 'the choice making of the middle class and working class students are very different' (p162). They stated that higher education should be recognised as a 'complex institutional hierarchy' and one where there is:

> continued reproduction of racialised, gendered and classed inequalities in which universities are classified and judged by both the applicants themselves and wider society in accordance with their proportion of working class and ethnic minority intakes. (Reay et al, 2005, p163)

Other research evidence (e.g. Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003; Read et al, 2003; Leathwood, 2004) has demonstrated that non-traditional students (i.e. those students who are the focus of widening participation initiatives) are more likely to choose less academically prestigious universities. For example, students from minority ethnic backgrounds chose a post-1992 University because they perceived it as being more ethnically mixed and a place where they were more likely to 'fit in'. A review of widening participation research by Gorard and Smith (2006, p24) stated that 'the key social determinants predicting lifelong participation in learning involve time, place, sex, family and initial schooling'. Earlier work by Gorard et al (1998) had identified typical learning trajectories of participants and non-participants in lifelong learning. Gorard et al argued that learning trajectories were a product of both structured access to learning opportunities and personal choices, but that there were characteristic and predictable patterns of participation and non-participation for groups of individuals which were closely related to key social determinants.

Transitions to PG study are under-researched (Wakeling, 2009) and those empirical studies that have been conducted provide a mixed picture in relation to the effects of social and cultural background. Drawing upon Gorard et al's (1998) notion of a typical learning trajectory of a participant, it might be expected that background differences would disappear at the transition from UG to PG study, since, once an individual learning trajectory includes successful participation in learning at UG level, it resembles the typical learning trajectory of any participant in lifelong learning. There is evidence to support this hypothesis e.g. Stuart et al, (2008) in their study of widening participation to PG study found no significant relationship between socio-economic background and aspiration for PG study. Wakeling (2009) also concluded from his larger study of the social class effects on entry to PG study that social class effects had little direct effect on immediate entry to PG study, once factors such as degree classification and first degree institution were controlled, although effects appeared on later transitions to PG education. Wakeling's (2005) earlier research had noted the strong association between first degree institution and progression to PG study in the UK with graduates from older Universities more likely to progress to PG study regardless of social class; this echoed findings of Purcell et al (2005). Wakeling (2009) concluded that social class

effects on progression to PG study are largely accounted for by social class differences in what is studied and at which institution at first degree level.

Empirical studies (Mullen et al, 2003; Wakeling, 2009) have drawn attention to how the extent and nature of social class effects differ by type of PG programme. They found that social class effects were most apparent in progression to research degrees and Wakeling (2009) noted that for progression to the PGCE they are the inverse of typically observed patterns, with graduates from working-class backgrounds more likely to make the transition to the PGCE than to other PG programmes, although Wakeling's (2009) research did not differentiate between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M. Similarly House (2010), in his review of PG education in the UK (drawn from the Higher Education Statistics Agency data), reported that 'those undertaking a PGCE are more likely to come from a diverse range of backgrounds, suggesting that teaching is a more common route into the professions for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds' (p22).

The link between ethnicity and participation in PG study was explored by Wakeling (2006). He noted the complexities in relation to the type of PG qualification, ethnic group, subject and first degree institution, making it difficult to report on overall trends. Wakeling and Kyriakou (2010) found that many, but not all, ethnic groups are underrepresented at PG research level. They also noted that women were underrepresented at PG research level.

In conclusion, studies of educational decision-making have pointed to the contributory role of educational decision-making in the persistence of inequality of educational outcomes for people from different social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I would argue that exploring decision-making and why people make the decisions they make can inform approaches that may limit these stratifying effects. The next section of this chapter considers two different theoretical approaches to explore educational decision-making.

2.3 The key features of Rational Action Theory and Bourdieu's theoretical approach

Rational Action Theory (RAT) and the use of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field provide contrasting approaches to explain and understand how the process of educational decision-making which results in inequalities. I aim, in this section, to identify the key features of each approach and to demonstrate their different empirical applications. Although, as I will argue, a Bourdieuian analysis offers the most potential for this study, I have not dismissed RAT altogether. I have found the discussion of both explanatory approaches as well as other theoretical ideas a useful way of considering their analytical potential, with each providing a reference point for the other.

Rational Action Theory

RAT has its origins in economics, although it has been widely deployed within the social sciences to explain social behaviour (Paton, 2007a). It conceptualises decision-making as a process with individuals (or families) making choices independently on the basis of calculated economic gains and self-interest (Hatcher, 1998). So, for example, when applied to an educational setting it assumes that individuals make decisions about educational progression according to a careful evaluation of the associated risks, costs and benefits of the different pathways, rather than 'unthinkingly following social norms or giving unreflecting expression to cultural values' (Goldthorpe, 1996, p485).

The original application of RAT within an educational context has been attributed to Boudon (Hatcher, 1998). Boudon (1974) distinguished between primary and secondary effects when attempting to explain the association between social origins and educational attainment. The primary effects are the social background factors that directly affect demonstrated academic ability and secondary effects are the social background factors that influence educational choices made irrespective of academic ability. Boudon suggested that students from different social class backgrounds will evaluate the costs and benefits differently as a consequence of their varied starting positions and used this as an explanation for class differentials in educational decision-making. In contrast, a Bourdieuian analysis

does not support such a clear distinction between primary and secondary factors, with, as I will show, a more holistic view of how decisions are made.

Boudon's (1974) approach was developed theoretically by the Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) RAT model which used the notion of 'relative risk aversion' as the key motivating factor for decisions made. Their model sees students and their families as rational actors making educational decisions based on self-interest and within the narrow policy of seeking economic gain. The central mechanism of the model assumes that young people and their families will make decisions that allow the acquisition of an appropriate level of education to avoid social demotion. The risk, therefore, is social demotion common to all individuals irrespective of socio-cultural factors and the decision-making process involves a costs-benefits evaluation which will be relative to an individual's starting position (social background).

According to van der Werfhost and Hostede (2007) RAT has increasingly been applied within an educational context as an alternative to the more deterministic theories of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory of cultural reproduction emphasised the causal influences of social and cultural factors when explaining educational inequalities. They argued that the unequal distribution of economic, social and cultural capitals between people from different backgrounds results in different educational successes and dispositions towards learning. Paton (2007b) linked cultural reproduction theories with structuralist models of educational decision-making. Structuralist models are described by Paton (2007b) as assuming that people do not make conscious decisions, but that 'ultimate destinations can be predicted from the environmental constraints surrounding them' (Paton, 2007b, p5), and are therefore far removed from the model of economic/instrumental rationality as defined by RAT.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework

In order to explore the key features of a Bourdieuian analysis some introduction of Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, field and habitus is required. Bourdieu (1986) used cultural capital to refer to the possession of and familiarity with the dominant culture, which via the education system can be transferred into other

forms of wealth and power (economic and social capitals). The possession of different levels of respective capitals enables individuals to take up different positions within a field. The field is defined by Bourdieu as 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992, p97). Thomson (2005) explained this as the social arena within which individuals exist occupying certain positions. Habitus describes a set of acquired and embodied dispositions and understandings of the world. It implies a tendency to act in a particular way although Bourdieu also likened habitus to the 'art of inventing' since 'it is what makes it possible to produce an infinite number of practices that are relatively unpredictable (like the corresponding situations) but also limited in their diversity' (Bourdieu 1990a, p55). In explaining educational decision-making researchers (e.g. Ball et al, 2000; Bowman, 2005; Reay et al, 2005) have used Bourdieu's concepts without the deterministic associations of structuralism and with an emphasis on the relational aspects of these concepts.

Habitus does not act alone – individual actions are the result of relations between the habitus and an individual's position (i.e. capital), within the current social arena (field). To emphasise this key feature of relationalism I use my own analogy. I recognise that this may cause some confusion since Bourdieu himself used the metaphor of a 'game' to explain his concept of field. Nevertheless, in developing my own understanding of the link between individual agency and the relational aspects of capital, field and habitus I found it helpful to use a crude analogy of footballers in a football match – the decision of what to do with the ball, i.e. the action of a player depends on the skill of the player (capital), the propensity to pass the ball – what type of player they are (habitus) which in itself is shaped by individual skill in relation to the other players but also by the state of play (field). All aspects are interlocking and cannot alone explain the action.

Empirical applications

Bourdieu's notion of methodological relationalism opposes the methodological individualism that is the core ontological priority of RAT (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Goldthorpe (1996) described his model of RAT as starting from an acceptance of methodological individualism, 'all social phenomena can and should be explained as resulting from the action and interaction of individuals'

(Goldthorpe, 1996, p485). He argued that it is a simple theory in the sense that the main idea is that all decision-makers have a similar utilitarian goal – to avoid downward mobility. By contrast, a Bourdieuian analysis problematises the decision-making process which is the focus of my thesis.

Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) model of RAT is mathematically expressed and as Wakeling (2009, p76) argued it is 'conducive to formalised testing and parsimonious (it includes only those features considered most salient – namely ability and resources).' Empirical studies (e.g. Need and de Jong, 2001; Breen and Yaish, 2006; Tolsma et al, 2009; Gabay-Egozi and Shavit, 2010) that have worked with RAT are typically studies of decision-making that involve key educational transitions, for example, post-compulsory education pathways, use of quantitative methods and large data sets. Empirical studies that deploy a Bourdieuian analysis tend to have a wider scope – they may include the key transitions but also extend to the everyday actions, but are more likely to utilise qualitative (or mixed) methods with smaller data sets (e.g. Ball et al, 2000; Reay et al, 2005; Bowman, 2005; Smyth and Banks, 2012) than quantitative methods with larger data sets. This is a small scale mixed methods case study and this is one reason why a Bourdieuian analysis is likely to be more meaningful.

However I would argue that explaining and unmasking the complexities of educational decision-making requires an approach that can draw upon different theoretical perspectives. Hatcher (1998, p16) stated that, 'The error RAT makes is to *counterpose* rational choice to culture rather than seeing it as one element in a culturally shaped repertoire.' I concur with Hatcher's (1998) view that social structures cannot be eliminated from an explanation of social events and his argument for a model with greater capability – one that retains 'the strengths of the culturalist paradigm while creating within it space for rational strategic decision making, for both non-utilitarian and utilitarian ends' (p21). The sense in such an approach has been a starting point for the theoretical position that I unfold through the next sections of this chapter and which therefore involves some comparison of Bourdieu's theoretical framework and RAT.

2.4 Agency

The role of individual agency within decision-making is pivotal to the acceptance of space for rational choice. My use of the term rational choice, here, includes that which results from conscious strategic reasoning without necessarily the confinement of orientations towards utilitarian outcomes as defined by RAT. In this section, I explore how individual agency is accounted for within RAT and by Bourdieu. I argue that despite claims made by RAT theorists that individual agency is central to the RAT model, the assumptions made of individuals maximising economic gain actually limits individual agency whereas Bourdieu's approach provides more scope to uncover the individual nature of decision-making. According to Paton (2007a) a Bourdieuian analysis seeks to use structure and agency simultaneously – or as complementary forces. Paton (2007a, p3) refers to agency as 'the capacity for an individual to act independently and to make their own free choices', and structure as 'those factors such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, and customs etc which seem to limit or influence the opportunities that individuals have'.

This dichotomy of structure and agency was encapsulated by Gambetta's (1987) study of educational decision-making at transition points within Italian education, titled: '*Were they pushed or did they jump*?' which poses a question as to whether individuals are 'pushed' by structural factors or 'jump' according to individual agency. Gambetta concluded that external constraints and non-rational forces (e.g. emotion, peer influence) can be expected to affect educational choices in addition to rational thinking. He identified two extremes which can influence educational decision making: push and pull factors. The push factors are the social reproductive forces (e.g. social class, gender, ethnicity etc) with individuals seen as essentially passive and constrained by a lack of alternatives or pushed by factors they are unaware of. The pull factors refer to the choices made (perhaps rationally) through weighing up costs and benefits, and are a result of individual agency, but the recognition of 'push' factors suggested the influence of non-agentic forces (i.e. structural or social reproductive forces).

RAT theorists attempt to resolve the dualism of agency and structure by a method of methodological individualism (Paton, 2007a) whereby 'individual social

actions are the ultimate source of larger social outcomes' (p29), and thus, agents have individual agency – the agent arrives at a rational decision through assessment of the perceived risks and benefits of a particular educational pathway with the ultimate and rational aim of maintaining or improving their social position.

The Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) model of RAT, introduced in the previous section of this chapter, enables predictions to be made regarding the association between social class and educational outcomes, e.g. students from a professional class background will choose a more risky academic pathway in order to avoid social demotion. There have been numerous empirical studies that have found varying degrees of support in relation to these predictions but few have tested the model's motivational mechanisms directly (Gabay-Egozi and Shavit, 2010). Wakeling (2009) argued that transition to PG education offered a good test case for the explanatory powers of relative risk aversion since it requires a purposely active choice by an individual; there has been a massive expansion in PG education (House, 2010), but it is still only a minority of graduate students who progress to PG study. Wakeling argued that students' motivations for PG study varied between instrumental and more intrinsic intellectual reasons for continuing study, but stated that there was no evidence of the patterned motivations that could be predicted from relative risk aversion.

RAT places individual agency as central to its mechanism, with the stress placed on agentic power rather than structural forces; '... what we seek to dispense with is any assumption that these actors will be subject to influence of a (sub)cultural kind ...' (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997, p278). However, I argue that RAT's dependence on 'rational' motivational assumptions, not necessarily supported by empirical evidence, limits the scope of individual agency within the model. To clarify, it begins with the individual as the basic unit of theory (Paton, 2007a, p33), but its adoption of a parsimonious model of an individual, and, therefore, also of agency leaves no space for the intricacy of feelings, emotions and interactions with others. The model does not allow for the complexities of individual agency resulting from the interplay between social, cultural, class and gendered identities. This point was made by Hatcher (1998) who referred to RAT as having 'no conception of a multiplicity of historically-constructed social identities'

p16), and by Reay et al (2005) who pointed to the more messy processes of educational decision-making not addressed by RAT.

Bourdieu conceptualised human action and individual agency through use of the concept of habitus. Bourdieu (1984, p170) viewed habitus as, 'neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time.' He stated:

> Because the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p55)

Putting this more simply, individuals are free to choose but habitus leads them to make certain kinds of choices. Habitus, therefore, implies individual agency, but within the boundaries of what is deemed possible as a result of field and capitals. Reay et al argued (2005) that Bourdieu utilized the theoretical concepts of habitus and field to move beyond the structure/agency dichotomy and it is through the workings of habitus that agency is linked with structure (i.e. capital and field). Waquant described habitus as a 'theoretical bridge':

> Providing the mechanism that "propels" definite agents, endowed with certain valences of capital to take up this or that strategy, subversion or conservation – or, one might add indifference, exit from the game. (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992, p120)

Nevertheless, some of Bourdieu's thinking does appear to fit with structuralist models of decision-making and it has been subject to criticism on the basis of its latent determinism. For example, habitus is described by Bourdieu as shaping our future actions, leading individuals to make decisions in terms of what they see as normal and reasonable within a particular social setting and time frame. This is an on-going process, since as we make decisions we continually make new history which presents a further range of possibilities and actions. Hatcher (1998) believed this left little room for intentionality and agency, arguing that social determinism is entailed in the core of the meaning of habitus – that Bourdieu's model is based 'on the interiorisation of the social, in which agency tends to reproduce social structure' (p18). Jenkins (2002, p51) argued that Bourdieu described 'a close, reproductive, link between the subjectivities of the habitus and the objectivity of the social world' and so 'it is difficult not to see them as bound

together in a closed feedback loop'. Bourdieu's writing on habitus can be contradictory, for example, 'the habitus goes hand in hand with vagueness and indeterminacy' (1990b, p77), yet at the same time Bourdieu suggested uniformity of practice, for example, when he wrote, 'this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances' (1990b, p77). Reay et al (2005) addressed this contradictory nature of habitus by suggesting a range of possibilities inscribed in a habitus, best envisaged as a continuum:

> At one end habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end of the continuum, habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations'. (p26)

It is through transformation of habitus that we glimpse a greater potential for agency and space for rational action. Bourdieu implied that habitus can be transformed through rational deliberation, triggered by a disruption to the alignment between habitus and field:

> ... not only can habitus be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of a social trajectory leading to conditions of living different from initial ones, it can also be controlled through awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p116)

Thus, habitus is not just formed and evolving through exposure to the social world, but can also be transformed by an awakening of consciousness and self-reflection. As argued by Paton (2007a) transformation of habitus is therefore one way of accounting for the patterns of mobility that exist within the educational system. Hatcher (1998, p21) also pointed to the possibilities provided by Bourdieu's 'strategic, conscious thinking and action as a means for overcoming the social reproductionism of their habitus'.

However, Bourdieu strongly opposed the notion of rationality within the context of explicit rational and economic criteria, saying of RAT:

> All the capacities and dispositions it liberally grants to its abstract "actor" – the art of estimating and taking chances, the ability to anticipate through a kind of practical induction, the capacity to bet on the possible against the probable for a measured risk, the propensity to invest, access to economic information, etc. – can only be acquired under definite social and economic conditions. They are in fact always a function of one's power in, and over, the specific economy (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992, p124).

His argument is that 'RAT forgets – and hides' (p124) the fact that action which is defined as 'rational' in that it satisfies a notion of economic practice, is the product

of an individual habitus which has the necessary economic and cultural capital to maximise the opportunities offered.

Bourdieu (1998) also used the idea of practical reasoning to describe a process that emerges as agents develop an intuitive sense of actions which are seen as sensible or reasonable, but without, necessarily having a clear end in sight. For Bourdieu, an agent's reasoning can be viewed only in relation to the social context within which the agent exists and since 'the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p190). Practical reasoning is then an expression of the shaping forces of social experience rather than an entirely autonomous and deliberate action. It expresses an ingrained sense of what is right within the constraints of the social context; agents act according to an embodied 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1998, p25). Crossley (2001) argued that Bourdieu's use of the 'players in a game' analogy does actually highlight a strategic element to intuitive actions, since players in a game use skill and competence to pursue an end. Perhaps another way to think of this is that choice may not be a 'rational action' as described by RAT, but neither is it non-rational or random.

Maton (2008) described habitus as a difficult concept to grasp, enigmatic and resistant to concrete explanation. Paton (2007a) argued that the lack of a theoretical explanation of how habitus can be transformed is a weakness in Bourdieu's work, and cited Sullivan's (2002) critique that habitus has no clear use for empirical researchers due to its theoretical incoherence and its resistance to any form of operationalisation. But, perhaps it is this nature of fluidity which provides its potential within an increasingly diverse and complex social world. Maton (2008) stressed the importance of the interlocking nature of Bourdieu's thinking tools and presented a strong case for the potential of habitus as an explanatory tool, if used with full recognition of its relational aspects. He warned against 'stripping habitus of its relational structure, its crucial relationship with field in generating practices and its dynamic qualities' (p63) when employing a Bourdieuian approach.

This interlocking nature is implicit within Bourdieu's (1990b) counter argument to the durability of habitus and the charge of determinism. He makes three points (p116), all of which stress the relational framework of his concepts: habitus 'becomes active only in relation to a field'; habitus 'is the product of social

conditionings' and a history, and as such 'is endlessly transformed, either in a direction that reinforces it ... or transforms it'; and it can be controlled through conscious thought. I argue that through these three points, Bourdieu demonstrated a conceptualisation of habitus which included possibilities for individual agency and, therefore, the related idea of rationality.

2.5 Contexts

Contexts form an integral backdrop to the decision-making process. They encompass both the objective and complex realities of individual circumstances, both past and present, but also the wide ranging subjective perceptions of these. RAT and Bourdieu conceptualise contexts very differently. RAT does not pay a lot of attention to contexts other than in terms of maintaining an individual's socio-economic status. Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) conception of cultural capital is more as a 'resource' attributable to the individual than the relational concept conceived by Bourdieu (1986). Hatcher (1998, p13) stated that within RAT, 'cultural capital becomes parental knowledge rather than as in Bourdieu, a relationship to 'arbitrary power''. I would argue that Bourdieu's (1986) relational concept of cultural capital, to a greater extent than RAT, provides the tools with the potential to understand and interpret the complexity of contexts. For this reason, I do not draw upon RAT in this section. Instead, I aim to demonstrate how Bourdieu's approach emphasises the enduring influence of contexts in all their dimensions; practices are the product of relations between one's habitus and one's current circumstances (capital and field). I also draw upon other theoretical ideas which I have found useful in providing a more tangible means of interpreting contexts for use within this empirical study.

Bourdieu's approach

The habitus as analysed by Reay et al (2005) is both collective and individualised, interplays between past and present, and is embodied. Reay et al (2005, p26) argued that, 'current circumstances are not just there to be acted upon, but are internalised and become yet another layer to add to those from earlier socialisations'. So, contexts can be described by the objective realities of capitals

and resources, but also by the subjective internalisation of these by the individual. To elaborate further, the social arena (field) that an individual occupies has an objective reality as does the position of the individual within that field as described by cultural capital. An individual's analysis of this is subjective, constructed by habitus, and it is habitus that generates action and therefore decision-making. Bourdieu (1998) talked of habitus as:

> A socialised body. A structured body which has incorporated the immanent structures of the world or of a particular sector of the world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (p81)

This description of contexts as both objective realities and their subjective internalisation fits with the conclusions made by Bowman (2005) in her study of Masters students' decision-making. She explored students' resources and dispositions for the field of Masters level study. The findings highlighted the influences of four key themes: seeking distinction, available opportunities, resources and dispositions. Use of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts revealed the complex and relational ways in which these key themes cut across the decision-making and impacted on students' individual positioning. The conclusions from the study stressed the individuality of decision-making, influenced by personal socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, which mediated perceptions of the objective realities of the opportunities presented by the field. Bowman (p247) argued that, 'characterising students as individualized rational actors seeking to maximise returns on their investment in education represents an unsatisfactory model of students' positioning in their pursuit of full time, Masters level study'.

Contexts can be illuminated by closer examination of Bourdieu's notions of cultural capital and field. Bourdieu identified three variants of cultural capital – the **embodied** state, the **institutionalised** state, and the **objectified** state, and I have drawn, here, upon the interpretation of these by Reay et al (2005). In its **embodied** form, cultural capital exists as knowledge, skills and competencies that cannot be separated from the owner – in the mind, in the body, the way we talk, the way we walk and hold ourselves, and it remains with the individual forming their habitus. The **institutionalised** state is the existence of cultural capital in institutionalised forms such as educational qualifications which can constrain the possible courses of action for individuals or provide an entitlement to the next stage of formal learning,

for example, entry to a PGCE qualification is dependent on the possession of a relevant degree. The **objectified** state is the accumulation of cultural goods such as books, paintings and artefacts, which can be transferred to other forms of capital but the other variants of cultural capital are needed to make sense of it. In consideration of the different aspects of capital, Bourdieu (1986) argued that:

> The transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital and it therefore receives proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct, visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled. (p246)

Cultural capital exists in conjunction with other forms of capital. Bourdieu talked about three other main aspects of capital: economic, social and symbolic which exist in conjunction with each other, and may be convertible in certain conditions. Economic capital is wealth, either inherited or generated by the individual; social capital is generated through connections, through family and societal networks (Bourdieu, 1986). Symbolic capital is 'manifested in individual prestige and personal qualities such as authority and charisma' (Bourdieu, 1985 cited by Reay, 1998, p26).

In forming my own construction of Bourdieu's term, cultural capital, I found it useful to consider it alongside the different uses of the concept of 'energy' in everyday and scientific discourse. For example, energy is conceptualised as something that can make something happen, as a resource, as some sort of invisible stuff that can change its form. Similarly cultural capital is envisaged by Bourdieu to be something that can 'make something happen' within the education system. Bourdieu (1986) himself used the principle of the law of conservation of energy to help explain cultural reproduction. He talked about how the diffuse, continuous transmission of cultural capital within the family escapes observation and control, but can in the long term be reproduced as educational credentials. Similarly, energy is dissipated during transfers, but never completely lost. However, within science the concept of energy has a defined metric, but, as Feynman (1963) argued, it is not a mechanism that explains how or why things happen; it is here that I think the sharp contrast with cultural capital is exposed. Cultural capital was presented by Bourdieu as an explanatory tool, not as a measure; it does not have a defined metric.

The conclusions drawn from empirical studies that have worked with cultural capital when explaining educational decision-making vary, perhaps because of the different ways in which cultural capital has been operationalised (Sullivan, 2001) and the difficulty in operationalising cultural capital (Barone, 2006). Common interpretations of cultural capital within European educational research have drawn upon two main assumptions. They have emphasised knowledge and association with 'high-brow' culture (e.g. the work of DiMaggio, Dumais as cited by Lareau and Weininger, 2003) as a measure of cultural capital as well as a distinction between academic skills and cultural capital. Lareau and Weininger (2003, p575) critiqued the use of cultural capital in educational research maintaining that 'these two assumptions have crystallised into what can be described as a dominant interpretation'. They argued that academic skills should not be excluded from the scope of cultural capital; Reay et al (2005, p19) also highlighted Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital 'as breaking with the received wisdom that attributes academic success or failure to natural aptitudes, such as intelligence and giftedness'. In a study of the educational choices made by Year 11 UK students, Sullivan (2001, p897) argued the need to determine empirically which 'elements actually yielded returns in the sense of contributing to educational success'. She examined pupils' cultural capital through engagement with activities such as reading, television, music, museum, concert, gallery visits and cultural knowledge, for example, of famous figures in history and linguistic competence. Sullivan's data suggested the significant effect of reading, rather than participation in 'highbrow' culture, in the development of intellectual resources.

The metaphor, 'capital' implies a conceptualisation of culture as a 'resource' that can be unevenly distributed. However, likening it to a resource suggests boundaries and an identified content which has led to some contention. For example, Harrison and Waller (2010) were strongly critical of the narrow conceptualisation of cultural capital used by Noble and Davies (2009) in their study of patterns in participation to HE. They argued that it 'over-emphasises traditional and outdated artefacts of 'highbrow' culture to the exclusion of more contemporary forms' (p475-476). This notion was explored in depth by Bennett et al (2009) in their study of British cultural practices which acknowledged how stores of cultural

capital fluctuate in the face of social and cultural change. They suggested that a re-formulation of the concept is required to allow its potential to be better realised within the current time frame and UK context and argued for 'a more elaborate and better specified analysis of capitals', for example, emotional, technical, subcultural and national 'to account for the diverse ways that cultural practice delivers profits to individuals and groups' (p259).

There are dimensions of cultural capital which evade any form of measurement, for example, Reay et al (2005) worked with an understanding of cultural capital that also included its more qualitative dimensions such as levels of confidence, certainty, and entitlement. From their collection of interviews with young applicants to HE they concluded that different levels of cultural capital powerfully underpin the processes of choice. The young people in their study with abundant levels of the different capitals spoke of seeing HE as a natural next step, as part of a normal and predictable biography. Frequently their parents had gone to University, providing them in turn with embodied cultural capital in the form of a confidence that comes with a sense of entitlement:

> The embodied cultural capital of the previous generation functions as a sort of advance (head start and a credit) which, by providing from the outset the example of culture incarnated in familiar models, enables the newcomer to start acquiring the basic elements of the legitimate culture from the beginning, that is, in the most unconscious and impalpable way. (Bourdieu, 1984, p70-71)

These young people and their families were negotiating a familiar field; they knew which Universities had more status, and could find the essential information needed to make informed decisions. In contrast, those young people in their study with less capital for the field contemplated HE within a discourse of uncertainty and doubt. Wakeling (2009), in his study of access to PG education noted the powerful influence of parental educational level, as an aspect of embodied cultural capital and first degree institution as institutionalised capital on the aspirations for PG study, although recognising that both parental educational level and first degree institution could also be seen as proxy measures of ability or social class background.

There are limitations to the use of cultural capital alone as an expression of context. By defining the content of cultural capital and utilising a measure, there is a danger of limiting an understanding of cultural capital to its institutionalised and

objectified forms, or an objectified aspect of the embodied variant, and therefore losing sight of its relational aspects to habitus and field and other forms of capital. Bourdieu theorised fields as antagonistic, as sites of struggle:

> Thus we have different fields where different forms of interest are constituted and expressed. This does not imply that the different fields do not have invariant properties. Among these invariant properties is the very fact that they are the site of a struggle of interests, between agents or institutions unequally endowed in specific capital. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p111)

Cultural capital may enable a powerful position in one field, but be less advantageous in another, but this is equally influenced by habitus which influences the perceptions of the value of aspects of capital in relation to the perceptions of a particular field. Habitus and field can legitimise cultural capital in different ways for different individuals.

Bourdieu's use of the theoretical tools of habitus and field presuppose change – 'a change in one necessitates a change in the other' (Hardy, 2008, p131). When habitus and field are new to each other but in alignment, change may be gradual and smooth:

> In a number of social universes, one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in the world as fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that suit their interests. All they have to do is follow their dispositions which being adjusted to their positions, 'naturally' generate practices adjusted to the situation. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p108)

This may not always be the case; when field and habitus are not aligned response to change could be slower, unpredictable and more difficult. Bourdieu (1990a) used the term hysteresis to highlight this disruption:

> when dispositions ill-adjusted to the objective chances because of a hysteresis effect, are negatively sanctioned because the environment they encounter is too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted. (p62)

Hysteresis is a term with scientific origins that refer to a time lag or mismatch between the changes in two interdependent properties. The gap between new opportunities that field changes may bring and the propensities of individuals to grasp and utilise these new opportunities is dependent on this hysteresis effect (Hardy, 2008). Individuals with a matching field and habitus experience less of the hysteresis effect and can capitalise more as they make different decisions within the field.

Educational decisions are typically made in association with an educational institution, another aspect of context with the potential to shape aspirations and self-belief. Reay et al (2005) worked with the concept of instutional habitus looking at how the organisational practices and status of different institutions influenced the patterns of decision-making for progression to HE, but in different ways for different students, dependent on individual circumstances, resulting in patterned outcomes that reproduced existing educational inequalities. Empirical studies of transitions to PG study (Mullen et al, 2003; Purcell et al, 2005; Wakeling, 2009) have also noted that first degree institution is a strong predictor of studying at PG level – a possible effect of instituional habitus.

Learner Identity

Contexts are evident within the concept of a learner identity and Gorard et al's (1998) identification of learner trajectories. Gorard et al (1998) placed emphasis on the structuring effects of individual contexts when considering educational decision-making. They used the idea of learner trajectories to describe the product of both an individual's previous educational history and social background with the personal decisions made as a result of their attitude towards learning (learner identity). Learner identity was described by Gorard et al (1998, p401) as based on a 'view of the value of learning, stemming from (their) previous educational experiences'. Crossan et al (2003) added that within any field an individual identity will encompass a learner identity, since any exposure to new influences, within both informal and formal learning environments, will develop changed attitudes towards learning. Consequently they argued for a construction of learner identity which allowed for the more temporary and fragile changes which can influence the educational decisions made:

> Learning careers are, then, frequently complex and multi-directional, just as learning identities may be extremely fragile and vulnerable to sudden changes in the learner's immediate social milieu. (Crossan et al, 2003, p65)

Communities of Practice and participation

The arena of education and training can be thought of as made up of different communities of practice (CoP) within which new members can learn (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) suggested that the notion of a CoP resembled Bourdieu's concept of 'field' but that CoP 'implies a

smaller scale of focus' (p54). They argued that the idea of a CoP can be a useful analytical tool when the social arena (field) includes Wenger's (1998) dimensions of a CoP: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of actions, discourses, tools etc, for example, within a school setting.

Wenger (1998) used the notion of legitimate peripheral participation to describe the central role that participating on the margins of a community of more experienced practitioners plays in enabling the acquisition of knowledge and new skills. They described how participation can range from initial peripheral participation to full participation, through to marginalization depending on the shifts in learner identity. Wenger, (1998) argued that the degree of participation by the learner can shape a learner identity. So, a learner with a habitus that allows synergy within the CoP, and the capital to position herself more powerfully is able to participate successfully and develop a learner identity which is favourable to making decisions that develop the degree of participation. Successful transitions within education can be described as those that allow learners to manage the changes and discontinuities in such a way that allows them to fully participate and capitalise from the new learning opportunities. O'Donnell et al (2009) explored transition to PG study using a CoP framework arguing that this allowed experiences to be understood in terms of participation within the valued practices of a community, and in terms of the identity shifts that such participation required.

Pragmatic rationalism

Contexts are also given credence within the model of career decision-making presented by Hodkinson et al (1996) which introduced the notion of pragmatic rationalism. Paton (2007a, p7) described pragmatic rationalism as aiming 'to accommodate the role of external structures with individual agency and identity', but it mainly 'stresses unpredictability and the variation between individual situations' (p20). Hodkinson et al's (1996) model had three inter-locking integrated dimensions: a lifestyle choice within a socially and culturally derived habitus; the location of decisions within the partly unpredictable pattern of life course turning points; and interactions within the field, related to the unequal capitals possessed by the different players (e.g. information). They described the decision-making of young people moving from school to the end of the first year of a Training Credits

Scheme as not fitting with the narrow economic sense of rational decision-making, based on maximising personal benefits. 'Decisions were only partly rational, being also influenced by feelings and emotions' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, p33). As such, the model provided scope for non-rational outcomes that might result from what was still a conscious decision-making processes. Within pragmatic rationalism there is, therefore, space for individual identity – as developed by a lifestyle and an educational or employment biography (or the habitus in Bourdieu's terms), and interactions within the field. Bowman (2005, p242) also used the notion of pragmatic rationalism to describe how students' decisions to progress to Masters level study 'were located and negotiated within their broader lives, in the context of their life course and the opportunities perceived to be available to them.'

The continuously changing contexts within which individuals operate were stressed as an important factor for a model of educational choice by Ball et al (2000). Their study looked at the decisions made by young people as they leave compulsory schooling. They identified three key and overlapping arenas of action and centres of choice: family, home and domesticity; work, education and training; leisure and social life (p148) which are dynamic over time. They argued that learner identities were both the products of and causes for the different choices made within these three identified arenas. They demonstrated that the young people did display a sense of individual choice, and there were also examples of rational choice justified by utilitarian gain, but that the decisions made were stratified by social class differences.

Barriers to participation in lifelong learning

The contexts for decision-making incorporate the three main types of barrier to participation in lifelong learning highlighted by Gorard et al's (2006) in their review of widening participation research: situational – such as costs and available time dependent on an individual's personal circumstances; institutional barriers – such as admissions procedures, degree of institutional flexibility; and dispositional barriers, in the form of an individual's motivation and attitudes to learning. Gorard et al (2006) cautioned against use of the word 'barrier' since it implies that once removed participation would increase, which over simplifies the nature of these 'barriers'. To reveal the more complex nature of the decision-making process, an

interpretive approach is needed that recognises the interconnectedness of these so called 'barriers' to participation as well as the subjective analysis thereof which will be influenced by a set of values – a further dimension of the decision-making process which I consider next.

2.6 Values

Within educational decision-making individuals will perceive the value of alternative educational pathways differently. They will also value the information provided about educational pathways and the sources of that information differently. Likewise, information and influences will inform individual values. In this section I claim that RAT places little emphasis on understanding the complexities of individual value systems and any socio-cultural influences. I draw upon other theoretical ideas which are useful in understanding this dimension of the decision-making process and that can support putting Bourdieu's concepts to work in the context of the data and setting (Reay, 2004).

Rational Action Theory

Rational Action Theory (RAT) assumes that alternative educational pathways are evaluated differently by individuals according to individual beliefs, desires and values; for example, students' perceptions of risks are influenced by their subjective beliefs about their chances of success. Sullivan (2006) argued that the notion of a rational action is problematic since it is impossible to define rational beliefs, values or desires. Drawing upon Elster's (1983) notion that a rational belief is one that is based on the available evidence in the right way, she argued that if interests, desires or illogical thinking affect beliefs then this condition cannot be met. Sullivan (2006) questioned the premises made by some RAT theorists in relation to social class effects on the attitudes towards education. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), for example, argued that values, norms and beliefs about education do not vary by social class, only the extent of resources and academic ability. Sullivan's (2006) empirical study of Year 11 students in the UK explored the links between social class background and gender with attitudes towards education and beliefs about ability. She concluded that beliefs about ability were systematically distorted in relation to

social class background and therefore did not support the views expressed by Breen and Goldthorpe (1997).

Other critiques of RAT (e.g. Hodkinson et al 1996; Hatcher, 1998; Ball et al, 2000) have argued that individuals make decisions based on the available evidence, which may be inadequate or faulty, and may lead to a non-rational outcome even though the process involved a rational computation. Little attention is given within RAT (Hedstrom and Stern, 2008) to the information used by decision-makers to make a 'rational' decision. Paton (2007a) outlined how RAT theorists allow for the possibility of inadequate evidence or cognitive reasoning with the notion of 'bounded rationality' with agents doing the best they can, within the constraints of the circumstances that they are in; but that the action taken always has utilitarian goals. Critiques have also argued that the goals of rational computation may not always be utilitarian. For example, Hatcher (1998) cited the study by Gewirtz et al (1995) where middle-class parents made careful and skilled decisions about secondary schooling selection as an example of decision-making on a rational choice basis whereas the working class parents in the study either used some rational calculation of costs and benefits, but, with less skill than the middle class parents or barely engaged with the process of choosing at all. RAT assumes that the costs-benefits evaluation should be the same regardless of social class. Hatcher used these findings to illustrate that, 'if intra-class differences cannot be explained by differences in the rational choice equations, they must be the product of goals and aspirations which are not simply utilitarian in economic terms' (p15); such, a notion recognises the sociocultural influences on value systems and is more in keeping with Bourdieu's approach. Gewirtz et al (1995) used their study findings to emphasise that different values can inform the conception of choice making, concluding that choice is a socially constructed phenomenon resulting in families being disadvantaged or privileged as a consequence of their values.

Information and influences

The information used by individuals to make decisions is informed by personal values, beliefs and desires. Starting from the viewpoint of a socially constructed learner identity, the decisions made when navigating educational careers are also socially constructed. By socially constructed, I mean developed through social

means, but in an individual way – through the shared construction of meaning with family, friends and networks. Archer and Hutchings (2000) argued that the discourses about the risks, costs and benefits of HE amongst working-class non-participants were socially constructed in complex ways which could not be systematically explained by reference to social class, gender or ethnicity. They concluded that although similar risks, costs and benefits were generally identified, the evaluation of the barriers to participation varied, with individuals 'using a range of class, gender and race based discussions' (p570). Such complexity can be encompassed by the concept of habitus which, as I discussed earlier, was developed by Bourdieu to be sufficiently dynamic to refer to the product of individual social conditionings and history but also to become active only in relation to the social arena.

There are different kinds of information that can inform decisions; Ball and Vincent (2006) differentiated two kinds which they labelled as 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge. They argued that 'hot' knowledge, the 'grapevine' knowledge is socially embedded; it comes from the experiences of friends, neighbours, peers and family, but it is unevenly distributed and 'used differently by different social-class groups' (p377) whereas 'cold' knowledge is the more formal knowledge produced by the educational institutions or government bodies. The 'cold' knowledge can be considered as more objective, but it is still subject to the educational institution and, deploying Reay et al's (2005) extension of habitus, its institutional habitus. Smyth and Banks (2012), in their study of students' intentions for HE from two different schools in Ireland, concluded that the type and quality of information received, influenced by the differing institutional habitus, bounded the degree of rationality with which decisions were made.

There are different 'hot' knowledge grapevines in operation and access to them is structured by social-class, gender, age and ethnicity related factors (Ball and Vincent, 2006). These different grapevines are positioned differently with respect to the capital they hold in terms of information and resources, but also in terms of what is perceived to be of value. An individual habitus will perceive and value alternative information sources differently. Ball and Vincent's study of parental school choices demonstrated the pervasive influence of the 'hot' knowledge over

and above 'cold' knowledge; it is valued by many (mainly from less advantaged social backgrounds) as more reliable, albeit characterised in terms of rumour – and a means to fill in for the missing information. The 'professional middle-class group of privileged/skilled choosers' (p392) tend to be more suspicious and doubting of 'hot' knowledge and use their cultural capital to seek out more of the objective cold knowledge, (and use of different grapevines) as a way of triangulating their evidence before making a decision. Different types of choosers have also been identified; for example, Reay et al (2005) distinguished between embedded choosers and contingent choosers in their study of transitions to HE. Embedded choosers typically expected to transfer to University after school, and drew upon a wider range of information when making choices – including both 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge, whereas the contingent chooser typically had no family HE background, and used more limited information when making choices.

Understanding educational decision-making as a social practice was explored by Heath and Fuller (2010) through use of network-based research as an alternative to the more typical use of individual accounts. They noted the multi-directionality of network influence, operating between and within generations. Brooks (2003) research focussed on the influence of peers and friends for a group of lower middle-class students making choices about HE entry. Her study demonstrated the influence of peer groups through a perceived ranking of ability, expressed via a self-constructed learner identity. In her view this could not be explained by use of habitus or cultural capital effects alone. This conclusion is justified by her conceptualisation of the habitus as durable and resistant to transformation. However, arguably, a conceptualisation of habitus as more fluid and responsive to fluctuations within the field, e.g. the perceived ranking of oneself against one's peers can accommodate these subtle changes in individual habitus, which in turn affect a socially constructed learner identity.

The role of values within decision-making is, thus, a complex one. RAT addresses values in simple, parsimonious terms. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field used relationally provide more scope to uncover the complex effects of information, influences and individual dispositions on the development of a system of values which is central to the decision-making process.

2.7 Implications of this discussion of theory for my research

My analysis of the literature has led me to adopt a Bourdieuian analysis on the basis of three key arguments. Firstly, in relation to Bourdieu and rational choice; Bourdieu does not rule out rational choice with use of the concept habitus. He accepts that conscious, deliberate action can accompany the practical reason which operates through the habitus, and even take over when individuals' 'sense of the game' is weakened in a situation when habitus and field are not aligned (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992).

The second argument is that other theoretical ideas can be utilised with Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. For example, the notions of participation, communities of practice and learner identities resonated with the context of my study; student teachers were in transition having recently joined the ITE department at the CSU. The decision to take the M level PGCE required a further transition to M level study in addition to the transition required when joining a school as a training teacher. There are many different fields at play as student teachers navigate their teacher training. There is the academic field of University and more specifically the fields within ITE and within the workings of a school department, and their smaller focus perhaps fits more closely with Wenger's (1998) notion of a CoP. Student teachers have also been part of another specific field of academic study according to their degree subject discipline, or part of a field of employment. For some, this may have been very recently and for others some time may have elapsed. Student teachers' prior educational experiences; shaped by socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity will influence their own constructed identity as an academic and as a training teacher. The consideration of an individual lifespan (Paton, 2007a) and its accompanying learner trajectory provides an expression of habitus and a means to explore qualitatively the decision-making process. In agreement with Archer et al (2000), I see this process as being socially constructed, and, therefore, it allows for the 'variability of individual outcomes', proposed by Paton (2007a, p21) as a required feature of a decision-making model.

My third argument is that a Bourdieuian approach offers the most methodological and theoretical potential for illuminating the processes and

stratifying effects of decision-making within this study. I have considered the process of decision-making through the dimensions of agency, contexts and values. These dimensions can be unpicked and better understood at an individual level through relational use of the tools of habitus, capital and field. If we look at these overlapping dimensions through a Bourdieuian lens, a tangible product of that overlap is a socially constructed learner identity impacting on the educational decisions made within the constraints of structural considerations which might make a particular decision more inevitable than not. Likewise, at an institutional level, when exploring the institutional impact of the CSU on the decision-making process, relational use of habitus, capital and field illuminate the socially constructed identity of the CSU. The CSU can be positioned within a broader field which comprises other local (and national) providers of ITE. Its position within that field is related to its institutional capital (e.g. reputation, status and ranking) (see Section 1.4). The institutional habitus is a product of capital and field, but at the same time, the perceptions of capital and field and which forms of capital are legitimate within the field are related to the institutional habitus. So, for example, the CSU may not legitimise the PGCE/M as cultural capital to the same extent as another HEI occupying a different position within the field. Thus, the field can structure the institutional habitus, making particular policy decisions and actions more likely than others – the relations between institutional habitus, capital and field shape the formation of policy and its practice, which in turn can shape the individual decisions made by student teachers.

This study is a small scale study of decision-making within the specific context of differentiated pathways for the PGCE. A point of key importance is that I am not seeking to test out the predictions that could be made from the use of either RAT or cultural reproduction theories in terms of decision outcomes, but to *explore the process* itself. I am concerned to investigate how and what information is constructed and valued by the student teachers and how this is then used to evaluate the benefits and risks of engaging with the field of M level study. Bourdieu's framework offers scope for *'thinking'* about the decision-making process, and, therefore to interpret the reasons that student teachers provide to account for the decisions made.

My final point is that the fluidity and inherent dynamic of capital, habitus and field are invaluable for exploration of the diverse group of students, and the institutional context within this study. They offer theoretical potential for exploring the individual and socially constructed evaluation of costs and benefits as a product, and, in turn, development of an individual learning trajectory (Gorard and Rees, 2002), and, therefore, to work with the empirical findings related to this study. In the next chapter of this thesis I outline the methodology for my research and show how this has been informed by Bourdieu's theoretical ideas.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I set out the theoretical underpinnings for my chosen methodological approach and the methods used to collect and analyse my data within an ethical framework. I start the chapter by outlining my research aims and this is followed by a justification of the methodological approach and rationale for the use of a mixed methods case study. I next outline the distinctive nature of the CSU and my role within it. This is followed by a description of my chosen methods for data collection, analysis and use of an ethical framework. I end the chapter by highlighting some of the strengths and limitations of my methodology.

My methodology has been influenced by many factors. I believe realities are multiple, complex and subjectively constructed, that knowledge is context and time bound and I have used enquiry to search for understanding, meanings and insights (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Also, of note is my positioning as a first time researcher and then member of the academic staff within the CSU. The constraints of working full time and the resources available have also had a bearing. My research was informed by previous empirical work about educational decision-making, some of which I have explored within Chapter 2 and return to in this chapter. My design remained flexible (Robson, 2002) with an iterative process of collecting and looking at my emerging data and searching the associated literature.

3.2 Research aims

The key aim that structured this research was **to use a case study approach to develop a greater understanding of student teachers' educational decision-making regarding the Professional or Postgraduate Certificate of Education and how these decisions contributed to the reproduction of inequality,** which I had previously observed at the CSU.

In relation to this research aim themes were identified and clarified with some focussed research questions. These were:

- **What was the relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions they made about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**
- **In what ways did student teachers construct M Level study as part of their Initial Teacher Education**
- **How did student teachers account for their decisions about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**
- **How did institutional policy and practice impact on engagement with M level study?**

In order to explore and better understand the very diverse worlds of experience that student teachers used in accounting for the educational decisions made, my research tools aimed to explore student teachers' cultural capital; their constructed identities as learner and training teacher; and their perceptions of the benefits or otherwise of M level study. I also sought to understand the development of policy and its enactment at the CSU and subsequent impact on student teachers' decision-making.

3.3 Justification of the methodological approach

In considering a methodological approach, I found that I agreed with aspects of different research paradigms, rather than finding resonance with one alone. Research paradigms can be referred to as a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Lincoln and Guba, 2003). I hoped to interpret and understand, be critical (Carr, 1995) and to work in participation with educational practitioners. Lincoln and Guba (2003) considered the commensurability of different paradigms and suggested that elements of interpretive, constructivist and participative inquiry can fit comfortably together and also complement each other. The confusion created in research texts when different language is used to describe the broad paradigmatic positions was noted by Mckensie and Knipe (2006), and is perhaps an indicator of their overlap. It was with this recognition in mind, that the notion of the pragmatic paradigm as described by Creswell (2003) resonated most strongly for me. A pragmatic paradigm places the research question as 'central' with data collection and analysis methods chosen as those most likely to provide insights into the question rather than a

philosophical loyalty to any alternative paradigm (Mckensie & Knipe 2006). It allows the research problem and the questions asked about this problem to become the most important aspect of the research instead of a focus on methods (Creswell, 2007) and the emphasis on heterogeneity and the need for several perspectives on a situation lends itself to a mixed methods approach (Cohen et al, 2007). Mills and Gale (2007, p436) drew attention to how a Bourdieuian methodology 'adopts a similarly open-ended approach to conducting research, guided by a particular philosophical stance but not method prescriptive stance.'

Mills and Gale (2007) also claimed Bourdieu was a critical social theorist with interests in uncovering social inequalities and by implication how these may be transformed. There are particular experiences linked to gender, ethnicity and culture that may be of relevance to this inquiry, for example, family commitments that may mean less time for academic study at M level. I aimed to explore the relationships between student teachers' characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity, with the decisions made but with the recognition, as described by Francis (1999, p386), that 'specific socially and culturally produced gender discourses will impact on different women at different times, in different ways...' Creswell (2007) highlighted the potential of the interpretive lens to 'lead to a call for action and transformation – the aims of social justice ...' (p24). I have found Bourdieu's theoretical framework useful as an interpretive lens. As I argued in Chapter 2, it seeks to transcend the dichotomies of objectivity and subjectivity, structure and agency. It also fits with the view that personal identity is never complete because individuals have multiple identities which are constantly being de/re-constructed and transformed as new meanings are sought. As highlighted in Chapter 2, learner identities are not static or linear, but temporal and complex (Wenger, 1998).

In order to enrich inquiry methods – adding depth and complexity to interpretation, I therefore acknowledge the need to draw upon different perspectives, positions and epistemologies. I have used a mixed methods approach as compatible with a pragmatic research paradigm. This approach can be analysed using some of the ideas about structure in research as discussed by Punch (1998). He distinguished between 'pre-specified versus unfolding' research design with a continuum of possibilities (p. 23) for when the structure is introduced within the

research process. I placed myself somewhere within the middle of this continuum. My study required a degree of pre-specified structure in relation to the time scale, resources available and my position as a first time researcher. I was also able to draw upon my own experiential knowledge; Punch raised the importance and benefits for the researcher in getting that knowledge, albeit in a relatively unexplored area 'out on to the table' (p.27). I anticipated that directions for a further review of literature would be revealed as categories and concepts emerged from the data as suggested by Punch (1998). For example, initial findings suggested that cultural reproduction theory (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) could be a useful theoretical lens for explaining the stratifying effects of choice. However, as my data suggested that student teachers avoided the risks associated with M level study, such as failure and the work load, it was pertinent to explore some of the literature (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997) about relative risk aversion within educational decision-making, and to generate a conceptualisation of decision-making that could build on different approaches.

3.4 Rationale for a mixed methods case study approach

This research is a mixed methods case study of educational decision-making in one HEI. I have relied on multiple sources of data (Yin, 2003) which have provided different insights enabling me to examine the 'case', in different ways and from different perspectives. In this section I aim to justify my approach by drawing upon other research studies that have been influential.

In theorising educational transitions, Tobbell and O'Donnell (2005) argued for the need to investigate the 'individual and social processes which underpin participation and its role in students' lives' (p13). There are many potential barriers to full participation, and I have argued in Chapter 2 that these can be explored using the tools of capital, field and habitus. This is a dynamic and interrelational process and one which necessitates a qualitative approach, at least in part. I have drawn upon the idea of exploring educational biographies (Gorard and Smith, 2006) and the 'reported experiences of students, the observed experiences and the institutional contexts' (O'Donnell et al, 2009, p29) in order to shed some light on student teachers' constructed identities and attitudes towards M level study at the

CSU. Studies of socially constructed decision-making via the influences of family, peers, social context (Archer et al, 2000; Ball et al, 2000) have also informed the qualitative aspects of my work, as has Reay et al's (2005) and Smyth and Banks (2012) consideration of institutional habitus.

Creswell (2007) talked about a case study as an in-depth study of a bounded system. I have conducted this research as far as possible within its real life context as student teachers engaged with their teacher training. Yin (2003) promoted the case study method as a means for a researcher to cover the contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon of study. Yin (2003) described it as:

> an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth, within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident (p13).

The case studied within this thesis is the phenomenon of the policy, practice and impact of introducing M level credits into the PGCE courses within the context of the ITE department at the CSU.

Drawing upon the summary provided by Cohen et al (2007) of the advantages of case study work, particular points that resonated with my goals include case study as a 'step to action'; and as products that can provide descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation. Multiple sources of data enable one to deepen and widen one's understanding (Olsen, 2004). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argued that as we can only know something through its representations, validation is not a realistic aim of the qualitative researcher but the combination of multiple methodological practices 'adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry' (Flick, 1998, p121 cited by Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p8). I was not aiming for validity through searching for 'truth', but as stated by Pring (2004, p46) aiming for validity though trying to "make sense' of the situation we find ourselves in 'through "constructing' connections, meanings, frameworks through which experience is sieved and made intelligible'.

3.5 The case study institution

My role at the time of this research study was as an academic course leader within the ITE department at the CSU. The CSU is a large post-1992 University in an inner

city location (see section 1.4 for a discussion of the institutional context). Its student intake is very diverse with over 150 different nationalities represented. There has been, at the CSU, a strong commitment to widening participation to education as evidenced through the diversity of the student profile, the range of curriculum offer and engagement with the economic, social and educational challenges presented by the inner city location. The ethos of the ITE department reflected the widening participation agenda at the CSU with a commitment to increasing the diversity of the school teaching force and an emphasis on urban education within its ITE courses. This is explored further in Chapter 4 when I consider the data collected about the policy and practice for the introduction of an M level PGCE route at the CSU. At the time of the data collection in 2009-10, the PGCE was offered for the primary sector and for seven subjects within the secondary sector: citizenship, English, mathematics, modern foreign languages (MFL), music, physical education (PE) and science. For 2009/10, the TDA database of statistics for all ITT providers showed that at the CSU the percentage of PGCE students who declared a minority ethnic background was well above the national average for both the primary and secondary courses; there was also a greater number of mature entrants (over age 25) to the PGCE compared with the national average (TDA, 2011).

3.6 Data collection methods

I found Paton's (2007a) reference to the two stages of research that must work together a helpful way of working with Bourdieu's methodological approach and account of analysing the field (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). These are: an objective stage to look at the relations and structures of the field and a second stage for a subjective analysis of individual's dispositions to act and their perceptions of the field. I used three main methods of data collection which aimed to incorporate both stages: analysis of current data and policy documentation; survey by questionnaire to provide quantitative and qualitative data; and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with academic staff and student teachers.

One aim of my data collection was to gather information in relation to student teachers' cultural capital. In a critique of cultural capital research, Lareau and Weininger (2003) argued for a broader conception of cultural capital that

'emphasises micro-interactional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence comes into contact with institutionalised standards of evaluation' (p569). My understanding and use of cultural capital (see Chapter2) has been influenced, for example, by the empirical work of Sullivan (2001) (importance of reading); Reay et al (2005) (its qualitative aspects); Wakeling (2009) (impact of parents' educational level) and particularly Bennett et al (2009) who argued for:

> a concept of cultural capital as a distinctly national formation which ... operates through the different relations that ethnic groups have to those forms of cultural experience, knowledge and familiarity which confer a sense of national belongingness. (p30)

Bennet et al's (2009) conception of cultural capital seemed pertinent to this case study. From my preliminary investigations and experiential knowledge I knew that the student teachers at the CSU represented a diverse range of backgrounds with very different educational and life biographies. These varied cultural assets will offer different advantages (or disadvantages) within the fields of academic life and the U.K school setting. The data collection tools used within my research explored the knowledge, skills and competencies that may offer an advantage for training teachers in the UK and in terms of managing M level work. For example, I have noted Bourdieu's emphasis on linguistic competence and Sullivan's (2001) findings about the importance of reading.

Preliminary investigations and pilot stage

My preliminary investigations included conversation with other academic staff and these discussions informed the design of my data collection tools, as well as helping to develop a rapport within the field of study. During the pilot stage I trialled the questionnaire with a group of science student teachers who I knew very well. Knowing the respondents and their response to academic work helped me to form some judgement about the meaning of the question to the respondents and therefore whether the questions were measuring what they were supposed to. A follow up interview with one respondent also contributed to this. The pilot questionnaire and covering email also invited respondents to comment freely on aspects of the questionnaire design. I have identified the ways in which the pilot

study led to any refinement of the data collection tools within my subsequent discussion of each of these.

Quantitative data sets

Data was collected, during 2009/10, by the primary and secondary course teams as part of the annual review required in order to produce the self-evaluation form for Ofsted. Since all those student teachers who studied on the PGCE/M for the primary or secondary courses passed and gained the award, the percentage outcomes were also a definitive indication[14] of the numbers who opted for the PGCE/M. The data also recorded outcomes in relation to age, gender, degree classification and course of study. The secondary team supplied additional data about ethnicity, linguistic background, place of education and the extent of any previous experience of working within a school setting. The data was made available to me by the course teams in the form of sets of figures (frequency counts) for the different variables.

Documentary analysis

I scrutinised a range of CSU documents. They included:

- proposal from the ITE department for the modification of the PGCE – considered by the University senior executive
- PGCE course regulatory schedule approved by the University governing body
- primary and secondary PGCE course handbooks
- assignment brief used by the secondary team to select admission to the PGCE/M.

Briefing for secondary student teachers

I observed and recorded the briefing given to the secondary student teachers by the secondary programme director. It was held in September 2009 just before the students had to make the decision about whether to take the PGCE at M level. The briefing and questions and answer session were recorded with a digital recorder for later analysis.

[14] The only exception to this being that for the secondary sector there were four applicants who opted and applied for the PGCE/M but in fact completed the PGCE/H; three were unsuccessful in their applications, and one student withdrew.

The survey

The full cohort of student teachers was surveyed using a self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 1) in November 2009 when the application process to the PGCE/M had ended. I aimed to capture students' responses just after the point at which they made a decision about whether to take the PGCE at M level. The purpose of the survey was largely to provide contextual information in relation to my research questions and to inform the semi-structured interviews. However, it also enabled me to see whether participants gave similar accounts in a different context and social setting. The survey gathered information from student teachers in relation to the following:

- Characteristics e.g. gender, ethnicity and age
- Educational and linguistic background
- Parental educational levels
- Reasons for the decisions made about whether or not to take the PGCE/M

The questionnaire was designed with use of an on-line facility (Google docs) which aided ease of distribution and analysis. I used a similar questionnaire during the pilot study and this allowed me to gauge its effectiveness with people who were in a similar position to the target audience having made the same academic decision during the previous year. Some modifications to question style were made after this pilot, for example, more careful checking for any negative statements. Negative statements can be difficult to understand, particularly when you are asked to agree or not (Oppenheim, 1992, cited by Cohen et al, 2007) and my pilot questionnaire had revealed this as a problem, as well as the need to check the wording of statements very carefully. I also removed the rating system for the question about explaining decisions made, since I felt it added complexity without necessarily providing more useful information; in the pilot, respondents had a tendency to 'hedge their bets' and choose the middle option. The rating system was replaced with a checkbox format question which asked participants to select factors that were relevant in explaining their decisions.

Drawing upon Robson's (2002) synthesis of the literature about questionnaire design, I tried to phrase the questions in such a way that the

respondents would understand what I wanted and would be happy to supply the information. In designing the questionnaire I drew upon Stone's (1993) guidance. The questions were largely closed and prompted some dichotomous responses, some alternative responses using a multiple choice format, and a checkbox format for choice of relevant responses. I checked that the questions asked all related to my research aims and composed the wording carefully, trying to avoid ambiguity or leading questions. There was also scope for open responses in relation to some questions, for example about factors that influenced the decisions made.

I used questions to collect demographic information and information about student teachers' cultural capital (with use of markers of cultural privilege relating to, for example, previous educational and linguistic background). I did not directly collect data on family social class background being unconvinced of any meaningful measure to do so. Many student teachers came from overseas and/or have children of their own; social class background measures such as parental occupation seemed an unreliable and inappropriate indicator. Instead, I included a question about the educational background of student teachers' parents. The student teachers, as graduates have already acquired a degree of capital advantage, but the extent to which this is a firmly embedded part of their constructed learner identity and therefore available for use as a player in the 'field' (Thomson, 2005) is potentially attributable to the length of time which educational achievement has been an established feature of family life. Stuart et al (2008) and Wakeling (2009) found that family experience of HE was a strong predictor of students going onto PG study. Wakeling (2009, p70) argued that, 'highly educated parents who possess cultural capital in the shape of their qualifications are better placed to pass on their knowledge and experience to their children'.

Initially I relied on course leaders to circulate the questionnaire for the on-line survey via email to student teachers. The response rate was low with no responses from some course groups. The Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the percentage respondent rate by course group:

Figure 3.1 Respondent rate (%) by course group

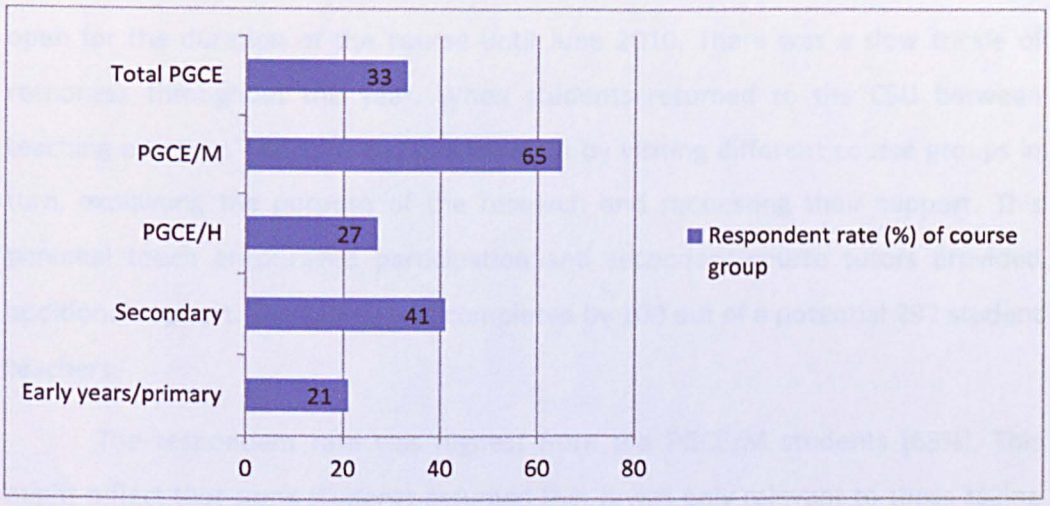
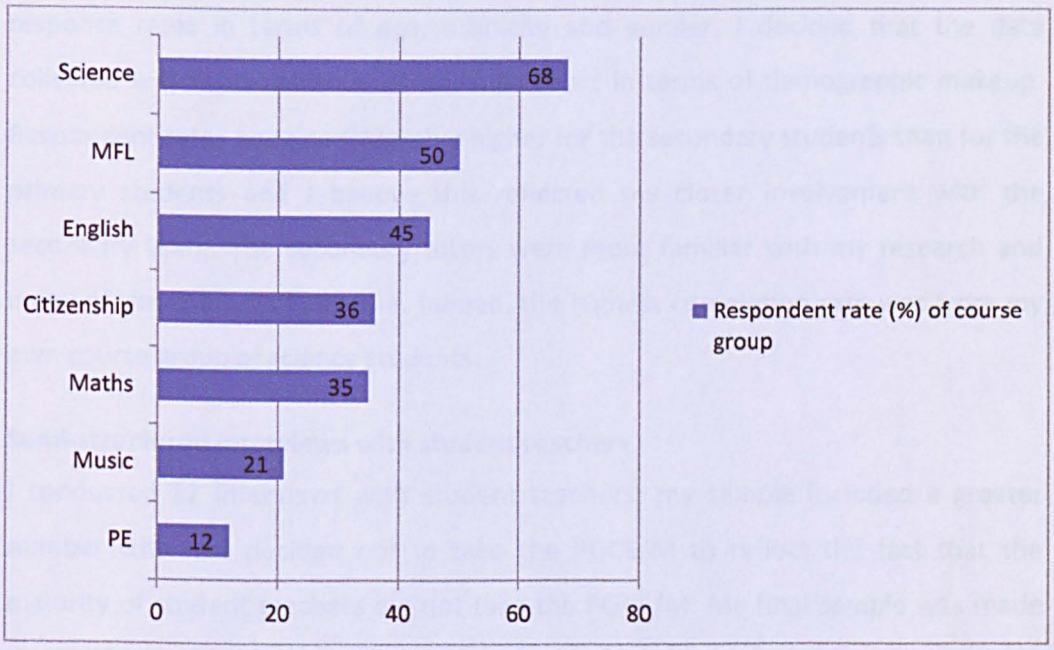


Figure 3.2 Respondent rate(%) by secondary PGCE subject



Course tutors for both primary and secondary frequently have to use email to circulate information when students are out on teaching practice. Students can feel overwhelmed by email messages and so I decided that it was not ethical to request a repeat circulation of the email link which might conflict with the timing of other important course information and announcements. Instead, primary and secondary course leaders allowed me to post the link to the survey onto the respective PGCE area of the CSU virtual learning environment (VLE) and so in theory it was available to the full cohort of student teachers. This prompted a few more responses but

response rates were still lower than I had anticipated. I decided to keep the survey open for the duration of the course until June 2010. There was a slow trickle of responses throughout the year. When students returned to the CSU between teaching practices I encouraged participation by visiting different course groups in turn, explaining the purpose of the research and requesting their support. This personal touch encouraged participation and secondary course tutors provided additional support. The survey was completed by 100 out of a potential 297 student teachers.

The respondent rate was highest from the PGCE/M students (65%). This might reflect that some students assumed that it was only relevant to those taking the PGCE/M, although it was clearly explained on the accompanying email and announcement on the VLE that it was for all student teachers. After analysis of the response rates in terms of age, ethnicity and gender, I decided that the data collected was representative of the full cohort in terms of demographic makeup. Respondent rates were considerably higher for the secondary students than for the primary students and I believe this reflected my closer involvement with the secondary team. The secondary tutors were more familiar with my research and many of the students knew me. Indeed, the highest completion rate was from my own course group of science students.

Semi-structured interviews with student teachers

I conducted 12 interviews with student teachers; my sample included a greater number who had decided not to take the PGCE/M to reflect the fact that the majority of student teachers did not take the PGCE/M. My final sample was made up as shown in Table 3.1 There were some limitations to its composition, i.e. nobody from the '25 and below' age range and no representation from citizenship or PE.

Table 3.1 Sampling frame for semi-structured interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Primary or secondary subject	Ethnicity	English as additional language	English as first language	English as one of several languages
PGCE/H route:							
Adela	26-39	F	Science	White European	Y		
Carlo	26-39	M	Science	White European	Y		
Chris	26-39	M	Maths	White British		Y	
Elizabeth	40+	F	Maths	White British		Y	
Farah	26-39	F	Science	Asian British			Y
Freda	26-39	F	Science	Black African		Y	
Melanie	26-39	F	Primary	White British		Y	
Muna	26-39	F	Science	Asian British			Y
PGCE/M route:							
Aisha	26-39	F	Maths	Asian British			Y
Jenny	40+	F	English	White British		Y	
Richard	26-39	M	Music	White British		Y	
Tom	26-39	M	Primary	White British		Y	

The survey invited student teachers to volunteer for the interviews and 27 respondents volunteered their contact details for a potential follow up interview; nine of these volunteers were from the PGCE science group, reflecting my personal involvement with this group and probably their wish to help me out. Initially the interview group was identified from those participants who had volunteered via the survey. I used purposive sampling – described by Robson (2002) as sampling which allows the researcher's specific needs to be satisfied. Mindful of my research questions, I aimed to interview student teachers who reflected the full range of PGCE courses, including a representative proportion of those who opted for the PGCE/M with a mix of ethnicities, age group and gender. My pilot study had pointed to the need to interview student teachers from both routes, in order to develop an

in-depth understanding. However not all those who volunteered followed up my requests for interview, and so to ensure a sufficiently diverse sample I purposively invited some student teachers to be interviewed. Responses to the survey questions helped to identify suitable participants, although in the main I was constrained by choosing from those who had volunteered, and who remained available for the interview. In presenting the data (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6) from the interview transcripts, codes (Table 3.2) were used after pseudonyms to identify contextual information about the student teacher:

Table 3.2 Codes used to describe characteristics of interview participants

M / F	Male or female
40+, 26-39	Age
WB	White British
AB	Asian British
WE	White European
BA	Black African
SH; PH	Secondary PGCE/H; Primary PGCE/H
SM; PM	Secondary PGCE/M; Primary PGCE/M

I used a semi-structured interview (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) where the 'participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences could drive the interview' (O'Donnell et al, 2009 p29). The interviews provided an opportunity for generating more in-depth data and particularly an opportunity for participants to discuss their interpretations of experiences and to express situations from their own point of view (Cohen et al, 2007). I had some notions of themes to explore following the pilot stage, survey and reading and the discussions were organised around the broad themes of:

- educational decision-making after compulsory schooling
- influences
- feelings about formal learning
- perceptions of M level work
- decisions about the PGCE/M or PGCE/H
- benefits of M level work for teaching
- choice and support mechanisms

I invited participants to discuss their educational histories, and asked questions to probe their constructions of learner and teacher identity, the nature of M level work and its relevance to teaching. I prepared an interview schedule (Appendix 3) which was organised into themes. For each theme there were key questions in outline form and possible prompts that might be needed to maintain a flow of dialogue. A clear advantage of this approach is that the outline can increase the comprehensiveness of the data making data collection systematic and focussed towards the research questions whilst allowing interviews to remain fairly conversational and situational (Patton, 1980, cited by Cohen et al, 2007).

The interviews were scheduled to take place after student teachers had gained some experience of schools and therefore of rationalising the academic and more practical aspects of their training. The interviews typically lasted for about 45 minutes. The interviews were staggered throughout the academic year and fitted in around the school placements and University sessions. The interviews all took place on site at the CSU, and wherever possible they were conducted in an unfamiliar room. I hoped by doing this to reduce the impact of me as a course leader. Prior to the recorder being switched on, I tried to create a fairly relaxed atmosphere, and used this time to talk a little about the purposes of my research, answer any questions, and hopefully place the participant more at ease. Overall, I hoped to establish a conversational tone so that when the interview started it retained elements of a conversation rather than a formal interview. Approximately half of the interviews took place towards the end of the course, by which time the participants had successfully completed two teaching practices, and were beginning to make the transition towards a professional relationship on a more equal footing with me. The PGCE science students were all very willing to be interviewed, and it was easier to make arrangements with them since I had frequent and sometimes daily contact with them. I believe that our relationship at this stage was one of mutual trust, and from this point of view I think it was perhaps easier to generate a more open conversational tone with them.

The interviews were taped and transcribed. I transcribed the interviews myself and began transcribing verbatim in order to facilitate discourse analysis (Tannen, 1989). However, since my focus, in the main, was more on the content of

what was said rather than how it was said my transcription changed to one which eliminated some of the 'ums', 'ers', 'you knows' and repetitions. I then checked the transcript against the taped record and my field notes several times, adding memo notes where I felt it relevant in relation to para-lingual features such as tone of voice and hesitations. In presenting the findings (Chapters 4 to 6) I have made use of the interview transcription codes as shown in Tables 3.3.

Table 3.3 Interview transcription codes

...	To show where parts of the transcript have been omitted
[...]	To show where longer parts of the transcript have been omitted
[ ]	Placed round words/phrases show where a word/phrase has been added, or a tense change to add clarification
( )	Placed round words/phrases which have been added to show non-verbal expression, e.g. (laughs)
Bold font	Used to show emphasis. This will be followed by an indication of the origin of emphasis. e.g. I **couldn't** (*original emphasis*) to show that the interview participant emphasised the word 'couldn't' or I **couldn't** (*my emphasis*) shows that the emphasis is mine.

Interviews with academic staff

Using the same approach to that used for the interviews with student teachers I conducted three semi-structured interviews with academic course leaders – representing the primary sector and two different secondary subject course leaders. This provided some representation of the different sectors and secondary subject areas. The interviews were carried out at different stages of the inquiry. This was not intentional, but a result of trying to work around colleagues' busy schedules. One secondary course leader had volunteered to be interviewed at an early stage of the inquiry as a result of discussion about my research during course team meetings. I purposively approached the PE secondary course leader after the survey had been completed. None of the PE group had chosen the M level route and so I was keen to have some 'voice' from this subject discipline within the case study. I used an interview schedule with themes and outline questions (Appendix 4) to generate discussion. The discussions were organised around the broad themes of:

- feelings about the M level PGCE
- perceptions of M level work
- explaining student teachers decision-making about M level
- influencing student teachers decisions
- policy and practice at the CSU

3.7 Data analysis

My interpretation of the data has been influenced by studies that have worked relationally with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (Bowman, 2005; Reay et al, 2005; Smyth and Banks, 2012) and the other theoretical ideas explored in Chapter 2. I began by considering the quantitative and qualitative data separately (see Sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2). However my final analysis of the data as presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 explores the mixed data thematically. Throughout the case study I have looked for the emerging themes inductively (Thomas, 2003), but have also analysed the data deductively in relation to my theoretical approach. This has allowed for an iterative development of the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The majority of students on the PGCE courses at the CSU chose not to apply for the M level PGCE route, and this non-participation was of key interest. I concur with Gorard et al (2006) that it is important to research non-participants in studies concerning widening participation – the reasons for non-engagement cannot be inferred from a study of only those who participate.

Quantitative data

The analysis of the quantitative data was exploratory rather than confirmatory. I loosely followed the exploratory data analysis approach suggested by Robson (2002) with use of an interactive chi-squared calculator to check for any statistical significance in the CSU data and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for ease of storage and frequency counting of the survey data.

Qualitative data

Analysis of the CSU documents and the transcript of the briefing for secondary student teachers focussed on the content in relation to the differentiated pathways, looking at the language used, the emphases and what was said (and not said).

The interview transcripts were coded for emerging themes and annotated with a reflective commentary (memos) (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Thematic analysis fits within my theoretical framework, described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.81) as 'not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things within them' with a theme described as capturing 'something important in relation to the research question', representing 'some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (p82). This concurred with my intentions to make the research question 'central' fitting with the pragmatic paradigm as described by Creswell (2003). Thematic analysis is based on grounded theory techniques; however, I recognised that I did not commit to a fully grounded theory approach. My own theorising, derived from my literature review and experiential knowledge, had influenced the questions asked and interpretations made and therefore the development of my thematic analysis. Drawing on Bowman's (2005) study of the decision-making of UK taught Masters students, I went through a process of analysing the transcripts from the interviews with the student teachers at three levels. Firstly I read each script as an individual story, and then I looked at the students in course groups (PGCE/H or PGCE/M) and then finally I looked at all the scripts again in relation to the themes that emerged. This system helped to expose differences between individual students and also between the different courses.

The transcripts were read several times to identify emerging themes and codes were used for the different themes. During this process, new themes emerged and overlapped; causing me to re-read and re-code transcripts within a different light. Ryan and Bernard (n.d) outlined a number of different techniques for theme discovery from text. I made use of some of these techniques, such as looking for word repetitions and key words in context. The process of 'pawing' through the data (Ryan and Bernard) led to my identifying summary themes to which all others seemed to be connected and overlapping.

I place my research within the parameters suggested by Griffiths (1998), recognising the effects of political positioning on language and communication and the effects of a political self-interpretation on the construction of any interpretation

of the data. My research was grounded in my individual perspectives and position and those of the participants, as well as my political and ethical views. For example, my own learning trajectory is lifelong (Gorard et al, 1998), and, my interpretation of other learning trajectories will inevitably be within the parameters of that perspective, with my own experiences acting as a subconscious reference point.

3.8 Ethical issues

Permission to approach PGCE students for information and conduct the research was initially negotiated through the appropriate academic course leaders. The information revealed by participants may suggest negativity in relation to my own work place and colleagues, for example, in relation to teaching methods, tutorial support, institutional policy and practice and there was a need for confidentiality and sensitivity towards colleagues and participants. In gaining access to the participants it was important to ensure that this was informed access; the 'gate keepers' were fully informed of the nature of the knowledge that I sought to gain. Consequently I involved course leaders, as far as possible, through discussion at team meetings during the preliminary stages of the research drawing upon elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as described by Wadsworth (1998).

I recognised the potential issues of my dual role as researcher and 'gate keeper'. My compromise position was to ensure that the researched were interested participants, informed about the nature of the research and the processes involved. I concur with Gelsthorpe (1992) who argued that the main point is that the researched should be treated as people rather than information givers and that some element of engagement with the research is desirable. I advised participants that information offered would be reported anonymously and that those who volunteered for interviews may have access to the transcripts and notes (if desired) before any reporting in case there is anything which they wished to withdraw. Participation within the study was of course voluntary and the purpose and methods of the research study were fully explained when seeking informed consent. The consent form (Appendix 5) explicitly stated that participation or otherwise had no bearing on any assessment decisions for the course. I complied with the appropriate research ethics policy and procedures of the CSU to assess

whether there were any potential ethical concerns that would need further assessment.

3.9 Strengths and limitations

The strengths and limitations of my methodology fall into two main categories: those related to my position as an insider researcher and those related to the research design, both of which are discussed in this section.

My position as a course leader meant that I was able to draw upon my experiential knowledge regarding the enactment of policy at the CSU, although I was unable to gain first-hand information of the meetings that took place at senior management level. For this, I was reliant on other colleagues. Some of these colleagues have since left the CSU, and therefore with them some of that first-hand information. My role within the secondary course team provided access to the secondary students and academic course leaders and meant that I was able to discuss my research within the team enabling an element of PAR. However, I had less access to the primary team and students and this limited the extent to which I could explore ways in which the sector of study influenced the decisions made. My role as a course leader may have led to the interview participants filtering aspects of their stories, particularly those that reveal their academic constructions, or in relation to institutional factors. During the interviews with student teachers I noticed the ease with which a more conversational tone was established with those students that I knew well. For example, these students seemed more open to acknowledging academic concerns whereas those students who I did not know gave a less frank account of their academic concerns at interview than that provided through the survey questionnaire. There may have been student teachers who did not wish to be involved because they felt insecure in relation to the inevitable power relations involved as well as other reasons such as time constraints and disinterest. Their 'voice' will have been lost and with it the 'knowledge' that it could have brought to this research study.

I collected a range of data from different sources in keeping with a case study approach which has enabled a wider understanding of this specific case of

educational decision-making. However, my findings are limited to the CSU and this particular context of differentiated PGCE pathways; they are not necessarily generalisable to other cases of educational decision-making.

I had anticipated a higher respondent rate for the survey and under estimated the difficulties in terms of distribution and encouraging responses from student teachers who did not know me. In hindsight, I should have made the survey available at an earlier stage of the course. The timing of the survey meant that the student teachers had begun their first teaching practice and the CSU probably seemed quite distant to them; I was mindful of intruding upon their time within a new school setting. Initially I distributed the link for the on-line survey to course tutors and relied on their goodwill to distribute to the students. The course tutors have varied responsibilities and timetables and so there was some variability in the speed with which they forwarded the link to their students. I noticed that there were surges in responses to the survey and students tended to either respond immediately or did not respond at all. Keeping the survey open for a longer period of time meant that responses were made by students at very different stages of their courses and this may have influenced the ways in which they reconstructed their decision-making. The low response rate limited the statistical analysis of the survey data and the extent to which I could draw conclusions about any relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions made (and reasons for the decisions made).

The CSU data provided more comprehensive data than the survey in that it provided the information about which student teachers decided to take each PGCE route in relation to certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, degree classification). This allowed me to explore and compare some characteristics of the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers. However the data was sets of figures rather than a database. This meant that I could only investigate whether there was a significant relationship between a particular characteristic (variable) and the decision made. Since the CSU data sets did not allow me to control for different variables, it was not possible to isolate the effects of these interrelated variables from each other or from other significant variables. In addition, there were gaps in the CSU data sets where student teachers had not disclosed information, for

example in relation to ethnicity. This was a concern since one of the factors that prompted the study was the ethnic imbalance between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M groups.

I am aware of limitations to the interview questions. With hindsight I realised that some of the questions were potentially closed. Although some student teachers responded openly, allowing for more conversation, others seemed more constrained by the question and needed to be prompted to move beyond yes/no answers. I think the use of more subtle questions related to uncovering 'learner identity' and 'teacher identity' would have enriched the findings and perhaps allowed me to gauge more indirectly student teachers' constructions of the possible benefits of M level work on the PGCE.

Although the pilot stage had been a valuable and essential step in improving the design of the self-completion questionnaire, my analysis revealed other pitfalls. For example, the two versions of the question about the relevance of factors as explanations for the decisions made – one version was aimed at those who opted for the PGCE/H and the other aimed at those who opted for PGCE/M. This in itself did not seem to be a problem (only one respondent answered both questions) but the questions used a check box style asking respondents to check all the factors which applied. In hindsight, I realised that there were too many factors and some of the factors were similar and overlapped. In addition, the different versions of this question included different factors which made it more difficult to draw comparisons between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers.

3.10 Conclusion

The methodology that I adopted fits within the pragmatic paradigm (Creswell, 2007) in that I placed the research aim and questions as central to the study design (Section 3.3). A case study approach has allowed me to use mixed methods, drawing upon multiple data sources which have provided an opportunity for both an objective and subjective analysis. This is in keeping with Bourdieu's theoretical approach and suggestions for research (Grenfell, 2008). The next three chapters

present the findings from the analysis of my data beginning with the contextual conditions for this case study.

4. Policy and Practice at the CSU

4.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to explore the data collected relating to the changes in policy and practice for the PGCE routes at the CSU. It analyses the contextual background in relation primarily to the research questions:

- How did institutional policy and practice impact on engagement with M level study?
- In what ways did student teachers construct M Level study as part of their Initial Teacher Education?

First I explore the development of policy and practice and secondly the information given to student teachers before they made a decision about whether to take the PGCE at M level. I have drawn upon the preliminary investigations and my own experiential knowledge about the early stages of policy enactment, the data collected from the documentary analysis, the briefing for the secondary cohort given by the secondary PGCE programme director, and interviews with academic course leaders.

4.1 Development of policy and practice

In this analysis of policy and practice, I have made use of Bourdieu's ideas about field. Thus, I have seen the CSU as having a position determined by its institutional capital within the field of HE, and similarly the ITE department and its individuals as having determined positions within the CSU. Bourdieu argued the need for a stage within research to look at the relations and structures of the field (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Thomson (2005, p742) provided a useful abbreviation of Bourdieu's field theory: the determined positions of a field are '(a) held in relation to others in the field; (b) differentiated in a hierarchy of power and status; (c) producing in occupants and institutions particular ways of thinking, being and doing.' The concept of field is useful in that it allows me to interrogate the relations that exist and the hierarchy of power and status that has resulted in the dispositions and practices revealed by my findings. Therefore this section discusses the ways in

which the policy and practice was shaped by discussion and collaboration between the team of teacher educators, by negotiation at senior managerial level between senior managers and academic leaders within ITE and by the need to work within the parameters of the CSU registration and assessment frameworks approved by the governing body. My analysis uncovered three key areas of tension; these were: the nature of ITE at the CSU; recruitment; and regulations, each of which is explored in turn in the subsequent discussion. This is followed by a summary of the final outcomes for the agreed policy change.

The Nature of ITE at the CSU

Policy changes at national level had introduced a degree of crisis within the field of HE, with HEIs being required to repackage their PGCE courses. ITE, in the form of the PGCE, can be considered as a product of the fields of both HE and school education, although the school-based component of the product, driven by competencies (the QTS statements) had not been changed. In fact, school partners had shown little interest in the change, as illustrated by comments from academic staff during interview. For example:

> I doubt many of the school mentors they work with even know there are two possible levels to the PGCE. They see the academic part as our responsibility – but that might change I suppose as more people go in with Masters for their PGCE. (Secondary course leader)

The nature of the product, ITE, is characterised by the content and philosophy of the courses, as well as the student teachers who are recruited and graduated. This section draws upon the findings in relation to both these components of the product, ITE, at the CSU.

During my preliminary investigations I met with the academic leader for ITE who had been directly involved in discussions with the senior management team regarding the potential introduction of the PGCE/M during 2006-7. She reported that there had been some reluctance by senior management to offer the PGCE/M at all. They believed that the flavour of ITE courses at the CSU were appropriately in line with a 'hands-on' classroom approach rooted in a mission to produce teachers prepared for an urban context. This supported the focus within the ITE department of developing a heightened awareness amongst student teachers for the diverse needs of the urban classroom with innovative and creative classroom practice.

Through my own attendance at ITE meetings, I knew that there was concern from primary and secondary course leaders that the additional time needed for M level work might restrict opportunities to prepare teachers for the urban context. Recruitment of teacher educators had tended to prioritise and value school and classroom experience over research and HE experience; out of the current eight secondary teacher educators only one had previously worked in HE, with the rest having all moved from secondary schools, and for the most part very recently.

My own experiential knowledge confirmed that this view of the strengths of ITE at the CSU was shared amongst the team of teacher educators. In Chapter 1 I raised some of the on-going debates about the professional identity of a teacher linked with the gradual increase in level of academic qualification required for teaching. The ITE team at the CSU favoured a 'teacher education' approach rather than a competency based focus – better described as 'teacher training' and more in keeping with the notion of teaching as a craft. By 'teacher education' approach, I mean one which emphasised appropriate theoretical underpinnings for the development of reflective classroom practice. Nevertheless, M level was not seen as essential to the flavour of ITE provided at the CSU. The introduction to the primary PGCE course, described a challenging course that aims to educate teachers to be reflective, skilful practitioners. This was aimed at both the PGCE/H and PGCE/M routes:

> One of the main aims is to produce teachers of the highest quality who are reflective, creative, imaginative and responsive to all children's needs. We expect our students to become skilful practitioners ... The course is **demanding, challenging** and **rigorous.** (*original emphasis*) (Primary Course Handbook)

The other important component of the product, ITE, is the cohort of student teachers recruited. At the CSU, during meetings within the ITE department, concerns were expressed by course leaders about the higher academic nature of M level work and whether the student teachers could realistically manage it alongside challenging teaching practices. The same concerns were reiterated during interviews with academic staff:

> I think many of our students find the level and extent of reading and writing difficult even on the H level and it is not as if they have the time to develop for Masters – they are out there struggling to cope in our schools. (Secondary course leader)

The proposal for modification of the PGCE, prepared by the ITE management team (ITE academic lead, secondary and primary programme directors) for discussion with the CSU senior executive group during 2006-7, identified that an advantage of including M level credits would be that, 'it would raise the academic status and content of the PGCE' but also stated that compulsory M level credits would be disadvantageous because, 'for many students the already very intense and pressured nature of the PGCE could become an impossible challenge'.

The diversity of student teachers' educational, geographic and cultural background reflected the CSU commitment to widening participation but also the then government's target to diversify the teaching force (TDA, 2007b). Through attendance at ITE team meetings I knew that course leaders were concerned that since many student teachers did not come from a 'traditional' academic background, they had less developed, practised and sustained 'academic' skills (Given and Smailes, n.d) which could enhance success with M level work. They believed that the academic writing demands, particularly for graduates with less experience of this type of reflective and more discursive writing, could become a barrier to success. There were also concerns about those student teachers for whom English was an additional language. For example, during interview, a secondary course leader commented:

> The issue would be ... their level of English ... their English is not great, so I would question whether they would be able to fully understand some academic writing – maybe and also be able to respond to it. (Secondary course leader)

In addition, the cohort of student teachers at the CSU represented a wider age range than the national average with more mature students. This led to another concern, raised in conversation with course tutors, that many of the student teachers at the CSU had other demands on their time e.g. a young family, single parenting, financial and housing difficulties.

Drawing on Thomson's (2005) description of the determined relational positions within a field, different institutions within the field of HE result in products with their own distinctive flavour. Thomson (2005, p750) highlighted Bourdieu's reasoning that at times of struggle, 'the very thing that each field seeks to produce, conserve and/or transform is at stake' and this was apparent at the CSU. The distinctive nature of ITE at the CSU was being challenged. In contrast, King (2008) on

the introduction of M level credits at the Institute of Education (IOE) wrote in a paper presented at the Teacher Education Policy in Europe Conference:

> The emphasis that the Institute's PGCE has long placed on enquiry focused assignments and critically reflective teaching meant that the course was well placed to be at least partially assessed at Masters level. Designation at M-level gives it added value and the Institute in recognition of the high calibre of beginning teachers attracted onto it's PGCE, chose to offer up to 90 M-level credits which could then be taken forward into Masters programmes. (King, 2008)

At the IOE the policy change was seen as a means to enhance the distinctive product of this HEI rather than to challenge it.

Recruitment

A further tension that I identified related to concerns about recruitment. I knew from attendance at secondary course teams that some course leaders (myself included) were worried about the potential impact on recruitment if M level credits were not introduced and only a professional route offered, i.e. that the professional route could become demoted which might affect recruitment to ITE courses at the CSU. The CSU ITE department recognised that recruitment to secondary ITE courses at the CSU was uncertain[15], particularly within the shortage secondary subject areas[16] of science, mathematics and MFL. This was a pressing concern, and the proposal for modification of the PGCE stated that increasing recruitment was a possible advantage of including M level study within the PGCE:

> It would bring us in line with other national providers and thus may enhance recruitment or at least avoid a negative impact on recruitment post 2007. (Proposal for modification)

The proposal also suggested that an M level PGCE could impact on recruitment to other courses which would fit with the overall agenda at the CSU to increase recruitment to courses:

> It could form the first step in developing MA study for serving teachers at an earlier stage in their careers than has been the case so far. (Proposal for modification)

The CSU, with its status as a 'new' University is lower down on the hierarchy of HEIs; it needs to establish and maintain recruitment and a reputation for quality. Such

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[15] There were penalties set by the government for providers who do not meet target recruitment figures in terms of funding for future allocations.
https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/MITT%20funding%202009-10.pdf

[16] The TDA classed these secondary subjects as priority subjects for improving recruitment nationally.
http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1011/hc03/0357/0357.pdf

HEIs, as argued by Bathmaker and Thomas (2009, p123) have 'to work increasingly hard at constructing a place for themselves within the field, which more and more resembles an HE market'. The different ITE providers make up part of this HE market; student teachers can choose between the different providers using data produced by the TDA[17] which compares them using a range of metrics to demonstrate perceived quality and outcomes.

Regulations

A third tension related to the inflexibility of academic regulations at the CSU. The proposals for modification of the PGCE recommended, for the CSU, a flexible model which provided student teachers with the option of following the PGCE/H route or applying for the PGCE/M route:

> Discussions at UCET[18] committee meetings [identified] the need for a 'fall back' position for those students who operate well as teachers ... but who may not be successful in meeting the criteria for academic study at 'M' level ... As a result a number of institutions (particularly but not exclusively post-1992 Universities) have decided to offer a structure with optional or directed pathways to either 'H' or 'M' level accreditation ... (Proposal for modification)

However, the CSU academic regulations did not allow any transfer during the course of the PGCE between the postgraduate and professional qualification routes. At the end of the academic year, 2006/7, course leaders were provided with copies of a document called the 'PGCE Course Regulatory Schedule'. This was intended to supplement the CSU academic regulations for UG and PG courses. I was unable to track down the origins of this document, but it stated under point 19:

> Selection for the Post Graduate route on Secondary courses will take place during the first term. Those who transfer to the Post Graduate route shall not be allowed to return to the Professional route. (PGCE Course Regulatory Schedule)

The status of the document was described as:

> This schedule forms part of the Regulations for all PGCE courses and should be read alongside the University's Regulations, which govern courses and the responsibilities of students. (PGCE Course Regulatory Schedule)

This regulatory schedule was incorporated into the primary and secondary course handbooks. During my preliminary investigations, and in conversation with the then

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[17] The TDA publishes statistics to aid comparison between providers of ITE. http://dataprovision.education.gov.uk/public/page.htm?to-page=publicOpencmsStaticPage&cms-page-id=tta-public/en/publicSearchForACourse/index.html (accessed 1/6/12)

[18] UCET acts as a national forum for the discussion of matters relating ITE and contributes to the formulation of policy in these fields.

academic leader for ITE, it was suggested that the centralised systems did not allow for much flexibility and the overly bureaucratic nature of the final policy was perhaps a reflection of the University's post-1992 status and concern to improve its reputation for quality. Restricted autonomy was granted to the team with respect to the shaping of these changes to the PGCE. These regulations were a source of concern for academic course leaders, 'I wasn't sure about it ... I thought the stakes were too high' (Primary course leader). The regulations meant that there was a risk if student teachers chose the PGCE/M route and then subsequently found it too difficult.

As a corollary of my position and role within the wider community of teacher educators, I was able to gather some anecdotal evidence during 2007-9 from other colleagues within local ITE providers about their developments towards the introduction of the PGCE/M, although this was not an intentional part of my data collection. The provision for the PGCE/M varied between other local providers. Teacher educators from two other local HEIs (post 1992) outlined similar regulations to those at the CSU. At both these HEIs the number of students opting for the PGCE/M during 2007-8 had been very small; a course leader at one of these HEIs suggested that students were deterred by the additional workload and the fear of failure. As a teacher educator, I attended a Masters level colloquium – 'Teaching: a Masters profession' organised by ESCalate[19] at the University of Cumbria[20] which presented the findings from Jackson's (2009) pilot study about the perceptions of the M level PGCE. Discussions with other teacher educators indicated that HEIs had developed a range of different ways of incorporating M level into their PGCE courses, and that while the CSU was not unique it was perhaps one of only a few HEIs that did not allow student teachers to transfer between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M routes. In the introduction to this thesis I referred to the report by Edwards and Pope (2006) which suggested that the different decisions made by HEIs seemed to be tied firmly to individual University regulations. I must reaffirm my study does not aim to compare HEIs, but, it has been helpful to consider practices within other

[19] ESCalate of the Higher Education Academy (Education Subject Centre advancing learning and teaching in education) existed to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in higher education in the fields of education and teacher education.
[20] http://escalate.ac.uk/6059 accessed 4/2/12

HEIs in order to help locate the case study within the field. In Chapter 2 I referred to Reay et al's (2005) use of the concept 'institutional habitus' as an analytical tool for exploring the institutional context for educational decision-making. My data has provided insights into how policies and practice can be shaped by the organisational attitudes and assumptions that make up the institutional habitus. I return to develop this point later in this chapter.

Outcomes for policy change

The final shaping of the policy at the CSU echoed Ball's (1994) description of policy as the product of compromises between multiple agendas and influences. Drawing up regulations and agreeing a framework for the PGCE/M offer was a result of negotiation and compromise both between the different course leaders within the ITE department and with the CSU senior management team. The agreement to introduce the PGCE/M was somewhat *tentatively* made. There was a sense of nervousness and resistance from the academic staff about the possible effects of introducing the PGCE/M relating to concerns that the student teachers may not be successful with the level of work and workload, and resistance relating to potential changes to the ethos and philosophy behind the development of the PGCE courses. The primary team introduced the PGCE/M in 2008/9 – a year later than the secondary team, which perhaps reflected a greater resistance amongst the primary team. However, within the secondary team at least, there was a consensus that it was an inevitable and perhaps welcome development. Course leaders recognised that some of the student teachers were producing work that already met M level criteria and this deserved the appropriate academic recognition. It was also seen as a necessary step to maintain and meet government set targets for recruitment. This compromise position contrasted sharply with the *confident* statement from the IOE:

> We have always believed that our beginning teachers are among the highest quality in the country...We have adopted a culture of 'reflective practitioners' who draw on 'critical reflection' and our beginning teachers engage with recent and relevant research ... Our question was not whether to move to Masters level but how many credits should we award in the initial training year. Our directorate was keen to award a high number of credits largely to demonstrate the high quality of the beginning teachers. (King, 2008)

The ITE department at the CSU proposed an optional route as a way of accommodating the student teachers who might struggle to manage the more

intense demands of M level study on a PGCE. The final proposal was to offer 60 M Level credits, starting with the secondary PGCE during 2007/8. This was managed by considering the PGCE course as made up of six modules – three related to school experience and were considered as equivalent to H level study. The remaining three modules (60 credits) could be taken at M level or H level. At secondary level the assignment titles for these three modules were the same for either H level or M level, but at M level a greater word count was expected to allow for greater critical analysis within the writing in order to reflect and address the QAA M level descriptors[21]. At primary level, there were different assignments for these 3 modules depending on the route taken. Both the primary and secondary student teachers had to submit an application for the PGCE/M which included a short diagnostic assignment; its purpose being to deter student teachers from following a course of study that may prove too demanding and for which they might not be ready.

Bourdieu's field theory can be used at this point to emphasise the implications for social justice. Using the notion of education as a 'field', HEIs can be regarded as players in the 'field' with different amounts of accumulated capitals and a different institutional habitus which embodies the structures and their position within the field. These extracts from documents, interviews and conversations with academic staff have highlighted the 'particular ways of thinking, being and doing' produced in occupants and institutions as a result of the differentiated field positions (Thomson, 2005, p742). Another way to consider this is through the idea of institutional habitus as described by Reay et al (2005) and discussed in Chapter 2. An institution may not confidently assume or aspire to the same starting position in the enactment of new policy as other HEIs. As a result of institutional habitus, the ITE department at the CSU did not assume that all recruits to ITE were ready to begin with study for M level credits, or that academic regulations would have the flexibility to support these unique course developments[22].

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[21] These can be accessed at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/FHEQ08.pdf (accessed 1/6/12)

[22] The PGCE course structures are relatively unique sitting within both the UG and PG assessment frameworks.

4.2 Information provided for the student teachers

In this section I consider what information was provided by the ITE department at the CSU to support student teachers decision-making and how this was disseminated. There were two main sources: the course handbooks and briefings given by academic staff from the primary or secondary teams. The course handbooks (produced by the respective academic course teams) included an explanation of the differences between the two routes with respect to possible outcomes, academic expectations, regulations and procedures for application to the PGCE/M as well as full details of assignments and criteria. The briefing to secondary PGCE students was given by the secondary programme director and covered the selection process, the differences between two qualification outcomes, and a reiteration of the regulations. Primary student teachers were also briefed at the start of their course in September about the different routes and application process. My analysis draws upon the data collected from these information sources and interviews with academic staff. The data reveals the limitations and conflicting messages about risk and choice/selection and a more detailed discussion of these follows.

Limitations

Two key limitations emerged; firstly, it emerged that the academic staff at the CSU were uncertain about some key areas and secondly the information provided did not sufficiently address student teachers' needs and concerns.

The PGCE/M was still fairly new, both at the CSU and nationally; there was a degree of indecision and unease regarding its potential impact, overall suitability and the processes. Key areas of uncertainty included the transferability of credits, the potential benefits of the PGCE/M and perceptions about the nature of M level work. The uncertainty about the transferability of credits was in relation to whether all 60 M level credits could be transferred to another HEI. During the briefing, the secondary programme director highlighted that he could not guarantee whether other HEIs would allow credit transfer:

> Other providers they have other rules. Some will let you bring in 30 credits only, some 40 ... so this is where it is problematic because I am not in a position to guarantee what other providers will do. (Secondary programme director)

Although the key sources of information for student teachers were the course handbooks and briefings, it is likely that student teachers were influenced (directly and indirectly) by course leaders' tentativeness. This related to the extent to which the PGCE/M would offer any additional value, for example in terms of employment prospects, as demonstrated, during interview, by primary and secondary course leaders:

> Whether it really does affect your job prospects, whether people even notice if it is an M level or an H level PGCE ... In fact, it's really quite clear really that it doesn't I expect. I'm not sure that schools are responding to that. (Primary course leader)

> They asked me whether I thought it would help them get a job, and when they asked me I couldn't in all honesty say yes or no ... well all the people with Masters have got a job fairly early on, but then it's just the two and I don't know why is it because of them as teachers or is it because – I don't know. (Secondary Course leader)

The proposal for modification of the PGCE referred to the uncertainty about potential benefits for employment as an argument against introducing compulsory M level credits:

> It is uncertain at the moment what value Head teachers and even student teachers would place on 'M' level study as part of initial training – there are signs in some of the UCET documentation that it is not a priority for them. (Proposal for modification)

The primary course leader was unsure as to whether M level work could benefit classroom practice:

> The first assignment, where they have to analyse in great detail an individual child ... but they do actually do a child study on the H level – but I think doing that and the reading at that level is helpful, but whether it helps practice – I don't know (Primary course leader)

Perceptions about the nature of M level work varied between the secondary course leaders. During interview, one secondary course leader constructed the PGCE/M as problematic; with frequent use of the word 'think', unfinished sentences and pauses:

> I think you need (*pause*) I think it's a combination of different skills and – a belief that you have those additional skills and I think (*pause*) – I'm not sure about how much of a divide there is between the two and I think that – there is a need to feel confident about your level of English and your ability to read academic English – and to analyse and critique it – confidently. (Secondary course leader)

In contrast, a different course leader was far less hesitant:

> Well, in the assignments, the quality of the writing, quality of the analysis, greater academic overview to the writing, greater awareness of the literature ... I think it gives some people an opportunity to have much more of an enquiring mind. (Secondary course leader)

During the interviews other differences emerged related to the extent to which course leaders influenced student teachers' decision-making. One secondary course leader openly talked about 'flagging it up' with potential M level students, referring to two students who had excellent degrees – 'first class and who showed enthusiasm for academic study', but also believed that the influence really came from within the group, from their peers. Another secondary course leader was cautious about influencing the decision-making, feeling that it was too early to have a view about students' academic capabilities until a piece of work had been looked at. The primary course leader spoke about 'steering away' from influencing them, although acknowledged that some members of the primary team said to the students, 'that they probably wouldn't have done it'.

Another key limitation of the information provided was that there was some evidence that it was insufficient (I return to this issue later, from the student teachers' perspective in Chapter 6). Student teachers were invited to ask questions after the briefing given by the secondary programme director and many requested additional information not supplied within the briefing or course handbooks, for example, about the currency of the PGCE/QTS outside the UK in relation to potential employability and mobility. In Chapter 1 of this thesis I highlighted the issues raised by Iacu (2010) regarding considerable diversity of ITE structures and systems despite an agreed European understanding of a PG qualification; student teachers' questions highlighted that this was of relevance to them. There were also questions regarding cost and length of study on Masters courses in the future, perhaps indicating some tendency to defer Masters level study until later.

Notably missing from the information provided was any mention of the possible benefits of M level, in relation to enhanced career prospects or pedagogical enquiry. This can be thought about using Bourdieu's ideas about capital (see Chapter 2). The cultural capital acquired from the PGCE/M was not seen by the staff at the CSU as necessarily being convertible to other forms of capital (e.g. embodied cultural capital, economic or symbolic capitals) outside of the institutional context. The proposal for modification of the PGCE highlighted raising the academic status of the PGCE as an advantage although not in relation to enhancing the quality of the student teacher. There was no reference made within

the course handbooks or at the secondary briefing about benefits in relation to intrinsic interest or impact on classroom practice. Indeed, arguably, the secondary programme director implied, during the briefing, that the M Level work was separate to classroom practice:

> The school experience is assessed at the same level for everyone- because you are on the postgraduate route does not mean that we expect you to be a better classroom practitioner. The M level work contributes towards the PGCE, it is the academic award. It is separate to QTS although linked. (Secondary programme director)

In contrast, King's (2008) paper about the restructuring of the PGCE at IOE made several references to the importance of being a critically reflective practitioner. In theoretical terms this served to emphasise that the institutionalised cultural capital acquired through dong the PGCE/M was readily converted into an embodied cultural capital through the development of legitimised knowledge, skills and competencies. At the CSU (at least within the formal information shared), the potential benefits for study at M level were limited to the instrumental value of gaining M level credits, as explained at the secondary briefing:

> With us because we know what you studied we will accept it as a full equivalent of a third of a Masters, ... I can say you will have a transcript stating that you have 60 credits at Masters level on a PGCE and then it's up to you to go out into the world and negotiate. (Secondary programme director)

Similarly, according to the primary course leader, the benefits of the PGCE/M were not greatly emphasised during the briefing for primary student teachers:

> Well let me think do we promote it- well we say it as it is really. If you wish to develop your thinking in this area at this level, then here's your opportunity to do it. (Primary course leader)

Risk

Risk was a dominant discourse within the information provided, although the messages about risks were at times conflicting. The inherent risks related to the regulations were outlined explicitly at the briefing for secondary students:

> ... a big ***but*** (*original emphasis*) – once you apply and are accepted onto the post grad course, there is no going back [...] We have permission from the University to reregister you – once only in November for the postgraduate route. But once you are on it, you are on it, you can't decide once you are doing school experience that it is too much work for you. (Secondary programme director)

The secondary programme director implied that the regulations are unfortunate, 'sadly we do not have flexibility within our regulations to keep switching people from professional to postgrad and then back to professional.' This provided another

illustration of the differentiated field positions within the CSU (Thomson, 2005) resulting in a policy not favoured by all individuals within the field. Nevertheless, the secondary programme director's stance served to emphasise the authority of these regulations and to deter any interrogation of their legitimacy and fairness. There was complete silence in the hall when it was explained that a failed module at M level would mean failure for the whole PGCE qualification:

> If you fail an assignment we might be able to recommend you for QTS – your legal right to teach but there would be no PGCE award. (Secondary programme director)

At the briefing, the secondary programme director moved between explicit references to the risk and how procedures mitigated against that risk which demonstrated the tensions between the two messages:

> ...this is a risk you need to be aware of [*referring to the lack of flexibility*]. However the thing that mitigates against that is that we have quite a rigorous application procedure. If we don't think you are writing at or near enough to M level we won't let you on. We don't want to see you fail or struggle, have a terrible time. (Secondary programme director)

And in answering a student's question about success rates:

> I can reassuringly tell you ... no one has failed postgrad, but some people did fail the application process and I think the two are linked and some people failed an assignment and had to resubmit. That was a bit hair-raising but they passed on resubmission. (Secondary programme director)

At the briefing student teachers were advised to at least apply, although this was set against a further reminder about the risks, albeit indirectly via a reference to the workload:

> I would say that you are all graduates so you would have to have a fairly good reason in yourself to know that you didn't want to ... it's the natural progression, free and part of the course that you are doing anyway ... but clearly what you have also got to understand – there is more work, more reading, more writing and it's at a higher level. (Secondary programme director)

The primary course leader also referred, during interview, to the risks in following the PGCE/M pathway:

> ... just there is a risk there and they have to make their own decision, you don't want to be push them either way really. (Primary course leader)

Through drawing attention to the consequences of following an unsuitable route in the course handbooks, the risk in opting for the PGCE/M was clearly signalled. For example:

> If trainees transfer to the Post Graduate route in semester 1, they must continue at this level. Trainees cannot negotiate a return to the Professional Graduate route.

> This has some serious implications if trainees fail to meet the required standards for Masters level work. (CSU Secondary PGCE Course handbook 2009/10)

The course handbooks were rigid, objective and authoritative in tone and this can be likened to McClure's (2003) characterisation of a policy text as a product of its use of formal terminology and grammatical constructions typical of technical discourses.

Choice/Selection

Another conflicting message related to whether the policy was about choice or selection. Although the policy was set up as one of 'choice' between two pathways, the selection procedures for the PGCE/M was a more dominant aspect of the information provided:

> To help you make the right choice we have a rigorous briefing and application procedure in place... and ... application form to be submitted with M level writing task. The assignment will be marked to inform the academic decision about applicants' suitability for the Post Graduate route. (CSU Primary PGCE Course Handbook 2009/10)

A 'rigorous application procedure' (Secondary programme director) was also referred to in the secondary briefing. The additional assignment used for selection to the secondary PGCE/M required a critique (about 750 words) of a book chapter. It was stated within the brief that, 'the critique should demonstrate clear understanding and an ability to engage in sustained critical reasoning at MA level.' Both course handbooks stated that success in meeting M level criteria must be shown on the selection assignment for entry to the postgraduate route:

> Criteria for transfer to the Post Graduate programme are:
>
> - Successful completion of application form.
> - Success in meeting Masters level criteria in task set.
> - Evidence of engagement with university sessions e.g. attendance, participation, preparation – course leaders will monitor and report on this.
>
> (CSU Secondary PGCE course handbook 2009/10)

The discourse is a formal one of meeting criteria with an implicit reference to the power relations, i.e. the academic staff will ultimately make the decisions as to who is suitable, and, therefore select student teachers for the PGCE/M route. The implied expectation was that students should already be capable of M level work rather than there being room for this to develop. O'Donnell et al (2009) drew

attention to the obstacle to widening participation that arises from any assumption that having a UG degree means that students are skilled in the practices required for success in PG study.

4.3 Concluding comments

The data collected reveal that the CSU engaged with this policy development in a cautious, and in some cases rather negative manner, for example, as demonstrated by the inflexible regulatory framework adopted. There was evidence of some disquiet about the impact on students and courses; this was conveyed through the information provided to support student teachers in their decision-making. The dominant discourse related to 'risks' rather than benefits. It revealed uncertainties, on the part of the CSU, with respect to the perceived value of the PGCE/M as a form of capital outside of the institutional context.

Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus, specifically the notion of institutional habitus (Reay et al, 2005), were useful in making sense of the data and the story that emerged. The ITE department at the CSU had less capital advantage within the field of HE (and with partnership schools) and therefore it could not assume a more confident starting position. The institutional habitus had been structured by a relatively short educational history – as a post 1992 institution. Consequently there was a need for the 'players' within the ITE department to 'engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that best suits its interests' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p108). This resulted in a policy and practice that offered the more prestigious qualification for ITE, but only to those student teachers who actively chose it and could demonstrate that such an undertaking would not compromise the overall outcomes for ITE. In other words any possible risks to the reputation of ITE at the CSU were being minimised. The policy adopted was a compromise solution. The academic staff at the CSU were 'hedging their bets' – reluctant to jeopardise the nature of the ITE courses and to introduce additional academic demands but aware of the need to maintain recruitment levels within a competitive market. In Chapter 6I return to consider the impact of the policy and practice at the CSU by drawing upon the data collected from the student teachers.

5 Characteristics of student teachers taking the PGCE/H and PGCE/M routes

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information about the PGCE cohort at the CSU and to compare characteristics of the student teachers taking the PGCE/H route with those taking the PGCE/M route in order to address the research question:

- **What was the relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions they made about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**

One reason for undertaking this study was because I had noted that those student teachers taking the PGCE/M were disproportionately from certain subject areas and a white UK background. In Chapter 3 I identified some of the limitations of my research and I return to one of these now because it is a significant limiting factor in relation to the analysis that I present in this chapter. Although the quantitative data from the CSU data sets enabled me to demonstrate which characteristics were significant predictors of the PGCE route taken, the format of the CSU data (see Chapter 3) meant that I was unable to isolate the effect of individual characteristics, and therefore to draw conclusions about the likelihood of any causal relationships.

My analysis draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. I have drawn the quantitative data mainly from the CSU data sets which were larger and provided more comprehensive data than that collected via the survey questionnaire. The qualitative data were collected from a total of 12 interviews with student teachers (eight PGCE/H and four PGCE/M). The data is presented in two interrelated sections; firstly I compare the characteristics of the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers; this is followed by a comparison of educational biographies. I have also drawn upon the data collected from student interviews, making use of Bourdieu's ideas about cultural capital.

The quantitative data is mainly shown as numbers since there is a danger with percentages in that they can mask the very small numbers involved and therefore be misleading in giving an impression that the sample size is bigger than it

actually is (Bell, 2005). I have drawn attention to emerging patterns and highlighted any similarities with other studies. The data was interrogated using a Pearson Chi-squared test to see if there were any statistically significant relationships between the variables and the PGCE route taken. I have included ρ values (Table 5.1) only where $\rho \leq 0.05$, and therefore suggests a relationship between the variable and the likelihood of deciding to take the PGCE/M which cannot be explained by chance alone.

5.2 Characteristics

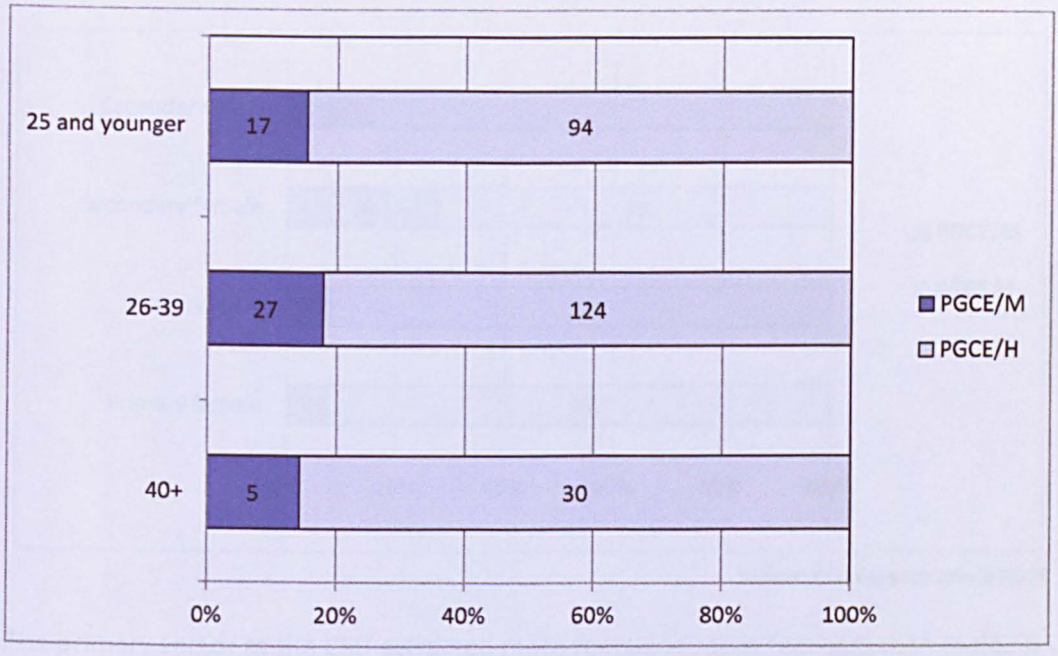
This section explores the characteristics of student teachers and draws contrasts between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M cohorts where appropriate. The characteristics that I have compared are listed in Table 5.1 and the quantitative data for these variables are shown on Figures 5.1 to 5.7.

Table 5.1 Relationship between student characteristics and PGCE route taken

Characteristic	Source of data	P	Effect on decision
Age Group	CSU data for whole PGCE cohort	Not significant	N/A
Gender	CSU data for whole PGCE cohort	Not significant overall, but significant (p = 0.05) among the secondary cohort	For secondary cohort male student teachers less likely to take PGCE/M.
Ethnicity	CSU data for whole PGCE cohort	0.002	BME student teachers less likely to take PGCE/M
Linguistic background	CSU data for secondary PGCE	0.0004	Student teachers with EAL less likely to take PGCE/M
Place of education	CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort	0.02	Student teachers educated outside the UK less likely to take PGCE/M
Parents' educational levels	Survey	Not significant	N/A

Age group

Figure 5.1 Proportion of PGCE student teachers opting for PGCE/H and PGCE/M by age group



Source: CSU data for whole PGCE cohort

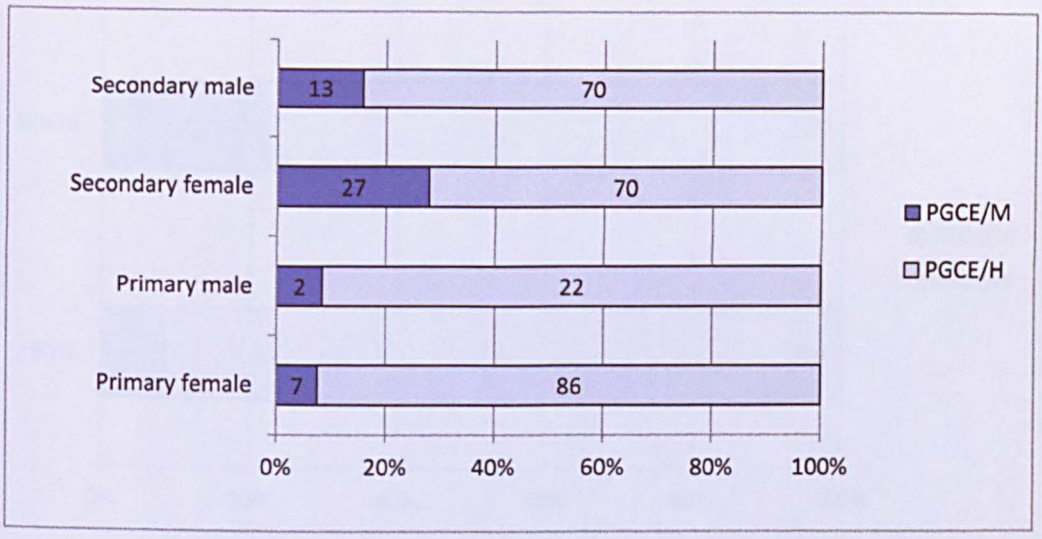
The CSU data sets show that the student teachers' age group was not a significant predictor of the PGCE route taken. However, I recognise the limitations of using these broad age group categories which could mask the effects of age on decisions made. Different age groups categories, for example, 30 and younger, 31-40 and 40+ could have revealed a different relationship.

At interview, Elizabeth (F, 40+, WB, SH)[23] spoke about concerns related to whether she had the stamina to manage the additional workload alongside her other responsibilities which she associated with being a more mature student. One limitation of the student teacher interview sample was that it did not include anyone from the age group 25 and below, and so I cannot tell whether the younger students would have talked about their age as a factor in the decisions they made. In Chapter 6, I show that some student teachers described challenges in returning to formal education related to acquiring an understanding of changed academic practices. O'Donnell et al (2009) also drew attention to the difficulties that PG students can face when returning to formal education after a gap.

[23] The codes refer, in this order, to gender, age group, ethnicity, PGCE route. See Chapter 3, p57 for full explanation of codes.

Gender

Figure 5.2 Proportion of student teachers opting for PGCE/H and PGCE/M by sector and gender



Source: CSU data for whole PGCE

The primary sector at the CSU attracted more female student teachers than male, in keeping with the national trend. The secondary sector was more balanced in terms of gender. For the secondary sector, males were significantly less likely to take the PGCE/M ($\rho = 0.05$). One possible explanation for this might be linked with another significant characteristic – subject of study. Although the CSU data sets do not allow me to isolate variables, I know from my own experiential knowledge that there were more men than women in the secondary subjects of maths, science and PE. As I show later, in this chapter, student teachers from these subject areas were less likely to take the PGCE/M. The data collected from the student teachers at interview provide a contrasting illustration of gendered effects. For example, Muna and Freda (PGCE/H) spoke about family responsibilities which had triggered concerns about the time and workload requirements of the PGCE/M. Although the quantitative data demonstrate that gender was not a significant factor for the primary sector, the interview data illustrate some gendered effects related to different career aspirations and constructions of teacher identity. I return to explore these more fully in Chapter 6.

Ethnicity

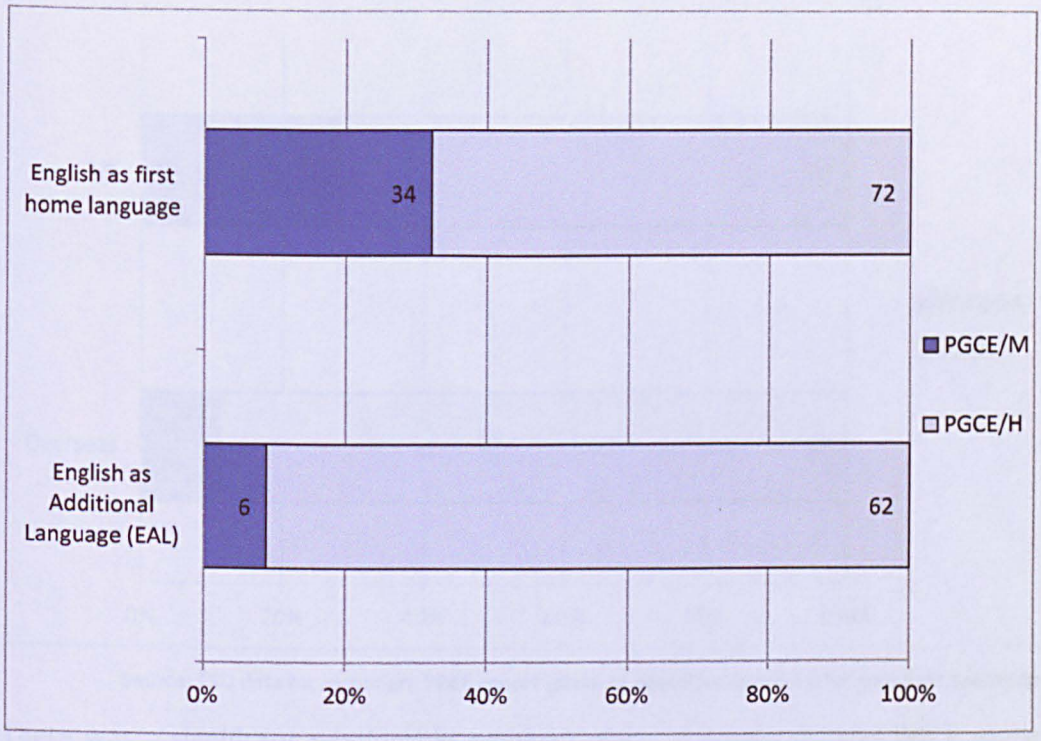
Figure 5.3 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H and PGCE/M by ethnicity

Source: CSU data for whole PGCE cohort (12 student teachers' ethnicity unknown)

The CSU data set records ethnicity using three categories: white, black and minority ethnic (BME) or unknown. Ethnicity was a significant variable ($\rho=0.002$), suggesting a relationship between ethnicity and the likelihood of deciding to take the PGCE/M which cannot be explained by chance alone. BME students were significantly less likely to opt for the PGCE/M. A possible explanation for this is the increased likelihood that BME student teachers will have EAL and have been educated outside the UK (also significant variables). During interview, these factors were used by student teachers to explain their decision-making as were other factors related to culture and ethnicity; this is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

Linguistic background

Figure 5.4 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H and PGCE/M by linguistic background



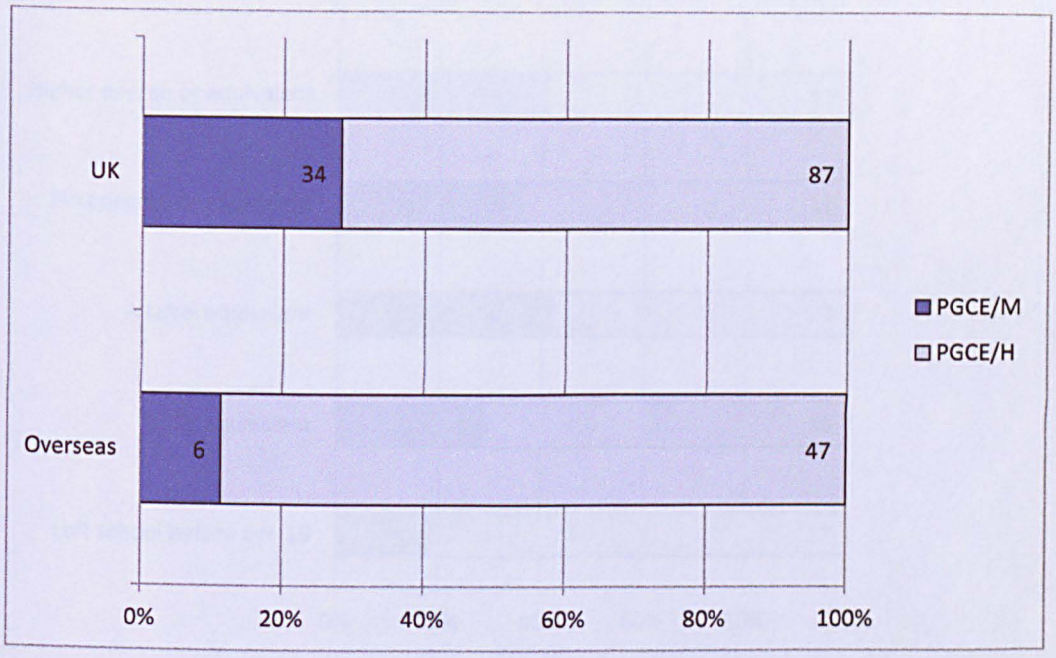
Source: CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort (8 student teachers' linguistic background was unknown)

In order to be eligible for teacher training all student teachers must hold the minimum equivalent of a GCSE in English at grades A-C. In addition, the requirements[24] for entry to ITT required ITT providers to rigorously check for accuracy and academic style in written English. Despite this, there was a significant relationship between having English as a first home language and deciding to take the PGCE/M ($\rho = 0.0004$).

24 http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20091002205646/http://tda.gov.uk/partners/ittstandards/guidance_08/itt/R1_6.aspx (accessed 8/7/12)

Place of education

Figure 5.5 Proportion of student teachers opting to take PGCE/H and PGCE/M by place of education

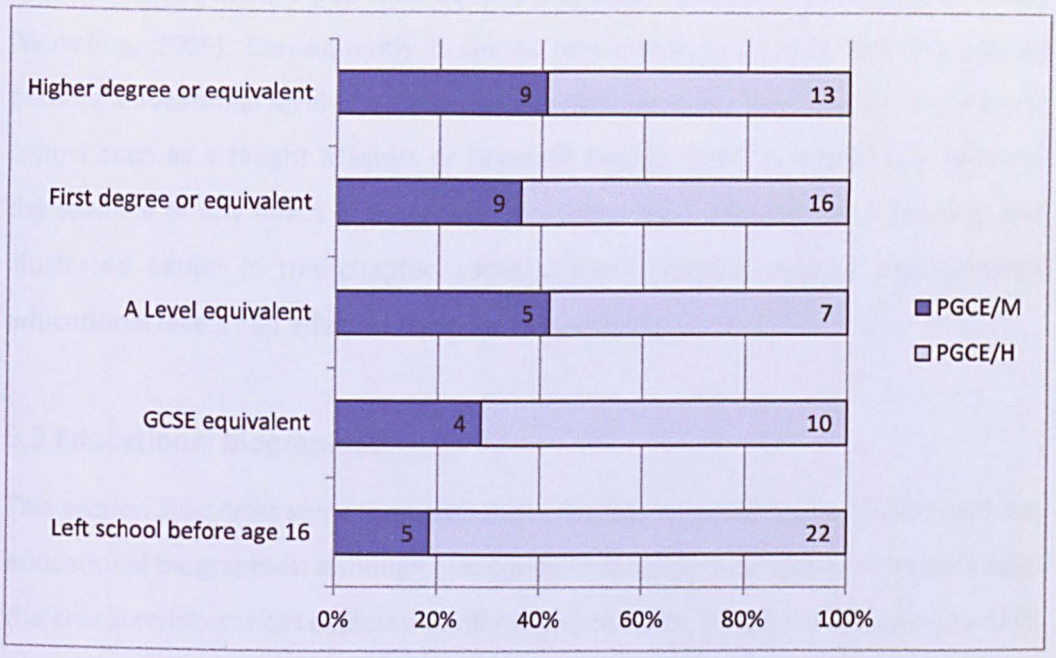


Source: CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort (place of education unknown for 6 student teachers)

There was a significant relationship between place of education and PGCE route taken ($\rho = 0.02$). Student teachers educated in the UK (this could have been for secondary or higher education) were more likely to take the PGCE/M.

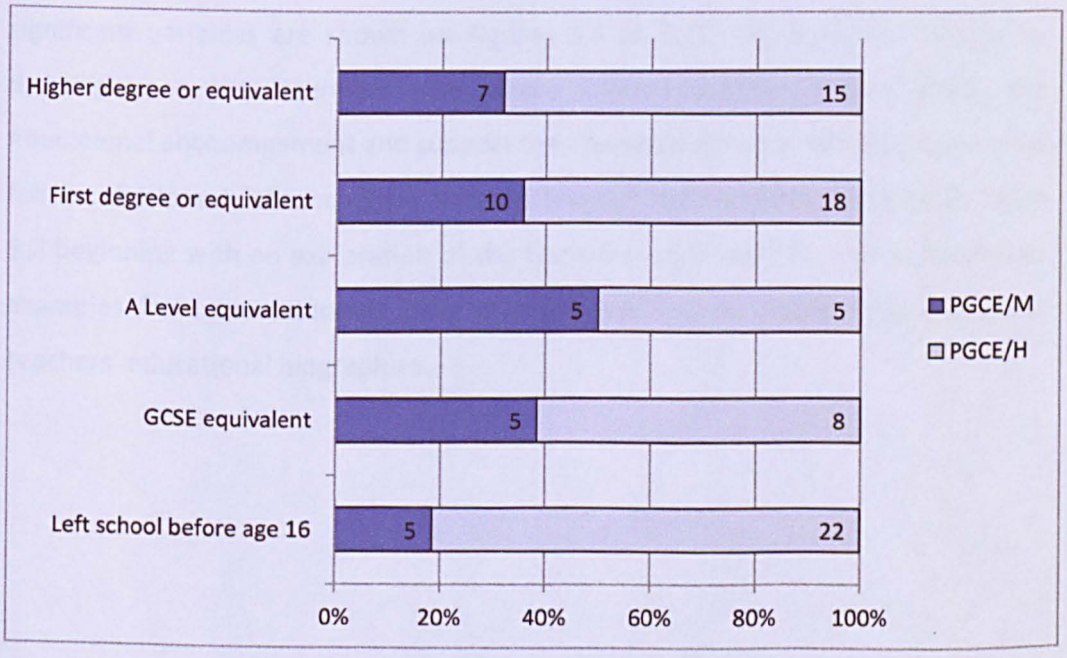
Parents' educational levels

Figure 5.6 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H or PGCE/M by father's educational level



Source: Survey data

Figure 5.7 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H or PGCE/M by mother's educational level



Source: Survey data

Other studies have linked parental educational level with entry to PG study (Wakeling, 2009). The quantitative data collected for this study did not show a significant relationship between parental educational level and the decisions made about the PGCE/M, and so the differences could be caused by chance alone. Whilst

the vast majority of PG students are middle class, a higher proportion of working class students do the PGCE than other PG courses (Masters or research degrees) (Wakeling, 2005). Consequently it seems reasonable to predict that the overall parents' educational level of a PGCE cohort might be lower than that for another PG cohort such as a taught Masters or research degree and this might have reduced the salience of any effect of parental educational level. However, at interview, as I illustrated earlier in this chapter, some student teachers implied that parental educational levels had affected their decision-making.

5.3 Educational biographies

This section illustrates some contrasts that emerged in relation to student teachers' educational biographies; although I recognise that these biographies are linked with the characteristics that I explored earlier in the chapter. I have drawn upon the CSU, survey and interview data. The variables in the CSU and survey data that I have associated with educational biographies are listed in Table 5.2 and the data for the significant variables are shown on Figures 5.8 to 5.11. My discussion begins by drawing upon the interview data where student teachers talked about the educational encouragement and support they received at home. My discussion then follows the loosely chronological order with which the variables are listed in Table 5.2 beginning with an exploration of the transition to University. I have integrated examples from the interview data that provide further insights about student teachers' educational biographies.

Table 5.2 Variables related to educational biographies

Variable	Source of data	ρ	Effect
University type for first degree	Survey data	0.05	Student teachers who attended an 'old' University more likely to take PGCE/M.
Degree classification	CSU data for whole PGCE cohort	0.05	Student teachers with a 2.1 and above more likely to take PGCE/M.
Previous postgraduate study	CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort	Not significant	N/A
Sector of PGCE study	CSU data for whole PGCE cohort	0.001	Secondary student teachers more likely to take PGCE/M.
Subject of study	CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort	0.00	English and citizenship student teachers most likely to take PGCE/M.

Educational support at home

During the interviews I used questions designed to probe familial attitudes towards education and learning, and to probe levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). I drew upon empirical studies (Sullivan, 2006; Noble and Davies, 2009) that have equated cultural capital with assets at home such as availability of resources such as books, newspapers, frequency of educational trips and used questions to elicit this information. I asked questions, such as, 'Did your parents hope that you would go to University?'; 'Did they help you choose the University course?'; 'Did you have many books at home, daily newspapers?'; 'Do you remember your parents taking you out on educational trips?'; 'How would you describe the types of conversation at home?'

The PGCE/M interview participants were a less diverse group than the PGCE/H sample of interview participants – all had been educated in the UK and spoke English as a first language, although less diversity is to be expected in part by the fact that there were there were fewer of them. However, this small sample was representative of the full cohort of PGCE/M student teachers who were less diverse than the full PGCE cohort in relation to ethnicity, linguistic background and place of education.

All interview participants spoke of being encouraged and supported in their education, but in different ways, and their accounts demonstrate some of the sub-cultural differences that come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, Carlo, Adela, and Freda (PGCE/H) – all educated outside of the UK – talked about being 'pushed':

> She [mother] had many children and so she knew the importance of an education but whereas for the others she couldn't afford it for me it was different and so she pushed me. (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH)

> Yes, I've always been pushed, pushed to learn ... (Adela, F, 26-39, WE, SH)

> My dad was into education, so he was pushing us, he would do anything so we would get the best education. (Freda, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Both Elizabeth (PGCE/H) and Jenny (PGCE/M) suggested a more liberal approach when asked about family expectations, which they attributed to changing times:

> ... things were so much more casual then. I think kids today get pushed ... (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH)

> I had a traditional middle class upbringing. So there was a lot of support at home. Though oddly enough not a lot of focussed encouragement in the way that people parent now. (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM).

The responses from the interview participants about cultural capital assets at home varied, and included references to books, newspapers, trips out, private tuition, music and drama lessons. There is no clear demarcation between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M interview participants in relation to these cultural capital assets (Sullivan, 2006; Noble and Davies, 2009). However there are differences and these differences contribute in subtle ways towards individual learner identities and levels of confidence. Comments from the PGCE/H student teachers suggest more limited amounts of cultural capital assets. For example, Chris (M, 26-39, WB, SH) said, 'not in the slightest' when asked whether books, newspapers, educational trips had been part of his growing up. He said, 'I wasn't good at reading because I wasn't encouraged at home to do it.' Farah remembered a trip when she was young:

> I remember, once, there was a trip to the Natural history museum, but that was very rare ... my dad was working shifts and my mum wasn't confident enough in her English to take us out and show us things. (Farah, 26-39, AB, SH)

Muna, similarly referred to some limitations caused by her parents' linguistic background, although at the same time identified the educational support she received when taught to read some Arabic and Bengali:

> I didn't read with my parents when I was young, they couldn't read and speak English but they would tell us stories in our own language and my mum taught me to read some Arabic and Bengali. (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Transition to University

I found the notion of learning trajectories referred to in Chapter 2, useful when exploring student teachers' educational biographies. Gorard et al (1998) identified

typical learning trajectories of participants and non-participants in lifelong learning, i.e. there were characteristic and predictable patterns of participation and non-participation for groups of individuals. At interview, the PGCE/M student teachers' described learner trajectories fitting with Gorard et al's (1998) category of 'transitional learner trajectories' in that they reported only 'continuous full time education ... so far in their lives' or 'lifetime trajectories' if the current episode of learning on the PGCE was following a transitional learner trajectory (p 403). They had all transferred directly from taking A-levels to UG degree courses. Only Richard talked about changing degree subject and taking a year out during his UG degree studies, although his change of degree subject from Physics to Music had been planned beforehand:

> It was kind of a plan before I got there ... I knew when I got there that I wanted to do that but it was still a big decision, you know like I'd got a place to do a Masters in Physics. (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM)

In contrast, within the PGCE/H group, there are also examples of disrupted learner trajectories which bear some similarity to those reported by Crossan et al (2003, p4), that is, occasions when learner identity had 'been fractured, or informed by periods of absence and possible antipathy towards education and training'. For example, Freda described having to wait a year before being able to go to University, 'What happened in Ghana there was a strike that threw the people entering University that year backwards' (Freda, F, 26-39, BA, SH). Muna had to leave her first degree course when she got married, 'I didn't quite finish because coming from an Asian family and being the oldest I had to give it up when I got married' (Muna, F, 26-39, AB). Farah spoke about taking a longer time to finish her Higher National Diploma (HND) and degree, 'When I was taking the HND I went through a lot, I got married and had kids and that was why it took me a long time to finish my HND and degree.' Farah also changed her University for her UG degree course:

> My tutor didn't think the degree course was for me, she thought I should go into work, but I was determined I didn't want to stop ... I thought she was quite negative towards me ... and so eventually I changed my Uni instead of staying there and not getting any support. (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Both Carlo and Melanie described periods of antipathy towards formal learning. Melanie returned to formal education after 11 years working as a nursery worker and Carlo returned after working in restaurants:

> I did my GCSEs and basically I didn't like secondary school and so the sooner I could get out the better ... (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, SH)

> I started Uni ... and then I quit. I went working in restaurants and then I thought 'No' study is better after all. So I went back to University when I was 25 ... (Carlo, 26-39, WE, SH)

These learner trajectories also fit within Gorard et al's (1998) category of 'delayed leaner trajectories' identified by a substantial 'learning gap' after school followed by a 'substantive episode of learning' (p403).

The majority of interview participants (both PGCE/H and PGCE/M) described progression from school to University as part of an expected trajectory, although for some student teachers this was not an embedded aspect of family history (more likely within the PGCE/H group). For example, Farah, a PGCE/H student teacher, spoke about an expectation that she should go to University:

> Yes, there was an expectation definitely ... because we were quite a close knit family my oldest cousin went , she studied law, yeah nearly all my cousins went and the ones that didn't go (laughs) were looked down upon, they were the ones that dossed about. (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

However, Farah's parents had not been to University:

> He [father] did training, he worked in Ford. At that time they were doing some sort of training, apprenticeship and so he worked there. My mother only studied until college because at that time it was more focussed on getting married even though she wanted to study it wasn't part of the culture, tradition. (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Chris (PGCE/H) spoke about being forced into going to University, unlike his sisters, 'I have two sisters – they weren't forced into it. I was, because my dad is a bit old school and I'm the boy. He wanted me to do really well' (Chris, M, 26-39, WB, SH).

In contrast an extensive family history of University was more likely for the PGCE/M interview participants (3 out of 4). For example:

> It was not really spoken about. I always knew that I was going to University. Perhaps that was part of the family. My mum and dad both went to University and both got Masters. (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM)

> It was very much the expectation from my family in that both my parents had gone. My brother had gone to Art school to do a degree. My father had been in the Navy and he had done his Masters through the Naval equivalent. My grandparents were teachers on both sides, a headmaster on one side and a Welsh and English teacher on the other. (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM)

For three of the interview participants (PGCE/M and PGCE/H) we can infer that going to University was not an expectation, although, only Muna mentioned any actual resistance from the family about going to University:

> I went on to say that I want to go to University and my mum was in a daze she said well who goes to University? ... And because I was so young and back then there wasn't anyone who had been in my generation and so it was a new thing. She was like well you're not going to go. My father on the other hand was very different... (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

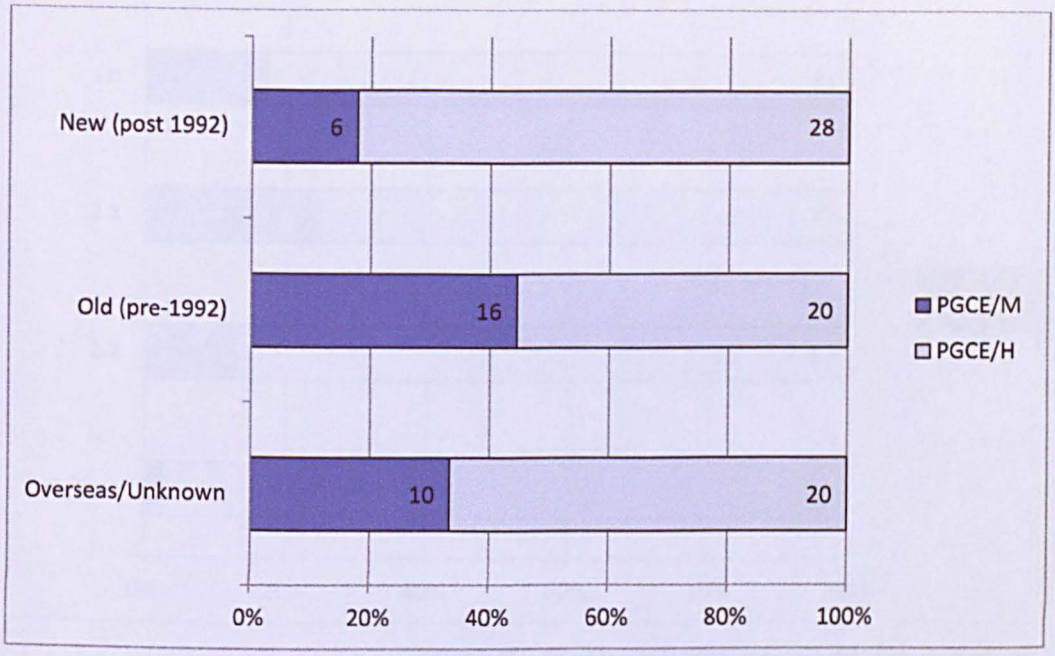
Tom (M, 26-39, WB, PM) said that his parents, 'although willing to support him financially, did not expect it'. Melanie described some disappointment when she did not immediately go:

> She [mother] was kind of disappointed I didn't stay on at school, do my A Levels and go to University but at the same time she was equally pleased that I went and got myself a career. (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH)

In Chapter 2 I described Reay et al's (2005) identification of two different discourses of choice in their study of educational transitions to HE resulting in contingent and embedded choosers. A family history of HE is a characteristic of an embedded chooser. Overall, although not exclusively, the PGCE/M group of interview participants displayed this characteristic of an embedded chooser which Reay et al (2005) associated with greater cultural capital.

First Degree University

Figure 5.8 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H and PGCE/M by type of University for first degree

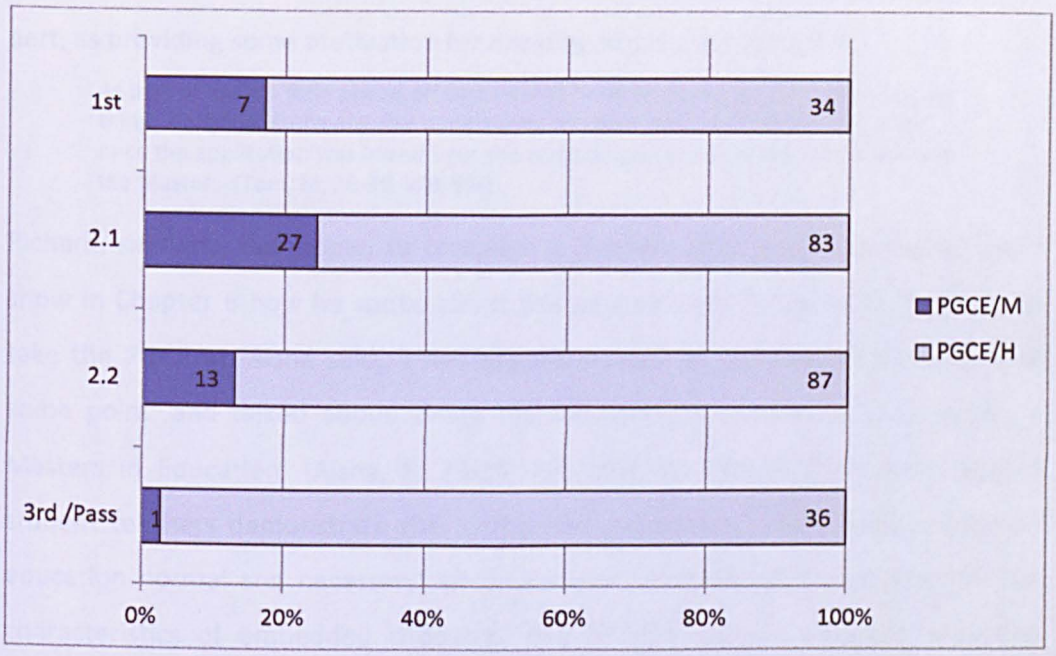


Source: Survey data

This data was collected via the survey and therefore only available for those student teachers (primary and secondary) who responded to the survey (100 out of a possible 297, with 65% of all the PGCE/M students responding and 27% of the PGCE/H group responding). Student teachers from 'old' Universities were significantly more likely ($p = 0.05$) to take the PGCE/M than those from 'new' Universities. This is in keeping with the findings from Wakeling's (2009) study which highlighted the effects of first degree institution on participation rates for PG study, with higher numbers of graduates from 'older' universities participating in PG study. Reay et al's (2005) concept of institutional habitus is useful when considering the effect of first degree institution. The division between 'old' and 'new' Universities in HE and consequent hierarchies in HE have been reproduced in part by the perceptions held and the decisions made by student teachers, i.e. those who attended an 'old' University were more likely to choose the more prestigious PGCE route, as they perceived it. Choosing the more prestigious route could also be considered to fit with the embedded choice discourse as described by Reay et al (2005) who identified recognition of the significance of University status as a characteristic of an embedded chooser.

Degree classification

Figure 5.9 Proportion of Student teachers opting for PGCE/H and PGCE/M by degree classification



Source: CSU data for whole PGCE cohort (9 unknown or overseas)

Student teachers who decided to take the PGCE/M were significantly more likely to have degree classifications at 2.1 or above ($\rho = 0.005$). This is predictable given that the typical entry requirements for studying for a Masters degree are to hold a degree at 2.1 or above. Nine degree classifications were unknown, either undeclared or because degrees were taken overseas. Overall degree classifications were higher for those student teachers entering the secondary sector than the primary sector (the modal classification was at 2.1 for secondary and at 2.2 for primary.

Postgraduate qualifications

Student teachers choosing to take the PGCE/M were slightly more likely to have other PG qualifications, but this was a marginal difference and could be explained by chance alone. Some student teachers may have chosen not to take the PGCE/M because they already hold a higher degree; there were eight student teachers (out of the 22 respondents to the survey with higher degrees) who stated that already having a Masters degree was a reason not to engage with the PGCE/M when responding to the questionnaire for the on-line survey.

Within the PGCE/M interview sample, Jenny already had a Masters in Film Studies. Tom had started a Masters and then withdrawn, but spoke about this, in part, as providing some motivation for deciding to take the PGCE/M:

> As part of me is a little pissed off that I didn't finish it when I was 21. I hate leaving things dangling, so having the opportunity to come back and take it was good ... once the application was in and I got the acceptance, yes I will take that, I will take the Masters. (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, SM)

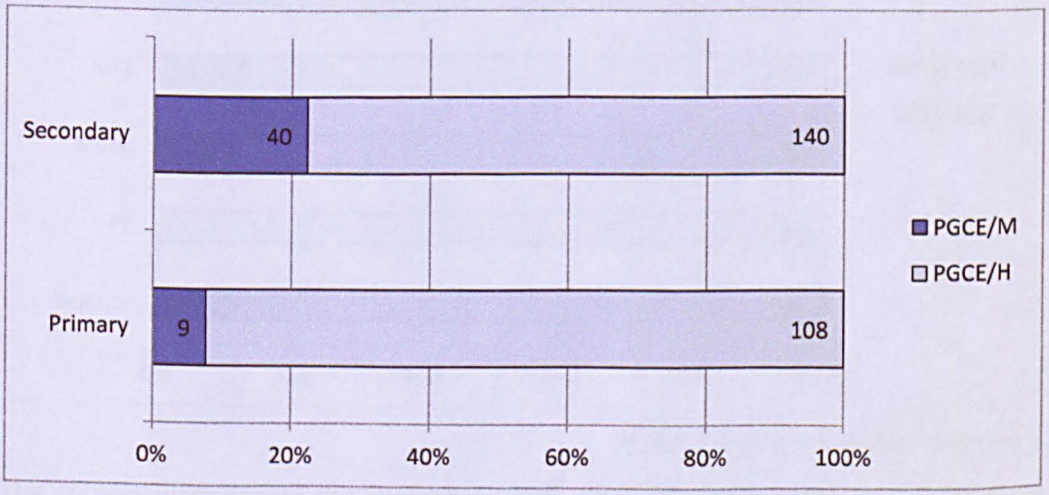
Richard, similarly, had hoped to complete a Masters after his Music degree and I show in Chapter 6 how he spoke about this as a relevant factor in his decision to take the PGCE/M. Aisha said, 'I had always wanted to do Masters level work at some point' and talked about 'doing the full Masters, eventually ... definitely a Masters in Education' (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM). Comments from the PGCE/M student teachers demonstrate the 'embedded aspirations which made continued education normal and necessary' which Reay et al (2005, p21) said describe the characteristics of embedded choosers. The PGCE/H student teachers also had aspirations for studying at Masters in the future but their plans were more tentative:

> ... once I finally settle in school and feel totally relaxed ... yes I think I wouldn't mind. (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH)

> I definitely want to continue with academic work [referring to Masters], but at the moment I'm just thinking, it depends on what help I can get. If I can try and do a course to help me with my academic English I'd like to perhaps learn more about teaching pupils with dyslexia ... (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Sector of study

Figure 5.10 Proportion of student teachers opting take the PGCE/H and PGCE/M by sector of study



Source: CSU data for whole PGCE cohort

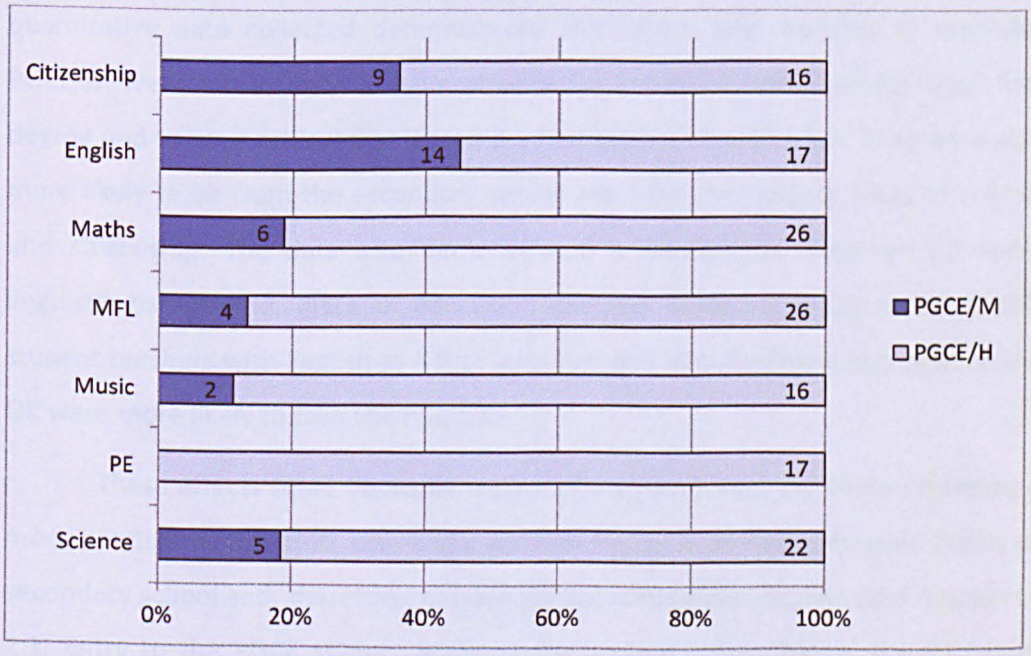
The secondary PGCE student teachers were significantly more likely (ρ=0.001) to take the PGCE/M than the primary PGCE student teachers. It is also helpful to consider these numbers as percentages of each sector respectively – 92% of the primary cohort chose **not** to engage with the PGCE/M compared with 78% of the secondary cohort. This might be explained by the more cautious response from the primary academic course team towards the PGCE/M shown by the evidence presented in Chapter 4. During interview, the primary course leader said:

> There is not really the time. I'm not positive about it, but I'm speaking for myself. I mean I know others in the team do feel the same way about is as me, but not everyone. (Primary course leader)

Another possible explanation is that the primary student teachers were significantly less likely to have gained a degree classification of 2.1 or above (ρ = 0.0001). As I have shown previously a degree classification of 2.1 and above was a significant predictor of deciding to take the PGCE/M. However, one key limitation of this study has been the small amount of data collected from primary student teachers, which has limited my exploration of the decision-making for the primary student teachers.

Subject of study

Figure 5.11 Proportion of student teachers opting to take the PGCE/H and PGCE/M by subject of study



Source: CSU data for secondary PGCE cohort

The subject discipline of the secondary PGCE was a significant predictor for taking the PGCE/M. The PGCE/M student teachers were more likely to be from the

subjects of English and citizenship, with the other subject areas significantly less represented within the PGCE/M cohort ($\rho = 0.00$). English PGCE students made up 35% of the PGCE/M cohort compared with 17% of the total secondary cohort and citizenship students made up 23% of the PGCE/M compared with 14% of the total secondary cohort. The CSU data sets did not allow me to explore whether those student teachers taking English and citizenship were significantly more likely to have the other characteristics which were significant predictors of taking the PGCE/M, such as gaining a higher degree classification or having English as a first home language. However, my own knowledge of the different secondary subject cohorts would suggest this. The data collected from the interviews show that subject discipline was linked with particular academic concerns and these are explored further in Chapter 6.

5.4 Concluding comments

This chapter set out to provide a contextual comparison between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers in order to explore any relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decision made about the PGCE/M. The quantitative data collected demonstrated that those who decided to take the PGCE/M were more likely to have attended a pre-1992 University for their first degree and to have achieved at least a 2.1 first degree classification. They were also more likely to be from the secondary sector and from the subject areas of English and citizenship. The data also demonstrated a relationship between ethnicity, linguistic background, place of education and the decisions made; white British student teachers with English as a first language and who had been educated in the UK were more likely to take the PGCE/M.

These effects could be explained by attainment levels, i.e. those attending a more prestigious pre-1992 University were more likely to have achieved highly at secondary school and, therefore, to have gained a minimum degree classification of 2.1. Entry to the PGCE subject areas of English and citizenship at the CSU (and nationally) was more competitive – they were not classed as shortage subject

areas[25] and, therefore, able to recruit more highly qualified student teachers. In addition, BME students are more likely to attend post-1992 Universities (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003; Read et al, 2003; Leathwood, 2004), and are less likely to graduate with a higher degree classification. For example, in 2008/9 the attainment gap[26] between the proportion of white and BME graduate students who attained a minimum degree classification of 2.1 was 18.0%. BME students are also more likely to choose degree subject areas from science, engineering and technology[27]. However, the data collected from the student teachers during interview provide deeper insights and demonstrate that the decision-making was complex and could not simply be attributed to different attainment levels.

The data illustrate the potential impact of cultural capital advantage on decision-making. Student teachers who possessed capital advantage as suggested by cultural capital markers were more likely to opt for the PGCE/M. The markers of cultural capital were selected on the basis that they might prove advantageous within the fields of academic life and/or UK schools: having English as a first home language; familiarity with the U.K educational system (through school study in U.K); educational credentials (2.1 or above); first degree taken at an 'old' University; parental educational levels and white ethnicity. The data collected in the survey did not show a significant relationship between parental educational level and the decisions made, although the data collected from the interviews with student teachers suggest that parental educational levels and cultural assets did have an impact on decision-making for some student teachers.

Overall, it did seem that the introduction of differentiated pathways on the PGCE had re-introduced inequalities. The student teachers could be considered to have reached a level playing field in that they had all been accepted to train as school teachers. Wakeling (2009, p80) in his study on social class and access to PG study drew attention to how inequalities can be reintroduced into a universal or

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[25] The TDA classed these secondary subjects as priority subjects for improving recruitment nationally. http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1011/hc03/0357/0357.pdf

[26] http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/equality-in-higher-education-statistical-report-2010.doc/view accessed 10/09/12

[27] http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/equality-in-higher-education-statistical-report-2010.doc/view accessed 10/09/12

near universal education sector as a result of differentials such as the institution attended, 'tracking' and the type of qualification attempted. He referred to this as the 'effectively maintained inequality hypothesis'. Interviews with course leaders at the CSU revealed concerns that student teachers were not taking the PGCE/M despite producing work at that level on the PGCE/H. Those who decided not to take the PGCE/M were disproportionately less advantaged in terms of cultural capital for the field, i.e. more likely to have EAL, to have attended a post-1992 University for their first degree, to have been educated outside of the UK, and to be from a BME background.

I have found it useful to draw upon the ideas discussed by O'Donnell et al (2009) from their study of transitions to PG education. They considered transition experiences for a heterogeneous group of students (in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity), recognising that a heterogeneous group of students will experience transition in different ways and for some transition will pose greater challenges. Many of the students at the CSU, and significantly more within the PGCE/H group, could be referred to as 'non-traditional' in that they did not typically represent entrants to the PGCE nationally. I would argue that in the particular context of this case study, some of the student teachers who decided not to take the PGCE/M avoided an additional transition i.e. that required to undertake M level study. All student teachers had already opted for the transition to follow a pathway of ITE at CSU, but many rejected the additional transition to M level. For some student teachers, this additional transition posed greater challenges (as perceived by them) than for other student teachers. The findings presented in Chapter 6 explore how student teachers held different perceptions of the challenge posed by this additional transition to M level study.

6 Exploring student teachers' educational decision-making

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and explores the data collected in relation to all the research questions, but primarily in relation to:

- **How did student teachers account for their decisions about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?**
- **In what ways did student teachers construct M Level study as part of their Initial Teacher Education**

I aim to address Bourdieu's second stage of research – to include a subjective analysis of individual's dispositions to act and their perceptions of the field (Paton, 2007b). My analysis draws on the findings from non-participants (PGCE/H) and participants (PGCE/M), using data from the survey and from the interviews with student teachers and course leaders. A key question on the survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) asked student teachers to select factors[28] from a list which were reasons in explaining the decision they made regarding whether or not to take the PGCE/M. There were two versions of this question – one for those who decided to take the PGCE/M and one for those who decided not to. This survey data was then a starting point for the subsequent thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews. The analysis of the interview data provided deeper insights into student teachers' decision-making which were used alongside the survey data to identify a thematic structure for a discussion of the factors that emerged.

I considered various themes for the analysis and presentation of this data; my final choice was to some extent arbitrary because the themes interconnect and overlap. I have aimed to illustrate interconnections between themes, and to highlight the overlapping influences from family, friends and the CSU, which were illuminating, but in different ways and with different weight. My analysis has made use of Bourdieu's theoretical approach, specifically habitus and cultural capital which I have found useful in considering the development of individual learner

[28] The numbers of student teachers selecting each of the factors listed for both versions of this question is included in Appendix 2.

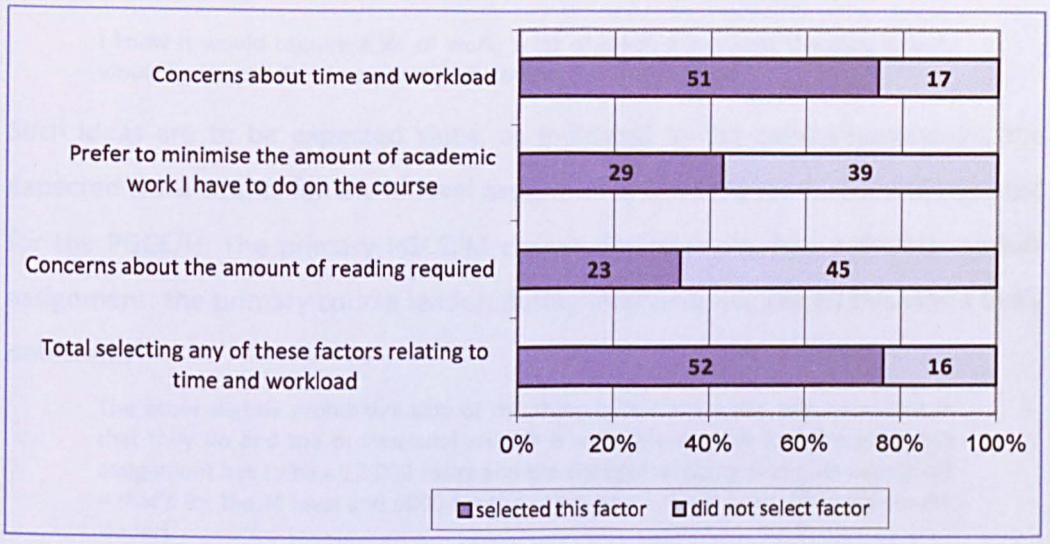
identities and the ways in which different levels of individual agency and the structuring effects of socio-cultural experiences generated different decisions.

In order to develop a greater understanding of student teachers' decision-making and its potential impact on reproducing inequalities, the survey and interview data have been integrated to illustrate patterns – comparing and contrasting the data collected from the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers where appropriate. The discussion that follows is structured according to the following themes: concerns about time and workload; student teachers' academic concerns and academic motivations; confidence in relation to ITE; the risk factor; the different ways in which student teachers perceived the value or otherwise of M level study; and aspirations for career development. Taking each theme in turn, I have used relevant examples from the survey data, and interview transcripts to demonstrate the evidence informing my analysis.

6.2 Concerns about time and workload

The survey question aimed at those student teachers not taking the PGCE/M included three separate factors related to time and workload. The other version of this question, aimed at those who decided to take the PGCE/M, did not include factors related to time and workload and so I cannot say anything about the PGCE/M student teachers' views on these unless anything relevant was said by the interview participants. In retrospect it might have been more useful to have designed these questions so that the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers had the same list of factors to respond to. The PGCE/H student teachers chose factors relating to time and workload most frequently with the majority of the survey respondents (52 out of 68) selecting at least one of the listed factors related to time and workload. The numbers selecting each factor are shown on Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Which of the following factors influenced your decision not to engage with the M level PGCE? Numbers of PGCE/H respondents who selected factors related to concerns about time and workload



Source: Survey data

I refer to time and workload concerns together because they were combined on the survey question. However, in hindsight I realise that it would have been better to have avoided this combination. Nevertheless, the other factors selected by individual respondents as well as additional open text comments gave some indication of whether the concern was workload, lack of available time or both. For example, in the open text box, two student teachers added comments about family/childcare responsibilities; 'I had to consider my childcare in regards to twilight sessions which are compulsory with M level' (PGCE/H Primary Female), which suggests that lack of available time was the prime concern for this student teacher. Those student teachers who selected concerns about amount of reading and preferring to minimise the amount of academic work were presumably concerned about the workload, although both these factors may be related to academic concerns which are discussed as part of a separate but interrelated theme.

The data collected from the interviews provide deeper insights, in relation to student teachers' perceptions of the demands of the PGCE/M and the factors that triggered time and/or workload concerns. Evidence from the interviews show that student teachers' ideas about M level study typically mentioned doing 'more' of something; the overriding view being that the PGCE/M had a heavy workload. For example Carlo and Muna who both decided not to take the PGCE/M said:

> ... obviously we would be required to produce longer work and more thoughts in the work and ... and have done a greater research. (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH) [29]

> I knew it would require a lot of work, a lot of reading and that the assignments would be longer. So, I knew that part. (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Such ideas are to be expected since, as indicated in the course handbooks, the expected word counts for the M level assignments were higher than those required for the PGCE/H. The primary PGCE/M course, for example, had a double module assignment; the primary course leader, during interview, suggested this was a likely deterrent:

> The other slightly prohibitive side of the thing is that there are two components that they do and the professional studies is a double module and therefore the assignment has to be a 12,000 essay and the thought of doing that puts people off – that's for the M level and 6000 for the other one – the H level. (Primary course leader)

The interview data show that there were varied reasons why students selected factors related to 'time and workload concerns'. Freda had originally applied and been accepted for the PGCE/M but had then changed her mind because of her decision to start a family:

> I thought I could easily do the M level. But when I took the decision to have a family then I knew I would not have the time to do the research. I also had to work evenings to finance the course ... I was disappointed and now I feel even more disappointed, I think I could have done it from the grades I'm getting. (Freda, F, 26-39, BA, SH)

For Freda, the perception of a high workload for M level, financial constraints and lack of available time hindered her aspirations. Another example of thwarted aspiration, with time concerns similarly triggered by family responsibilities came from Muna:

> I went for the easier option because the thing is I had just moved out with my husband as well and I didn't want to take up all my time doing the Masters work where I would be staying up doing loads and loads of work and I just wanted to give him that time ... Had it been anything else I would have done the Masters ... (Muna, F, 26-39, BA, SH)

During the interview Muna used a gendered and racialised discourse when referring to the difficulties she had faced during her UG degree studies – managing domestic responsibilities combined with her studies. She talked about the cultural expectation within her Asian background for newly married wives to stay at home,

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[29] The codes refer, in this order, to gender, age group, ethnicity, PGCE route. See Chapter 3, p 57 for full explanation of codes.

complete the chores and cook for all the family and guests. Her mother-in-law had not been supportive of her continuing her education, and only now, some years later, had her husband's family accepted that she would train as a teacher and go out to work.

Another trigger for time/workload concerns was the perceived tension between school duties and the required workload for the PGCE/M. For example, Carlo believed that he would need all his time and energy for lesson planning fuelled by his fears about teaching practice:

> ... because I'm such a slow person when planning lessons ... I was really worried about going into school, I knew that say 90% of my energy would be channelled into lesson planning and overcoming my fears... (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH)

Melanie did not want studying for the PGCE/M to prevent her from spending time on other teaching duties, 'Well, I don't want to spend my evenings just doing M level work, I would question how much time I was putting into classroom practice' (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH). A secondary course leader suggested that the secondary PE student teachers were wary of the additional PGCE/M workload because of a potentially longer school day:

> There is a perception in PE, and I think there is some truth in it that their school based work can be longer hours at school because of extracurricular activities ... So they're very wary of that. (Secondary course leader)

Elizabeth used an age (and gendered) based discourse to highlight how she perceived the time demands to be greater for her as a mature student:

> I'm no longer in my 20s I've watched some of my peers achieving their deadlines by staying up all night and I just can't do that anymore – I no longer have the energy ... you know being older than my peers, I don't just go home, and have a few beers, I've got stuff I have to do and the workload has got to fit in with everything else I've got to do ... you know looking at the kids [younger peers] who just go home and the tea is on the table because mum's cooked it for them. (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH)

These examples provide evidence of the situational barriers (Gorard et al, 2006) referred to in Chapter 2 of this thesis, that are linked with available time and costs dependent on individual circumstances. However, student teachers' perceptions of situational barriers are also informed by their current circumstances. Circumstances may describe objective realities, for example Elizabeth is a mature student (40+), older than the majority of her peers on the course; however the analysis of her circumstances is subjective, although a product of these circumstances. In contrast,

Jenny, another mature student teacher, decided to take the PGCE/M. I show later in the chapter how she used her status as a mature student (40+) to demonstrate increased levels of confidence and experience, which perhaps contributed towards her decision to take the PGCE/M. Bourdieu's notion of habitus is useful in providing a conceptual tool to consider the dynamic relationship between objective probabilities and subjective orientations. Jenny's subjective analysis of her circumstances was different to Elizabeth's, a product of her different habitus and embodied cultural capital.

I agree with Gorard et al's (2006) caution regarding use of the over simplified term, 'barriers', which does not convey the interconnectedness of different factors that act as 'barriers' to participation. This is illustrated by the example I used earlier from the interview with Carlo, who was not educated in the UK and for who English is an additional language. Carlo was concerned that he would need all his time for lesson planning, but this was linked to his fears about teaching and schools. He was nervous about teaching practice, saying, 'schools here are scary places' (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH). An education in the UK and having English as a first language are characteristics which I have identified as markers of cultural capital relevant to the field of ITE in the UK. In Chapter 5 I presented data which demonstrate that both these characteristics were significant in predicting whether or not student teachers decided to take the PGCE/M. Carlo's subjective analysis of these interconnected factors created a more complex 'barrier' which he used to explain his decision not to participate in the PGCE/M.

Tom (PGCE/M) also referred to concerns about time and workload in relation to his decision-making:

> I flimflammed like nobody's business ... But it was more nerves, how hard will it really be? How hard would the rest of the course be? I was not concerned about the academic side, it was more the workload. (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM)

However he also talked about the strategies that he used to cope with managing the workload:

> You need to be brutally well organised ... I re-wrote the timetable for handing things in, to suit myself. If you followed the Uni time-table you were peached. You really needed to take ownership. I had those skills from 13 years of working. (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM)

Rees et al (1997) suggested that learning identities emerge in relation to informal learning opportunities as well as being a product of formal education and how these identities have 'rather different implications for the evaluation of alternative courses of action' (p493). Tom felt able to deploy the time management skills that he had gained from his previous employment experiences. These time management skills are an aspect of Tom's embodied cultural capital, and which have in part generated his learner identity. Consequently, for Tom, concerns about the workload were not a barrier to his participation in the PGCE/M.

In summary, the data collected demonstrate that student teachers considered the PGCE to be a demanding course, with the M level work perceived as an additional strain. For some PGCE/H interview participants concerns about time and workload were interrelated with other factors, resulting in a perceived barrier to participation which they used to account for the decision made to not take the PGCE/M.

6.3 Perceptions of academic work at M level: concerns and motivations

This section explores student teachers' perceptions of academic work at M level and academic factors in relation to both concerns and motivations for M level study. The design of the survey questionnaire meant that it was not possible to make direct comparisons between the survey responses of the PGCE/H and PGCE/M cohorts; PGCE/H student teachers could not indicate any academic motivations on the survey questionnaire and PGCE/M student teachers could not indicate academic concerns. However, the data collected from the interviews reveal that the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers were both concerned and motivated about academic work.

I found the idea of 'learner identity' useful in developing some understanding of the different perceptions about academic work. If we consider learner identity as an expression of an attitude towards learning then students teachers' constructed identities as learners will be subtly changed as the transition to ITE is made. In Chapter 2, I drew attention to Crossan et al's (2003) argument for a construction of learner identity which allowed for the more temporary and fragile

changes which can influence the educational decisions made. I have explored student teachers' perceptions about M level study together with their previous experiences of education and learning. This has provided insights into their constructed identities as learners and concerns and motivations for academic work. Examples related to these aspects are provided in the following discussion.

Perceptions about M level:

Despite common beliefs about the heavy demands of M level study, there was little certainty about what it really entailed. In general, and in accordance with Jackson's (2009) study, perceptions reflected uncertainty and difficulty in defining M level, as illustrated by the following comments from Chris, Farah and Muna:

> I thought it was rocket science sort of stuff ... (Chris, 26-39, M, WB, SH)

> To me, it was like a kind of high English academic work, which I knew I just could not do ... (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

> My perception is that it is really hard, it's more than just undergraduate work it's on a higher level. (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Although these comments suggest a degree of uncertainty, they also demonstrate the perception that M level is difficult and challenging. Muna talked about the influence of friends and peers on the secondary science PGCE course who perceived the PGCE/M as too hard for them:

> Well, [student] said ... it's really hard and what are you sitting there for [referring to question session after briefing]. I spoke to other people as well ... but they all said we just want to get a pass on our PGCE and that's it, forget about the Masters and when people talk like that you just think, oh that's it I just have to pass. (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

This comment illustrates the workings of habitus with Muna's friends and peers rejecting action which they saw as 'not for the likes of them' (Bourdieu, 19901, p55-56). Chris also referred to the influence of his peers on the secondary Maths PGCE course:

> There was also a lot of hype about how hard this year was going to be which I believed – obviously you should never believe hype, but I did. (Chris, M, 26-39, WB, SH)

As argued by Crossan et al (2003) attitudes towards learning can be affected when individuals enter a new field. Chris and Muna, influenced by their peers, were cautious about the additional academic demands of M level study which resulted in their decisions not to take the PGCE/M. In contrast, Aisha, on the secondary Maths

PGCE course with Chris, decided to take the PGCE/M and constructed M level study as more manageable, although still expressed with a degree of uncertainty as to what it entailed, 'I just assumed it was more detailed and more involved in terms of the way you were writing, and the amount you had to write would be more' (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM). Chris and Aisha provide examples of different learner identities, and I show later how Chris's concerns about reading and Aisha's UG degree experiences have contributed to their individual learner identities which generated their different educational decisions.

Freda was the only student teacher interviewed who was able to provide a more definite description of M level study:

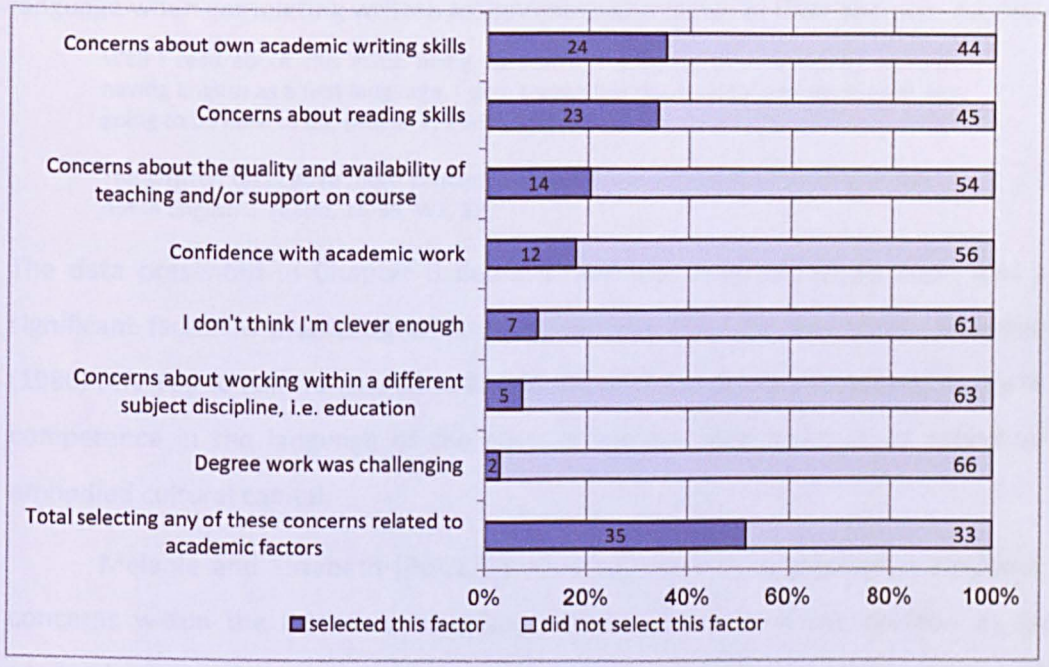
> Mainly that you have to be more critical, then bring in your own solution. You have to be well read and to be able to compare situations and analyse them, pick out the best and also suggest things that can be done to make it better. (Freda, F, 26-39, BA, SH)

Freda had originally applied to take the PGCE/M but decided to withdraw because of her concerns about whether she would have the time for study. Her comments suggest that she had carefully read the information provided by the CSU and perhaps compared the assessment criteria for the two levels provided in the course handbooks.

Concerns about M level

The survey question aimed at those student teachers not taking the PGCE/M included seven separate factors related to academic concerns which respondents could select in explaining their decision. The PGCE/H student teachers chose factors relating to academic concerns less frequently than those relating to concerns about time and workload. The numbers of student teachers selecting factors related to academic concerns are shown on Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Which of the following factors influenced your decision not to engage with theM level PGCE? Numbers of PGCE/H respondents who selected factors related to academic concerns



Source: Survey data

Concerns about academic reading and writing were prevalent amongst the PGCE/H interview participants. For example, Chris spoke about his 'rubbish reading and writing skills' and a long term avoidance of reading:

> Reading is something I have never, ever, ever done ... But no never. For my degree I never read a book. It is just not how I learn; I prefer to learn just by talking to people. (Chris, M, 26-39, WB, SH)

He suggested a 'fear' of reading, triggered by a loss of self-esteem during early school days:

> I think I got disconnected from reading at a very early age ... the last time I can remember reading out loud to anybody ... these girls started taking the mickey out of my reading .. They were laughing. Ever since that – it was never dealt with – and I have never engaged with reading since ... It is just a phobia – like being afraid of spiders in England, totally ridiculous. (Chris, M, 26-39, WB, SH)

Farah, whose dyslexia was diagnosed during her UG studies, emphasised how challenging she had found her degree:

> It has been a **big** challenge; it has been a **very big** challenge (*original emphases*), but I'm glad I've pulled myself through – come as far as I have now, but it has been a very big challenge... (Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

She said about her decision not to take the PGCE/M:

> I just knew I could not do it, so I thought there is no point in me pushing myself to do this when I know it's not going to happen ...(Farah, F, 26-39, AB, SH)

Adela and Carlo identified the extra demands of having English as an additional language when completing written assignments as a factor in their decision-making:

> Well I read about this PGCE being hard and so I knew, as a foreigner, and not having English as a first language, I didn't want too much work, and because it was going to be hard to do. (Adela, F, 26-39, WE, SH)

> The written tasks gave more concern because I was not used to writing essays ... not in English ... (Carlo, 26-39, WE, SH)

The data presented in Chapter 5 demonstrate that linguistic background was a significant factor in predicting whether or not the PGCE/M was taken. Bourdieu (1986) referred to cultural capital as familiarity with the dominant culture; linguistic competence in the language of the country can be considered as an aspect of embodied cultural capital.

Melanie and Elizabeth (PGCE/H) were reluctant to acknowledge academic concerns within the interview situation, perhaps because of my position as an academic course tutor at the CSU – although both had selected a number of academic concerns on the survey questionnaire. For example, Melanie selected, 'I don't think I'm clever enough' -- but initially during interview she drew upon her previous UG experiences to present a positive and confident picture of her academic capabilities:

> I absolutely loved it [her degree], I loved the fact that I was using my brain in a particular way ... the standard of work I was doing was pretty good ... I was 2 marks off a first and it was really annoying but a 2.1 is still really really good ... (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH)

Later, during the interview, Melanie mentioned her concerns about writing:

> The first piece of work that came back [on the PGCE] and they said there were grammatical errors ... errors that were picked up here were not picked up before [at UG level] ... so it scared me. It still does now whenever I hand something in – grammar seems to be something that I can't see. (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH)

Elizabeth, similarly, presented herself as having been a confident student academically, 'I'd always been good at stuff at school, never really had to work particularly hard to be successful' (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH). Although, there was a hint of her academic concerns when she said:

> I think we were expected to engage with the academic literature far too early in the course ... it was just impossible to form a judgement right at the beginning of the course and so I got quite irritated by all the reading we had to do ... (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH)

Both these examples from Melanie and Elizabeth also point to the possible effect of a loss in academic confidence caused by the expectations and feedback on the PGCE.

The difficulties in returning to education after a long gap and having to learn a new style of academic writing and referencing were a concern for some student teachers. For example, Elizabeth commented:

> I'd just found it intensely **frustrating** *(my emphasis)*, you'd start to read something and you couldn't get the flow of the argument because every few sentences you'd get – Bloggs, 1957 ... It's a style of literature I find very irritating ... my own writing style is very different to what is required for the academic engagement part of this course ... (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH)

Returning to education after a long gap did not necessarily deter student teachers from deciding to take the PGCE/M. For example, Jenny remarked on similar difficulties but decided to take the PGCE/M:

> What I find as someone returning to education, is that I have struggled with my style of writing I have obviously acquired through my work over the last 20 years of working, which I found **bizarre** *(my emphasis)*. Academically, sometimes it does not hit the mark ... (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM)

Different subject background may be of relevance in explaining the different decisions from these two mature student teachers. Elizabeth was studying on the secondary maths PGCE and Jenny on the secondary English PGCE. I drew attention in Chapter 5 to the data showing that subject of study was a significant predictor of the decision made about taking the PGCE at M level. This is possibly because some degree courses provide fewer opportunities for students to develop academic writing skills. The difficulties faced by some maths and science students when writing at Masters level on PGCE courses was reported by Tas and Forsythe (2010) who suggested that they typically gain less experience of this kind of writing on their undergraduate courses. This was also suggested as a reason why one of the PE student teachers did not pursue taking the PGCE/M:

> He [PE student teacher] wrote his assignment for the application as he would write up a scientific assignment. He was going to redraft it and then he decided he couldn't be bothered. He would have to relearn a whole set of academic skills which he didn't really want to do. (Secondary course leader)

Chris, when explaining his decision not to take the PGCE/M, referred to his maths background as a possible reason for his avoidance of reading and writing, 'so I prefer working with numbers rather than reading and writing' (Chris, M, 26-39 WB,

SH). A comment from Aisha, (a Maths student who took the PGCE/M) illustrates the variation between UG courses, but also the potential impact of experiencing critical writing at UG level:

> The main difference [referring to M level] compared to my degree is the critical side of writing. Having a debate within what you are writing. But I kind of did that with the maths education [module] part of my degree, just at a higher level now. (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM)

Aisha had accumulated embodied cultural capital relevant to the field of ITE from her previous HE learning experiences. Her cultural capital generated an individual habitus which resulted in her decision to take the PGCE/M.

In further consideration of the different decision outcomes for Elizabeth and Jenny, the two mature student teachers, I have drawn upon Bourdieu's ideas about hysteresis (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Both Elizabeth and Jenny on returning to University after a successful career found that conventions and expectations had changed; there was a mismatch between habitus and field. For both Elizabeth and Jenny the cultural capital acquired from their earlier academic experiences had less legitimacy within the new field. This point is explored further when I consider confidence as a qualitative dimension of cultural capital in Section 6.4. The hysteresis effect describes the gap between the new opportunities of a changing field and the propensities of individuals to capitalise on them. For Elizabeth, this hysteresis effect was seemingly greater (perhaps because of the additional factor of Elizabeth's subject of study, an aspect of her habitus, being less closely matched with the field of M level work within ITE). This might explain the disparity between the opportunity for engaging with M level work and her acquired dispositions and, therefore, her frustrations. Jenny experienced a similar problem, but her description of the issue as bizarre arguably indicates her different dispositions and response to it.

Tom decided to take the PGCE/M, but acknowledged academic concerns related to learning a new subject discipline, 'pedagogy was a new word for me in September. That put me ill at ease, I suppose ... I wanted to do it but was scared' (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM). However, he described how his first degree in English had helped him acquire useful skills:

> I am very good at reading at pace. I am good at skim reading. I can whack points out. I am very good at note taking, especially taking notes by grabbing quotes, so

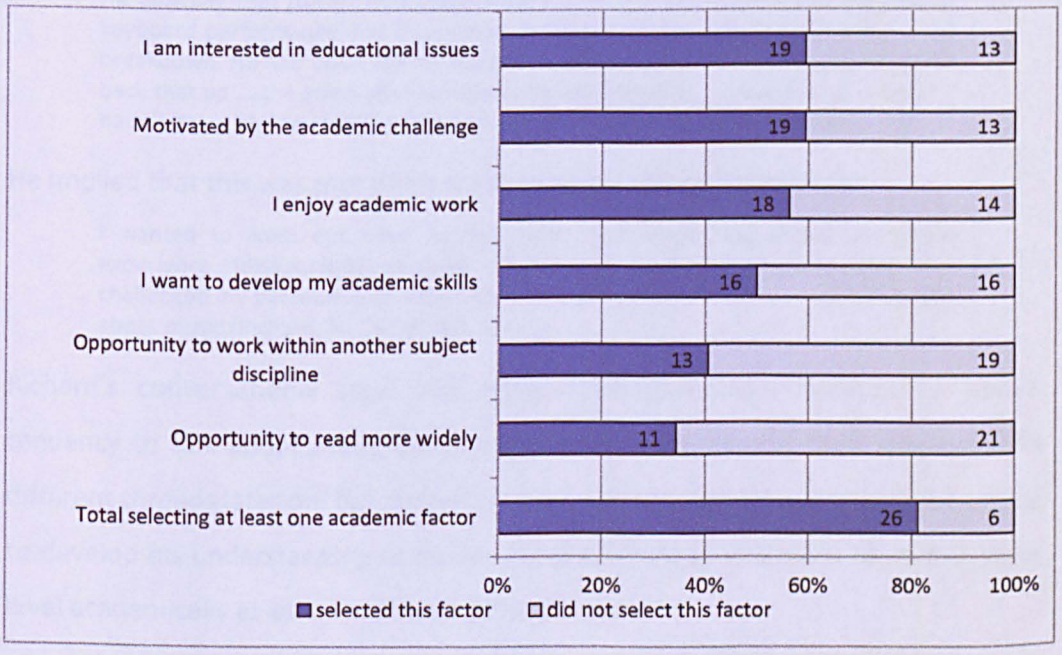
> you don't bother with the entire page, grab a quote that sums it up, that will be your link back in. Through that I am also quite good at remembering text ... (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM)

Tom, like Jenny, although acknowledging the academic demands of the PGCE/M, presented himself confidently throughout the interview. I return to discuss this theme of confidence later in the chapter and show how the subjective analysis of concerns about academic work differed in relation to individual levels of confidence.

Academic motivation to take the PGCE/M:

The survey question aimed at the PGCE/M student teachers included six separate factors related to academic motivation. The majority of survey respondents (26 out of 32) selected at least one of these factors. The numbers selecting each factor are shown on Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 Which of the following factors influenced your decision to engage with the M level PGCE? Numbers of PGCE/M respondents who selected academic motivational factors



Source: Survey data

Drawing on Ryan and Deci's (2000, p65) description of intrinsic motivational factors as 'of interest and to satisfy the innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy', I regard these academic factors as intrinsic motivational factors. In contrast with the PGCE/H respondents, many of the PGCE/M respondents were motivated by the academic challenge rather than deterred by it. For example, Aisha

(PGCE/M) talked enthusiastically about a maths education module she had completed as part of her UG degree work:

> So I really got interested in teaching maths ... I did my project on low achievement in maths and lots of research about negative attitudes towards maths. That really interested me ... I think the research element is really important within teaching ... (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM).

The data also suggest that student teachers' level of motivation for M level work was affected by whether their family members had studied at M level. On the survey question directed at PGCE/M student teachers, five out of 32 selected 'parents having Masters/higher degrees' as a reason to explain their decision to take the PGCE/M. Richard (PGCE/M) referred to family members completing Masters as well as personal academic motivation when talking about his decision to take the PGCE/M, 'My mum doing an MA in history and my brother doing his in science' (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM). Richard also mentioned that he felt he had been misled over the possibility of doing a Masters in Music at Edinburgh:

> He basically said [tutor] that there wasn't a barrier to me doing his masters in keyboard performance and this was knowing my degree results and having a full breakdown. He had observed my full piano recital ... but then in writing he didn't back that up ... the email afterwards was on the lines that ... I needed a 2.1 which I hadn't got ... and so I felt like I'd been misled (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM).

He implied that this was part of his motivation for taking the PGCE/M:

> I wanted to work out what M level was... but everything about the whole experience [disappointment over Masters in keyboard performance] had challenged my perception of what I knew but also what I felt other people thought about music (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM).

Richard's conversational style was difficult to disentangle because he had a tendency to talk about many issues within one sentence and then return to the different threads later on, but a strong motivation emerged in terms of him wanting to develop his understanding of music and education, as well as to reach the same level academically as other members of his family:

> I wanted to work in music and work out what it means [M level] and so yeah it was a massive thing now and so I wanted to work to the highest level that I thought I could for personal identity reasons and family whatever ... (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM).

At interview, Richard referred to many key educational decisions during his educational history and the interplay of a range of factors was evident. The study by Ball et al (2000) identified overlapping arenas of action and centres of action: family, home and domesticity; work, education and training; leisure and social life;

it was possible to see for Richard how his identity as a learner had been shaped by the complex interactions of decisions made within each arena – each of which contributed towards his motivation to take the PGCE/M.

The PGCE/H interview participants also revealed motivations for academic work. For example, Carlo (PGCE/H) mentioned having enjoyed doing all the reading for a foundation to teaching course that he completed at the CSU before beginning the PGCE:

> I remember I had to do lots and lots of reading ... which was the enjoyable part and I think that was like a life saver for me because everything I learnt was mostly in books. I had to do extensive research ... I bought all the recommended books. Now I've got a library (laughs) (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH).

Other examples of motivation for academic study, held by the PGCE/H interview participants, were provided in the previous chapter when I illustrated aspirations held for PG study in the future.

Summary comments

The examples of data presented in this section demonstrate varied perceptions about academic work. It shows how learner identities are shaped by past experiences, peer and familial influences, dispositions, skills and aptitudes – all of which generate and are generated by an individual habitus. The data collected from the interviews show that the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers were both concerned and motivated about academic work, but also demonstrate the different expressions of confidence that make up an individual learner identity resulting in the different decisions made. These are explored in the next section. Some student teachers recognised retrospectively that they probably could have managed the additional workload. There was evidence that as they progressed successfully through the PGCE and developed a more powerful position within the new field of practice that their learner identity was being reconstructed. Consequently their perceptions of the balance between costs, risks and benefits of M level study were shifting, allowing M level to be contemplated for the future.

6.4 Confidence in relation to ITE

Confidence, as argued by Reay et al (2005), is generated through high levels of cultural capital and as such can be considered as a qualitative dimension of cultural capital. In this section I review data which illustrate student teachers' levels of confidence and explore the extent to which this related to their cultural capital.

The interview accounts reveal how the student teachers positioned themselves differently with respect to learning in the field of ITE, informed in part by the possession of different levels of relevant cultural capital. In Chapter 2I presented arguments for a broader conceptualisation of cultural capital to include markers of cultural capital that would be advantageous for managing the PGCE/M, such as linguistic background; familiarity with UK schools and HEIs; and previous educational background.

The impact of different levels of confidence on decision-making was a view shared by one of the secondary course leaders who said:

> I mean one [student teacher] in particular- she said to me 'I really regret it' but I didn't have the confidence – I'd been out of University for a few years'- she's a native English speaker, UK educated, and not being that can sometimes be a reason why people think they can't do it but she really regrets it now – it was her level of **confidence** (*original emphasis*) whereas another trainee with a similarish background, possibly from a more prestigious University who had just graduated last year – she just didn't have any second thoughts about doing it at all (Secondary course leader).

According to this course leader the student teacher did not take the PGCE/M because she did not feel sufficiently confident, in contrast to another student teacher with a similar background but who had more recent experience of HE (the course leader implied that the University attended for the first degree may also have had some impact). Applying Bourdieu's theoretical ideas we can argue that for one student teacher there was a closer alignment between habitus and field, the student teacher was able to 'move in the world as a fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p108) and capitalise on new opportunities. This student teacher, who decided to take the PGCE/M, had knowledge and understanding of current academic practices in HE (a marker of cultural capital) and perhaps had attended a more prestigious University for her first degree (also a marker of cultural capital). Her habitus was generated by cultural capital relevant to the field of HE including the qualitative dimension of confidence, resulting in a closer alignment between habitus and field.

In response to the survey question; 'Which of the following factors influenced your decision not to take the M level PGCE?', 30 out of the 68 survey respondents selected 'concern that I might fail'. During the interviews, even when talking confidently about academic work it tended to be within a discourse of anxiety about other aspects. For example, Carlo and Adela (both PGCE/H) were anxious about the teaching practice placements and so avoided the additional demands of the PGCE/M:

> I'm not scared of academic work ... The University based part was OK – nothing to worry about but the teaching practice was the thing that gave me lots of troubles and nightmares... *(laughs)* (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH).

> Schools are different here, very different from where I went to school, it was scary to think of the practices and ... my accent ... and would they make fun of me... (Adela, F, 26-39, WE, SH).

Freda had withdrawn from the PGCE/M because she was not confident that she would pass. She feared that if she was only awarded QTS, this might affect her eventual employment prospects within her home country:

> I was worried that I might fail and not have a PGCE at all, and where I come from [referring to her home country in Africa], if you do not get the highest point of education, then you might not get a good job and salary (Freda, F, 26-39, BA, SH).

Freda, Carlo and Adela were educated outside the UK and Carlo and Adela had English as an additional language. Without the required level of confidence to overcome concerns, they constructed the PGCE/M as too risky. These PGCE/H student teachers did not feel sufficiently comfortable (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992) to maximise the available opportunities. Wenger's (1998) ideas about communities of practice are also of relevance. All student teachers begin their ITE with legitimate peripheral participation, but, as argued by Tobbell and O'Donnell (2005), this is in theory because when students join new communities 'participation is not inevitable' but 'mediated by a multiplicity of factors' (p10). I would argue that those with more advantageous cultural capital for the field are able to move more swiftly towards full participation and the development of a learner identity which is more disposed to make decisions that further enhance learning and participation.

During the interviews, higher levels of confidence were evident from the PGCE/M student teachers, notably, for example, from the way they talked about previous experiences, their current experiences on the PGCE course and about decision-making. However, I recognise that personal confidence is demonstrated

not only through the content of *what* is said, but also through *how* it is said and I draw on both of these aspects, although with full realisation that 'how something was said' is very much my own construction of meaning. Confidence can be considered as an aspect of the embodied variant of cultural capital, interpreted by Reay et al (2005) as in the mind, in the body, the way we talk, the way we walk and hold ourselves, and it remains with the individual forming a part of their habitus. For example, Tom (PGCE/M) presented a confident persona; he expressed himself with certainty even when acknowledging concerns. In contrast, Carlo (PGCE/H) presented a far less confident persona at interview; he spoke with hesitancy and nervous laughter. At interview the PGCE/M student teachers demonstrated how their previous experiences had facilitated acquisition of cultural capital, and therefore, also confidence.

For example, Jenny (PGCE/M) had acquired institutionalised cultural capital and symbolic capital through attending a prestigious film school and embodied cultural capital through her experiences as a parent. She said:

> The Royal College is probably one of the best colleges in the world in terms of Art. So to go there to do a film course is very prestigious within the film world. It was a challenge to get on it ... it gives you a huge step up ... you go on a very privileged career path (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM).

> As a parent I have discovered that actually I have a wealth of knowledge about education over the last 20 years which possibly a lot of people on the course don't ... (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM).

Cultural capital in its embodied variant, exist as knowledge, skills and competencies that cannot be separated from the owner. However, as Reay et al (2005) argued, it is also the deployment of cultural capital within the field that can generate different outcomes. Jenny was sufficiently confident to deploy her parenting knowledge within the field of education rather than problematising the tensions of parenting and formal education. Tom spoke confidently about how he used written argument on his English UG degree:

> Writing an academic paper always struck me as just construct a clever argument and develop it through. I have always been the same, once I knew what my end point was the middle part took care of itself (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

Jenny used her previous experiences of the film industry and her acquired cultural capital to question the academic judgements made about her work on the PGCE course:

> I did not necessarily reference Buckingham or whoever [referring to her PGCE work], because I think their books are outdated, and I think they have no relevance to the industry ... I know what they are telling me is actually wrong about the industry, as a media professional ... (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM).

She also suggested that the M level work on the PGCE restricted independent thought, and her reference to 'supposed professionals' perhaps indicates that she positioned herself more powerfully within the field:

> In terms of academia, you are very much caught in a bubble and if you do not jump through these hoops [referring to assessment criteria] – in terms of creating independent thinkers, actually you are not encouraged to – you have to justify it all to a supposed professional to achieve the mark ... (Jenny, F, 40+, WB,SM).

Although Jenny had referred to the challenges in returning to education after a gap and acknowledged 'struggling with her style of writing' (see p117), Jenny's habitus enabled her to legitimise her existing cultural cultural capital. Reay (1998) referred to work by Lareau (1998) which emphasised the need for cultural capital to be *activated* within the field and the processes by which dispositions become activated into capital. In the case of Jenny, we can see how her dispositions, her habitus, enabled her cultural capital to be activated. Reay (1998) linked the activation of cultural capital within external organisations with middle-class backgrounds.

This is in sharp contrast to Melanie (PGCE/H) who reported that she had had been 'scared' by the feedback she had received on her first piece of PGCE work and this had deterred her from taking the PGCE/M. A further example of Tom's self-confidence was shown by his positioning of his peers on a previous Masters course as not very bright (less bright than himself):

> I was with a bunch of people – they were all mature students ... and as far as I could see they weren't the brightest mature students in the world either and I just found it very frustrating ... (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

Levels of confidence were also illustrated by accounts of the decision-making process. Some student teachers (PGCE/M) provided examples of 'non decisions' which displayed the 'sense of entitlement' and 'certainty' referred to by Reay et al (2005, p21). M level study was seen as a natural progression. For example, Jenny said, 'I didn't really think about it, I just assumed I would do the M level, I didn't think of doing a lesser level ... so without thought really' (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM). Aisha (PGCE/M) also spoke about not giving it much thought:

> I didn't really know that much about it before I went into it ... I did not really give it much thought at the time ... if there is the option to do something then I will go for it (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM).

These examples from Jenny and Aisha illustrate the type of 'non decisions' referred to by different researchers (e.g. Hodkinson et al, 1996; Ball et al, 2000), when decisions are made without much evidence of conscious thought. Paton (2007b) cited the work of White (2007) who referred to them as default decisions because they are not active choices, in that there may be very little engagement on the part of the individual. Wakeling (2009, p74) referred to the 'herd mentality' of certain groups of students for whom transitions have become non-decisions.

Bourdieu used habitus to describe an individual's dispositions – the unconscious ways of thinking, feeling and doing that compose the habitus and that when a habitus sufficiently matches the field, 'all they have to do is follow their dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p108). The field of ITE includes the fields of HE and schools. Jenny and Aisha had been educated in the UK, progressed from school to University and had positive UG experiences. When field and habitus are less closely aligned, the habitus directs the more conscious weighing up of costs, risks and benefits. For example, as I discussed previously in this chapter, Elizabeth (PGCE/H) did not have the same sense of certainty, she was not confident that she could cope with the PGCE/M – her habitus and the field of ITE were less closely aligned; she consciously weighed up the potential risks and benefits of either course of action:

> I thought very hard about the decisions ... there were two important factors ... once you'd opted for it there was no route to get the lower qualification, so I couldn't start and see if I could cope with the work level and then change my mind ... the other factor was where I was in terms of my career, ... I'll probably be retired before that [M level] becomes important in terms of getting jobs anyway (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH).

The data demonstrate that those student teachers who decided to take the PGCE/M displayed higher levels of confidence and the associated qualitative dimensions of cultural capital: certainty and a sense of entitlement (Reay et al, 2005). This is not a surprising outcome, but what is more difficult to understand are the complex ways in which these are accumulated through structure and agency. However it would seem reasonable to suggest that they are linked with higher levels of cultural capital for the field of ITE associated with the characteristics explored in Chapter 5.

6.5 The risk factor

Risk was frequently referred to by student teachers and course leaders, in relation to the consequence of failing the M level work and therefore the whole PGCE. As I highlighted in the previous section, 30 out of 68 survey respondents selected 'concern that I might fail' as a reason for deciding not to take the PGCE/M. The interview data provide insights into how the risk factor was perceived differently by individuals and for different reasons. As I have previously shown, student teachers' concerns about possible failure were related to factors such as time, workload and academic confidence. In this section I explore how the institutional practice was a source of the perception that the risk associated with taking the PGCE/M outweighed any advantages, as illustrated by a comment from the primary course leader:

> I think the idea that you can do your MA whilst teaching and the current one that if you fail then you're off- there wasn't any going down to H level was prohibitive for people. They didn't want to take the risk (Primary course leader).

Some student teachers found the decision-making stressful, but, although opinion varied, more than half said they favoured having a choice, when asked about this at interview, 'It was a bit of an ordeal going through the decision-making process but probably a good one' (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, SM). The stress came from the lack of flexibility within the regulations, which meant that they had to feel confident with their decisions – and if the PGCE/M was chosen, sure that they could be successful with M level work.

At interview, the PGCE/H student teachers referred to the risk factor. For example, Carlo reported his peers on the course saying, 'No there is no point in taking the risk – it's something you can always do later on and so it's better to play safe and get the easier option' (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH). A review of widening participation by Gorard et al (2006) highlighted institutional barriers to widening participation, such as a lack of institutional flexibility. The regulations at the CSU were rigid and as I discussed in Chapter 4 the lack of flexibility within the regulations and uncertainty with a new policy change resulted in a cautious approach from the academic staff. One student teacher commented on the survey:

> It would be nice if the CSU staff didn't act as if attempting the M level course was akin to bathing in honey and swimming with piranhas (Secondary PGCE/M)

Some felt the choice process had probably resulted in them following the easier and safer option, for example Freda said:

> Human nature is such that if you are forced to do something you will do it anyway, but when given a choice you go for the easier one – well that's what I did (Freda, F, 26-39, BA, SH).

The limiting aspect of the choice process was also identified by Jenny who said, 'some people who were not doing it could easily have coped and it might have given them more confidence to then carry on and finish the MA' (Jenny, F, 40+, WB, SM).

The data suggest that the information provided by the CSU to support the decision-making process did not overcome the perception of risk for many student teachers or sufficiently convey any outweighing advantages. The survey showed that 38% of respondents (55% of those who chose the PGCE/M) would have liked more information to support the process. Ball and Vincent (2006) distinguished between the 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge that is used by individuals to inform educational decision-making and the limitations of the 'cold' knowledge were evident from the data collected. For example, Chris revealed misunderstandings amongst his course group which might have influenced the weighing up of risks and benefits and therefore affected the decision-making. He implied that he and some of his peers thought the M level credits were not transferrable:

> ... some people did not want to do it because there was no point and they did not want to be tied to a University ... the credits are specific to CSU and they do not know where they are going to be in a number of years down the line (Chris, M, 26-39, W, SH).

Some of the survey comments suggest that student teachers would have liked access to more 'hot' knowledge:

> I would have liked more information about why we should take it – i.e. what are the benefits – perhaps even heard from past students about their experiences of what the decision meant for work-load, stress etc (Secondary PGCE/M).

Carlo (PGCE/H) implied that schools could possibly play a greater role in supporting the decision-making, 'I think if I had been told more especially on the advantages but then I think also if the schools gave the right support like if my mentor at school would take me through this different type of work' (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH).

In summary, the data highlight that the policy of choice for the different PGCE routes coupled with the rigid regulations deterred some student teachers

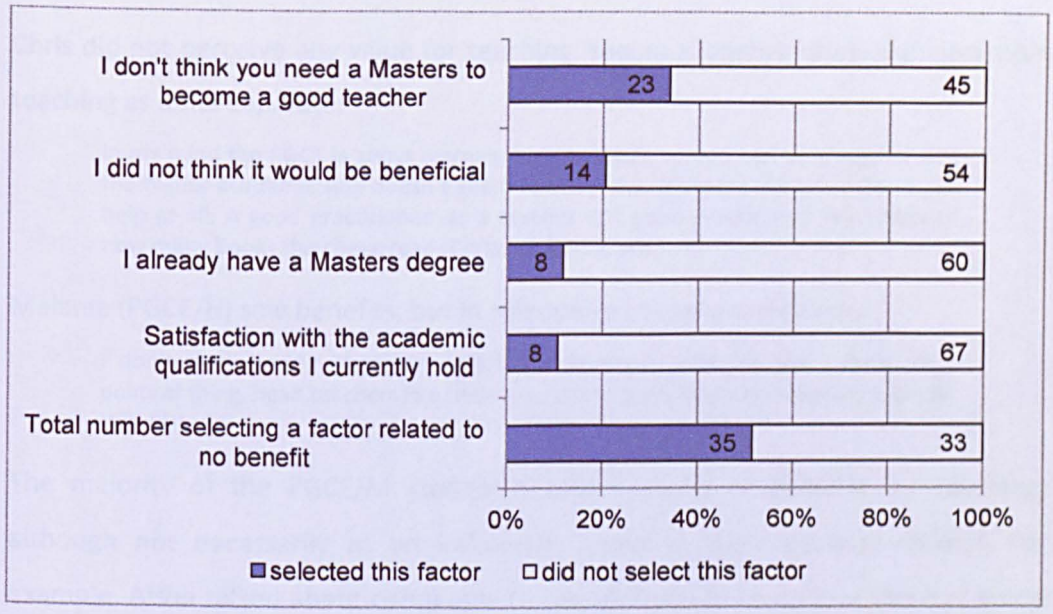
from taking the PGCE/M and that some student teachers would have liked more information. According to Bourdieu, the ways in which information is perceived and valued by individuals is a result of their individual habitus – the information was provided by the CSU and therefore institutional habitus (Reay et al, 2005) also played a role in shaping aspirations and influenced the weighing up risks and benefits and therefore the decisions made.

6.6 The value or otherwise of M level study as part of ITE

This section explores the perceptions held by student teachers about the value of the PGCE/M in relation to their developing constructions of teacher identity. In Chapter 1 I argued that the PGCE/M presents possible benefits for the developing professional identity of school teaching. In this study, student teachers had varied perceptions of what it means to be a teacher, and the value of M level work.

For some student teachers these perceptions were a key factor in their decision-making. The survey question aimed at those student teachers not taking the PGCE/M included four separate factors related to the M level being of 'no benefit'. One or more of these factors was selected as frequently as the academic concerns discussed previously, with approximately 50% of respondents selecting a 'no benefit' factor to explain their decision not to take the PGCE/M. The PGCE/H student teachers who selected a 'No benefits' factor were significantly more likely to have declared a white ethnicity (ρ=0.03) which possibly illustrates that cultural background can affect constructions of teacher identity and therefore the perceived value of the PGCE/M. The numbers selecting each factor are shown on Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4. Which of the following factors influenced your decision not to engage with the M level PGCE? Number of PGCE/H respondents who selected a 'No benefits' factor



Source: Survey data

On the survey question aimed at those student teachers taking the PGCE/M, 17 out of 32 selected that 'it might help them to become a better teacher' as a reason for taking the PGCE/M. I can only conclude that for some student teachers the perceived value of the PGCE/M for teaching was a factor in their decision-making, but that perceptions of the value of the PGCE/M varied and were not necessarily a determining factor in the decision-making for all student teachers.

The data collected from the interviews with student teachers also illustrate this point. For example, Jenny decided to take the PGCE/M but was unsure about any benefits for teaching, 'I don't think it has an impact on the classroom' (Jenny, F, 26-39, WB, SM). In contrast, Muna who decided not to take the PGCE/M identified many benefits:

> I think Masters is a good way to learn new skills, collaborate with people and also to learn new knowledge about how children learn and what strategies there are. I think it is beneficial, most definitely (Muna, F, 26-39, AB, SH).

Most of the PGCE/H student teachers were less convinced of any benefits, but did not explicitly link this with their decision-making. For example, Carlo was unsure of how the theory would relate to practice:

> It was really interesting and inspiring to read all those opinions [referring to the literature about pedagogy] ... I only believe that could have ended up with knowing more in theory but I'm not sure I could have used that in my practice... right now I

> feel like I don't know ... that it's not much different, it would be more or less the same thing (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH).

Chris did not perceive any value for teaching, seeing academic work and classroom teaching as quite separate:

> In my mind the PGCE is about learning how to teach, so you can be a teacher and the higher academic side doesn't seem to have any relevance. I don't think it can help at all. A good practitioner, as a teacher is a good practitioner regardless of how many books they have read (Chris, M, 26-39, WB, SH).

Melanie (PGCE/H) saw benefits, but in relation to career progression:

> I don't think having Masters matters for classroom practice, but I think it's a political thing, head teachers like their teachers to have Masters (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH).

The majority of the PGCE/M student teachers spoke of benefits for teaching, although not necessarily as an influential factor in their decision-making. For example, Aisha talked about being able to see the benefits now that she had come to the end of the course:

> I think it is now. Especially now that I am doing the last project because I have read so much ... and I think that has really shaped me as a teacher... I think through doing the reading and the research, I think this is not available on the other course, that helps make you a better teacher (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM).

Richard implied that the M level also had value in relation to personal growth which could be beneficial for teaching, particularly in music:

> Yes I did think M level would be beneficial, but there is more that I want to look at for this. I think it's important to be aware of how an individual and in my experience it has happened with music more ... to understand the personal ways that you are affected by situations ... (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

None of the secondary PE student teachers had decided to take the PGCE/M and a secondary course leader spoke about an attitude linked to the secondary subject, PE:

> Well I wouldn't want to pigeon-hole a cohort or a subject as not being reflective. They do exhibit those traits, many of them do to varying competence levels, but I don't think they necessarily perceived that as having an impact on their ability to be an enquiring and reflective teacher, and good practitioner (Secondary course leader).

This suggests the notion of a shared construction of a 'PE teacher identity' by a network of PE student teachers, all of whom have belonged throughout their educational histories to different networks of teachers and school students. These shared constructions produce 'typical' notions of teacher identities, which 'pigeon-hole' some areas of teaching, more than others, as a craft rather than as an

academic profession. The 'teaching as a craft' view appeared to be shared by Melanie (PGCE/H) in relation to primary school teaching:

> They [referring to her friends and family] said they could always see me in my own classroom, with my own paintbrushes and pots ... and that's my OCD[30] thing ... (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH).

Her comment also suggests a gendered view of primary school teaching, with the classroom seen as an extension of home (kitchen) with the teacher replacing the mother in a nurturing role (Johnson et al, 2009). However, in contrast, Tom one of a minority of male primary student teachers, talked about primary teaching 'as a profession' and about it 'demanding Masters level work'. He said, 'I think you have a right to expect a little more [referring to M level] of trainee teachers' (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

Another, but related, tension about 'teacher identity' is what is actually meant by teaching as an academic profession. The academic component could refer to having strong subject knowledge within the areas being taught rather than the pedagogical knowledge and understanding associated with knowing how to teach a subject. In Chapter 1 I outlined the current coalition government's support of a highly qualified teaching force, with its emphasis on attracting more highly qualified graduates – in keeping with a view that teaching is about 'knowing your subject'. A study of the preconceptions of PGCE trainees at the start of their courses (Younger et al, 2004) found that student teachers expected to focus on developing subject knowledge but were less certain of the value of learning pedagogical theory. This viewpoint seemed to be shared by Elizabeth (PGCE/H):

> What you need to learn first of all is a good understanding of your subject and secondly to have good communication skills, to be motivational, inspirational and I don't think the academic literature helps you with that (Elizabeth, F, 40+, WB, SH).

These perceptions about teaching are shared constructions developed jointly with peers, friends, family and institutions and from available discourses. Some student teachers could draw on experiences of working in schools for example, as teaching assistants or technicians but none had any sustained experience of working as qualified teachers within the urban context served by the CSU ITE department. The notion of M level on the PGCE was, in any case, a new

[30] I assumed she meant 'obsessive compulsive disorder'

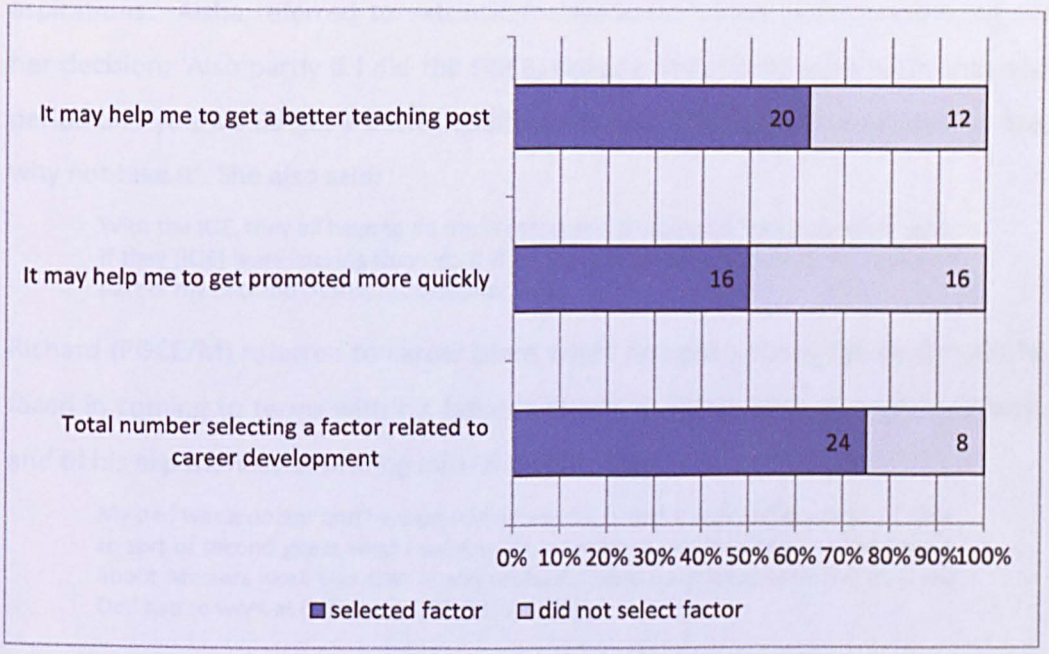
policy – hypothetical as Carlo described it, 'Maybe it's just a bit early – a bit what can I say – hypothetical? Just something that is being – like a new thing – not well defined...' (Carlo, M, 26-39, WE, SH). The mixed opinions support conclusions from other studies (e.g. Jackson, 2009; Creaser, 2010) and reflect the newness of the policy change, as well as the debates referred to in Chapter 1 regarding the nature of a professional identity for teachers. They also reflect the findings revealed in Chapter 4 which revealed a level of uncertainty from the staff at the CSU regarding the value of the PGCE/M.

The data, therefore, does demonstrate some relationship between constructions of 'teacher identity' with the individual decisions made by student teachers. It may not be a clear relationship but those seeing teaching as a profession or a career ladder were keener than those who saw it as a craft. The data also suggest that the student teachers' characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, sector and subject of study can affect individual constructions of teacher identity which, in turn, might have had a determining effect on the decisions made by some student teachers.

6.7 Aspirations for career development

This section explores the extrinsic motivations student teachers used to account for their decisions to take the PGCE/M. Drawing on Ryan and Deci's (2000) differentiation, I took extrinsic motivational factors to be those factors that come from outside of the individual with an external outcome – in this case related to improved career prospects, i.e. gaining M level credits is 'instrumental to a separable consequence' (p65). The survey question aimed at the PGCE/M student teachers included two separate factors related to career progression and most respondents (24 out of 32) selected at least one of these listed factors. The numbers selecting each factor are shown on Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5. Which of the following factors influenced your decision to engage with the M level PGCE? Number of PGCE/M respondents selecting a factor related to career development



Source: Survey data

At interview, the primary student teachers outlined the career development benefits of the PGCE/M more explicitly than the secondary student teachers. For example, Tom emphasised career progression when accounting for his decision to take the PGCE/M:

> I am ambitious, I want to move up. I do not want to be a classroom teacher for the next 10, 20 years, a door opening with your masters, it is one more tick box that you need on your CV... Also I thought if I am doing this course I wanted to take away as much from it as was humanly possible (Tom, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

Tom had also been accepted at another HEI (with transfer of credits) to complete a full Masters during the following academic year. Melanie, also implied that any potential benefits of M level study were in relation to career development, 'it depends on what you are going to use it for, if you're looking at a headship then yes, if you're looking for personal growth then yes' (Melanie, F, 26-39, WB, PH). Her comments suggest that she was not thinking about becoming a head teacher, at least in the short term. This corroborates the evidence on gendered career aspirations of male and female primary school teachers. Male primary school teachers are disproportionately more likely to seek and gain promotion and headship (Thornton and Bricheno, 2009).

The secondary participants referred less explicitly to career development aspirations. Aisha referred to extrinsic motivational factors when accounting for her decision; 'Also partly if I did the PGCE, doing a little bit of extra work over the period and you would get a better qualification and if that option was open to me, why not take it'. She also said:

> With the IOE, they all have to do the Masters and that would help in terms of jobs. If they [IOE] were making them do it then there must be a reason for it. That was part of my decision (Aisha, F, 26-39, AB, SM).

Richard (PGCE/M) referred to career plans when he spoke about the challenges he faced in coming to terms with his father's death, deciding upon a career pathway, and of his experiences in settling into University life:

> My dad was a doctor and he died when I was 12 ... and it was unexpected ... I have to sort of second guess what I want to do in terms of big decisions ... what I knew about Masters work was that it was probably more associated with the level my Dad had to work at (Richard, M, 26-39, WB, PM).

Other references he made to his educational history suggested that he felt dissatisfied – perhaps because he felt that he had not matched the expectations that his father would have held for him. He implied that this had been an influential factor in his decision-making for the PGCE/M.

6.8 Concluding comments

This chapter of findings has revealed that the student teachers drew on a range of different but interrelated factors to account for the decisions they made. The survey data show that key factors within student teachers' decision-making were concerns about time and workload, academic factors and perceptions of the value or otherwise of the PGCE/M. The data collected from the student teachers illustrate the complex ways in which these factors were linked, but also the overlapping influences of personal confidence, family, peers and cultural background which generated the subjective analysis of all factors.

Those who decided not to take the PGCE/M tended to have constructed 'risk of failure' as a real possibility for them, and this was linked with concerns about the time and workload required as well as academic concerns. These student teachers saw, for example, not having English as a first language; not feeling comfortable when reading; having limited writing skills; and lack of available time as

insurmountable barriers. With a habitus generated without the advantages of cultural capital they were unable to dismiss those risks. Motivations for engaging with the PGCE/M included both extrinsic factors such as improved job and promotion prospects as well as intrinsic intellectual fulfilment, with few student teachers falling into one or other camp exclusively. The data illustrate some of the complexities of learner identity – the way it can be shaped, for example, by previous educational experiences (including subjects studied), cultural background and age. It has also shown how learner identity is a fragile construction – liable to temporal fluctuations, particularly when a new field of learning is encountered. The student teachers provided examples of this when they talked about the effects of moving to different countries, learning a new language or returning to education after a long gap.

Student teachers' decision-making about the PGCE/M was also linked with the perceptions of the value of the M level PGCE for ITE and of the professional identity of a teacher. The value of the PGCE/M was perceived in different ways, for personal academic development, development as a teacher and enhanced career prospects. Some student teachers did not perceive any benefits. These perceptions are linked with developing constructions of teacher identity. Although they did not necessarily impact on the students' decisions – some saw M level as valuable but did not do it, and some who saw it as having little value for their teaching career did do it.

The policy of choice for the differentiated PGCE pathways adopted by the CSU was a strategy to cater for the differing needs and experiences of the diverse student body. O'Donnell et al (2009) warned against assumptions of heterogeneity of PG students in transition to PG study and the heterogeneity of the student teachers at the CSU was reflected by the varied ways in which they accounted for their decision-making. This analysis provides insights into the concerns, perceptions, values, influences and motivations used as well as some of the structured ways in which these are subjectively analysed. This understanding is important to ensure that student teachers can be better supported in their decision-making.

In the next and final chapter of this thesis I summarise the findings from the last three chapters and consider the implications for future professional practice.

7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The first purpose of this final chapter is to pull together the findings collected from my research in relation to each of my research questions. The research questions are interrelated and overlapping, but I have started by looking at each in turn before looking more holistically at the main research aim. Secondly, I have provided an evaluation of my methodology. Finally, I have considered some potential implications for future practice and research.

This study has produced original knowledge. Widening participation to PG study is under-researched – in particular the transition to Masters, and the introduction of M level work on the PGCE is a relatively recent policy change which to date has attracted very limited attention from researchers. A further aspect of originality lies within the scope offered by the CSU and its student teachers. These were students who represent a more socially and culturally diverse group than in other studies of transitions to PG degrees (e.g. Bowman et al, 2006), and as such allowed some exploration of the complexity of the interplay between characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, age and the students' social, cultural and educational backgrounds. However, I recognise that this exploration was limited by my methodology (see Section 5.1) and was only partially possible in relation to the analysis of the interview data.

7.2 Addressing the research questions

What was the relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions they made about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?

The data analysed in relation to this question, presented mainly in Chapter 5, show a significant relationship between certain characteristics and the decisions made. In summary the student teachers who decided to take the PGCE/M were more likely to declare a white British background, have English as a first home language and have been educated in the UK, and they were also more likely to have attended a

pre-1992 University for their first degree, have a degree classification of 2.1 and above, and be from the secondary subject areas of English and citizenship.

Those characteristics that were significant are clearly linked, although as I have previously explained (Section 5.1), the data sets did not allow me to explore the inter-relationships between the various characteristics. For example, student teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to have English as an additional language and to have been educated outside the UK. In addition, first degree institution can be linked with educational attainment or 'ability', and with social class and ethnicity (e.g. by Reay et al, 2005). Academic ability (as measured by degree classification) is a significant predictor of the decision to take the PGCE/M, and a likely explanation for this is that those student teachers who achieved more highly at first degree level are more likely to feel sufficiently confident academically to take the PGCE/M. The survey data (Section 6.3) show that half the respondents selected a factor related to academic concerns as important in influencing their decision not to take the PGCE/M. Academic attainment might also provide an explanation for the relationship between ethnicity and decisions made, since, as previously explained, (Section 5.4) national data has shown that fewer BME students achieve degree classifications at 2.1 and above. Whether academic ability can be partitioned from cultural capital is debateable. Bourdieu argued that academic ability stems from cultural capital rather than from some form of natural giftedness (Mills and Gale, 2007), and my data arguably illustrate this point. While it is possible that fewer BME student teachers decided to take the PGCE/M because they qualified with a degree classification below 2.1, this could be attributable to cultural capital effects related to home background. A further or alternative explanation is that these student teachers have less cultural capital relevant to the field of ITE in the UK.

There is a strong relationship between both sector and subject of study with the decisions made. There are different possible explanations for the lower numbers of primary student teachers taking the PGCE/M, and the conclusions I draw are limited by the smaller numbers of primary student teachers who participated in this research. However, as shown in Chapter 4, there was evidence of a more cautious and reluctant response to the policy change from the primary

course team at the CSU, and in addition the primary student teachers were less likely to have a first degree at 2.1 and above. As I have discussed (Sections 5.3 and 5.4), the secondary subject of study can be linked with other characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, linguistic background and degree classification which might account for part of the significant relationship between subject of study and decisions made.

The data collected from the interviews (Chapter 6) illustrate the varied ways in which factors such as cultural and linguistic background; parental educational levels; cultural assets and confidence can impact on decision-making. Paton (2007b, p13) cited the proviso made by Foskett et al (2004, p9-10) that 'there is no deterministic connection at the level of individuals between a particular set of circumstances and a specific outcome or 'choice' – one individual may respond to a set of circumstances in a very different way to another individual'. In consideration of this it is useful to draw upon Bourdieu's concept of habitus, i.e. an individual's analysis of circumstances is subjective, although informed by a habitus which is an interiorisation of those circumstances. However, whilst I agree that there may not be a deterministic relationship between student teachers' characteristics and the decisions made; there is still evidence of strong patterns which have resulted in systematic inequality.

In what ways did student teachers construct M Level study as part of their Initial Teacher Education?

The data (Chapter 6) suggest student teachers constructed M level study as part of their ITE in varied ways. Their perceptions of M level study and its potential benefits for teaching (Sections 6.3 and 6.6) were generally couched in rather uncertain terms, but by and large, M level study was linked with being harder, and requiring extensive reading, higher word counts and a more academic style of writing in assessments. Student teachers' perceptions of M level study and their expectations of an ITE course informed the value that they placed on the opportunity to study at M level on the PGCE. The survey and interview data highlight the varied beliefs about the value or otherwise of the PGCE/M. Clearly those who decided to take M

level credits perceived there to be some benefits. The survey data show that for some PGCE/M survey respondents a key motivational factor was the belief that extended academic study was beneficial for teaching and personal progression, whereas for others the opportunity to 'get ahead' in the job market was a more important factor in their decision-making. Just over half of the PGCE/H survey respondents did not perceive it to have any benefits, either in relation to their future career as a teacher or to enhance classroom practice and they selected this as an important factor in their decision-making.

I have argued that the perceived value of M level study for teaching is associated with developing constructions of teacher identity (Section 6.6). The student teachers have all experienced schools and teachers – and have developed a construction of teacher identity through social means. It is, therefore, a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon, dependent on time and context, and this was illustrated during interviews with student teachers. Using Bourdieu's ideas about habitus, we can say that their constructions of a teacher identity were structured by an individual habitus which in turn has been structured by their life history. Ashby et al (2008) highlighted the increasing emphasis on the importance of understanding how student teachers' initial expectations about teaching can impact on how they engage with their Initial Teacher Preparation. Following from this, I would argue that student teachers' initial expectations are likely to impact on their developing constructions of teacher identity and therefore the value they place on taking M level credits on the PGCE.

One shared discourse of teacher educators nationally is that M level work can enhance critical reflection and lead to more effective practice (King, 2008; Jackson, 2009), but there is no strong evidence that this viewpoint was shared amongst the student teachers – only 53% of the PGCE/M survey respondents thought taking the PGCE/M route 'might make them a better teacher'. This is, I feel, inevitable given that student teachers made the decision about the PGCE/M at an early stage in their ITE and so were unlikely to have had much experience of schools beyond their own experiences as a school pupil. It also reflects the uncertainty with which the staff at the CSU valued the PGCE/M, an aspect of the institutional habitus (Section 4.2). During the course, student teachers have legitimate peripheral

participation (Wenger, 1995) in a school community of practice, but this is only for a short and temporary period of time. The extent to which they can engage in deep situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) may be limited, and therefore also their own realisation of the extent to which they are developing the skills of critical reflection. However there was some evidence of a shift in thinking about M level work within ITE with benefits identified more clearly by student teachers interviewed towards the end of the course (Section 6.6).

Furthermore, the data collected from the documentary analysis (Section 4.2) suggest that the official discourse among the ITE team at the CSU was to value the higher academic status of the PGCE/M. However, the benefits of the PGCE/M were a significant discourse missing from the information provided to students. It is also noteworthy that the idea of 'critical engagement', as a feature of M level work, although evident within the formal discourse or 'cold' knowledge (Ball & Vincent, 2006) was only hesitantly and very infrequently referred to by the student teachers.

How did student teachers account for their decisions about whether or not to study for Masters credits as part of the PGCE?

The findings in relation to this question (Chapter 6) reveal that the decision-making was multifaceted; there were different ways in which factors interrelated for student teachers, dependent on their individual agency; their values; and the structuring aspects of individual contexts.

The survey data highlight (Section 6.2) that time and workload concerns were selected by the majority of respondents as an important factor in their decision not to take the PGCE/M. Evidence from the interview data illustrate how these concerns were frequently linked with academic concerns and anxiety about teaching practice, as well as constraints of family life associated with age, cultural background and gender. Almost half of the survey respondents indicated that fear of failure was a factor in their decision-making fuelled by concerns related to reading, academic writing and having English as an additional language (Section 6.3). For these student teachers, the perceived risk of taking M level credits outweighed any benefits. Over half indicated that they had not taken the PGCE/M because they could not perceive any personal benefits (Section 6.6). The survey

data show that important factors in deciding to take the PGCE/M were fairly evenly balanced between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational reasons (Sections 6.3 and 6.7), and the interview data show how these factors could also be linked with family influences.

The study by Ball et al (2000) identified overlapping arenas of action and centres of action within educational decision-making: family, home and domesticity; work, education and training; leisure and social life. In this study there is evidence that the student teachers drew upon factors which overlapped with the first two arenas of action. Leisure and social life were not directly referred to, but this might explain the importance of time/workload concerns in the decision-making for some student teachers.

How did institutional policy and practice impact on engagement with M level study?

The findings (Chapters 4 and 6) provide insights in relation to this research question. Chapter four provides the contextual information about the development of policy and practice at the CSU and explores the ways in which the CSU supported the decision-making. Chapter six explores what was said, at interview, by the student teachers about the institutional practice. The main answer to this research question is that the institutional practice and policy at the CSU hindered engagement with the PGCE/M; it was a source of the risk factor referred to by both student teachers and academic staff at interview (Section 6.5). The regulation that students who failed the M level course could not qualify on the PGCE/H was the main factor making the PGCE/M a risky option; both students and staff referred to this in interview. Many student teachers chose a pathway that they deemed to be safer for them as they moved into a new field of learning and employment. Some referred to the decision-making as stressful because they recognised the limitations and dangers of choosing unwisely, and the need for more information was raised both at interview and on the survey.

The data also demonstrate that the institutional policy and practice was constructed by individual student teachers in different ways and Bourdieu's theoretical concepts have been useful in interpreting some of these differences.

The notion of an institutional habitus (Reay et al, 2005) of the CSU has been helpful in unpicking some of the effects of policy development and enactment.

To use a case study approach to develop a greater understanding of student teachers' educational decision-making regarding the Professional or Postgraduate Certificate of Education and how these decisions contributed to the reproduction of inequalities.

In this discussion, I begin by returning briefly to the explanations of educational decision-making provided by Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) Relative Risk Aversion (RRA) hypothesis since the small numbers taking the PGCE/M could be seen as compatible with predictions made from using the RRA hypothesis. In a review of PG education in the UK (drawn from the Higher Education Statistics Agency data), House (2010) suggested that 'teaching is a more common route into the professions for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds' (House, 2010, p22). In comparison with other PG courses, a higher percentage of teacher training students are from lower social classes. Student teachers on a PGCE have opted to take a course of study that provides them with a specific outcome and good prospects for employment if they are successful. It is a less risky option than many other PG courses of study. RRA predicts that individuals seek to avoid risk of downward mobility and so it could be used to offer some explanation for the patterns that have emerged at CSU in relation to this educational decision-making. Student teachers who have already acquired upward mobility through graduating with a first degree would be less likely to choose a qualification route (PGCE/M) with higher risks of failure and the possibility of downward mobility should they not be successful. The widening participation mission of the CSU probably means that a higher proportion of the student teachers are first generation University than may be the case on PGCEs elsewhere and so this factor is perhaps more salient at the CSU.

On the surface, RRA might seem a reasonable explanation, but it remains limited with respect to its scope in illuminating the more complex individual decision-making revealed by the interviews with student teachers (Chapter 6). RRA is also a less convincing explanation when taking into account the fact that the risks of failure were arguably slight. There had not been any incidences of failure on the

PGCE/M at CSU in the previous two years, a fact which students were made aware of in the briefings about the PGCE/M. Indeed, on the survey just over half the student teachers did not select 'fear of failure' as a reason for not taking the PGCE/M. It can also be argued that the risk factor also exists for the PGCE/H, in that if the modules are failed at H level the consequences are the same.

Some student teachers appeared to carefully evaluate the costs (e.g. time and workload), risks (e.g. academic factors) and benefits (e.g. motivations) in order to reach a decision that was rational at least to the point of aiming to do the best for themselves – the rational computation identified by Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992) as supplementing or even taking over from the habitus under certain conditions. For some student teachers, this was within a rational framework of utilitarian gain; but for most, the rational computation was bounded in some way and fitted with a model of pragmatic rationalism as described by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997). There was a conscious decision-making process but it was also influenced by non-rational feelings and emotions, which in some cases were related to socio-cultural background. For example, the anxiety shown by Carlo, Freda and Adela can perhaps be related to their status as migrants to the UK and therefore lack of familiarity with the dominant culture – or in Bourdieu's terms, having less relevant cultural capital.

For other student teachers, individual agency was less evident within the process, or expressed more as an embodied 'feel for the game' – a kind of practical reasoning (Bourdieu, 1998). Pathways were chosen that reproduced the well-established dispositions of habitus. The decisions made by these student teachers were perhaps more an expression of the shaping forces of social experience than an entirely autonomous and deliberate action. Some student teachers who decided not to take the PGCE/M clearly rejected the opportunity, with little further conscious thought, either because they did not see it as for the likes of them (Reay et al, 2005), or because they deemed it to have no value. There was also evidence of a 'herd mentality' (Wakeling, 2009, p74) – those student teachers who saw the PGCE/M, as a natural progression route and demonstrated the 'salience of confidence' (Reay et al, 2005, p21) to approach the choice as a non-decision. While some of them did express concerns on academic and other grounds, they did not

construct these as a barrier, but considered that such concerns are inevitable at the start of a new course and that they could be tackled through judicious use of the available support mechanisms.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis I argued that a Bourdieuian analysis offers better methodological and theoretical potential for illuminating the processes and stratifying effects of decision-making. Throughout, and as reiterated in the discussion so far in this chapter, I have used Bourdieu's ideas of habitus relationally to field and cultural capital to enable a greater understanding of the interrelatedness of the different factors which influenced student teachers' decision-making about the PGCE/M. I have referred to student teachers' individual habitus and the institutional habitus of the CSU. However, in conducting my analysis I felt some unease about the concept of institutional habitus because there is also the individual effect of the academic staff who work within the CSU occupying different positions within the hierarchy, representing different groups of student teachers and disciplines, different personalities, different overarching philosophies – different identities. Each possesses a different capital advantage within the field – a different habitus, and therefore, impact on policy and practice at the CSU in a myriad of ways. This was an issue raised by Atkinson (2011) as part of his critique of the notion of collective habitus. PGCE course leaders may not have been able to influence the initial formulation of regulations (Section 4.2), but their interpretations of policy combined with their personal constructions of M level; their interactions and relationships with student teachers; and the chance remarks made are likely to have impacted on the construction of learner and teacher identities (Sections 4.2, 6.3 and 6.6), and therefore the decisions made about taking the PGCE at M level.

Thinking more holistically, the institutional policy, learner identity and the decisions made can all be considered as a products of the complex interplay between different aspects of the field, individual and institutional habitus (Reay, 2004). In consideration of how the decision-making led to inequalities I draw upon this interplay between institutional and individual habitus which contributed to the shaping of student teachers' learner identities and the decisions made. This shaping most typically replicated the dispositions that constitute the individual and

institutional habitus, and only less typically transform them. There are three main types of barrier to widening participation suggested by research (Gorard et al, 2006,): institutional, situational and dispositional – all evident as factors within the decision-making in this case study. Thus the policy at the CSU was an institutional barrier – the timing, lack of flexibility and structure of the opportunities for support constrained transformation of habitus. Student teachers' personal circumstances, coupled with learner identity and the decisions made were the situational and dispositional barriers that further constrained the transformation of habitus. As I argued previously (Section 2.4) Gorard et al (2006) cautioned that the term 'barrier' over simplifies the nature of these barriers; the use of a case study approach, with data collected from different sources, has illuminated some of the complexity of these barriers, and how they interrelate at an individual level, which led to the decisions made and the resulting inequalities of outcome.

The data collected in this case study has revealed the role of individual agency and identity, as well as the external structuring effects which constrain the degree to which individuals make rational decisions – and the ways that these are held within a dynamic relationship of objectivity with subjectivity (or subjectivity with objectivity). It is difficult to envisage how any model of educational decision-making could provide the explanatory power to manage this degree of fluidity and complexity. However, working with Bourdieu's concepts has provided a means to capture simultaneously the notions of objectivity with subjectivity and structure with agency and thus to interpret the decision-making process for the student teachers within this case study.

7.3 Evaluation of the methodology

By methodology, I am referring, really, to the whole of my research, but specifically here I reflect on some of the limitations of the methods used to collect the data and make some suggestions for possible improvement if I had the opportunity to do this research again.

The case study approach allowed me to gather evidence from varied sources within the real life context of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2009). I aimed to integrate and compare the different findings, in order to develop a story of policy change and impact from differing perspectives. My research questions were central to my aims and the evidence collected from the different sources has enabled me to address these. However, I recognise that my selection of evidence, for example quotations from the transcript interviews, the ways in which I have stitched together the different pieces of data to suggest conclusions is of my own construction – or to continue to think in terms of habitus, capital and field, it is a product of my individual habitus structured by the capital advantage I possess within this field. To illustrate more specifically what I mean by this – my learning trajectory has been linear and lifelong (Gorard et al, 1998), my learning experiences positive and it is through this positioning and relative to it, that I view other people's individual experiences. Another researcher may have given a different emphasis in the qualitative data analysis. However, the patterns of unequal participation existed and so the substance of the overall conclusions is unlikely to differ.

Limitations and implications of data collection methods

The data collection methods each had their limitations which I discussed in Section 3.9 and highlighted within the chapters of findings. Here, I consider the potential implications of these and emphasise those where I feel, in hindsight, that I would do something differently if I were to repeat the research.

The survey was a useful tool for collecting data from a greater number of student teachers about the factors they thought were important in their decision-making. However, the response rate was low, only 33% overall, and not evenly distributed between the different course groups (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) which may have resulted in bias. There is no reason to assume that the non-respondents would have selected different factors as important in their decision-making. However, it is possible that the PGCE/H non-respondents did not complete the survey because they were not interested in the PGCE/M and therefore may have been more likely to have selected factors related to the PGCE/M being of 'No benefit'.

Ultimately the low response rate limited the statistical analysis of the survey data and meant I could not explore any relationships between student teachers' characteristics and the factors they considered important in their decision-making. For example, there was very limited data collected from the PE and primary student teachers.

My analysis of the survey data was further constrained by the question design which presented different sets of factors to the PGCE/H and PGCE/M student teachers. This made it impossible for me to compare directly, for example, responses about time and workload, academic factors and the value of the PGCE/M. This question could be redesigned so that comparisons could be made more easily of student teachers' responses from all the different course groups.

It should also be recognised that the data (survey and interview) in relation to the reasons given by student teachers to account for the decisions they made is limited by the extent to which individuals are consciously aware of the reasons for their decisions as well as willing to reveal all of the reasons of which they are conscious. Although there is no reason to assume that the factors provided on the questionnaire to explain the decision-making were not appropriate, these factors were suggested initially by **me** as possible reasons to explain their decisions. I cannot be sure they were sufficiently comprehensive or that student teachers would have offered these same reasons themselves. Student teachers may only have become consciously aware of these factors through completion of the survey with the result that these factors were brought to the surface of their consciousness prior to the interviews. However, in order to try and understand student teachers' decision-making I have drawn upon a range of responses provided by student teachers at interview, not just those given as a direct response to account for their decision-making.

The student teacher interview sample was mixed with respect to most variables, and through the use of purposive sampling it reflected, as far as possible, the characteristics of the overall cohort. However the sample did not include anyone from the age group 25 and below or from the secondary subject areas of citizenship and PE and so I was unable to explore how these student characteristics may have been linked with decision-making. In addition, my original intention had

been to focus mainly on the decision-making of non-participants of the PGCE/M. Thus I interviewed only four student teachers who decided to take the PGCE/M. On reflection it would have been revealing to interview a greater number of student teachers taking the PGCE/M. This would have provided better opportunities for drawing comparisons between the course groups and therefore exploring how the factors interrelated in different ways for individuals.

The CSU data sets were not provided as spread sheets and so I was unable to run statistical tests on controlled variables for the CSU data sets. This was a real limitation since it meant that I could not ascertain which characteristics were linked. In hindsight, had I realised the extent of this limitation, I would have requested access to the original data bases for these sets of figures. However, counter to that, I would argue that even knowing that relationships between characteristics exist; the extent to which this can illuminate the decision-making process at an individual level is still limited. Nevertheless, identifying such relationships have helped to reveal the patterns of inequality that resulted from the decision-making.

The case study approach provided rich and varied data which enabled an exploration of decision-making which could encompass the effects of individual and institutional habitus. However, there were some limitations in the quality of the data collected. The data collected about the negotiation and subsequent formulation of policy at senior management level tells only a partial story and one that has been pieced together from second and third hand sources. For example, there are examples of speculative evidence (Section 4.2) such as that provided by previous academic leader for ITE within the CSU, for example, when trying to account for the decisions about the policy change at senior management level.

Although, a few student teachers referred to the influence of peers (Section 6.3) I collected little data in relation to this. This might be because it was not an important factor in the decision-making. However, in hindsight, I could have included this as a possible factor on the survey question and explored it as a separate theme within the interviews with student teachers. Furthermore, at interview my questions about the value or otherwise of the PGCE/M revealed only minimal or poorly articulated responses from some student teachers. Although this in itself is telling, I am aware that the way I phrased the questions perhaps limited

exploration of their constructions of teacher identity. If I were to repeat this research I would want to develop the exploration of this theme with both student teachers and the course leaders. On reflection, I think it would have been better to have used more open questions to establish expectations and views about the teacher's role, separately to the connection with the potential benefits or otherwise of M level study.

7.4 Implications for future practice and research

This study has revealed the difficulties faced by student teachers when making the decision about which PGCE route to follow and the potential problems for widening participation that appeared once differentiated PGCE pathways were introduced. In theoretical terms I would argue that the aim for a widening participation agenda in Higher Education (or more specifically of ITE) should be to examine the field and the capital of the players within that field, to lessen any hysteresis of habitus (Section 2.5), so that habitus can be transformed through practice, enabling a wider range of players to feel 'as fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p108). It is therefore imperative that any notion of determinism is challenged, but at the same time the resilient nature of habitus must be acknowledged, as well as the associated conservative nature of the field, so that realistic strategies can be implemented in order to reduce the barriers to transforming habitus. HEIs need to recognise the potentially contradictory effects of policies that appear supportive and inclusive (e.g. the policy of choice introduced at the CSU) but can reproduce inequalities, in part, because of the resilient nature of habitus. Individuals need to be shown explicitly by the institution that there are practical mechanisms in place that can, in theoretical terms, legitimise capital within the field, and facilitate the development of individual dispositions that are comfortable within the new field. The ultimate aim is to develop learner identities that can embrace new opportunities rather than reject them 'out of hand'. In the subsequent paragraphs of this section I draw upon the findings presented and explored within Chapters 4 to 6 in order to make suggestions of ways forward to address this challenge.

The findings (Sections 4.2 and 6.5) provide examples which demonstrate that the information provided by the CSU to support student teachers in their

decision-making was insufficient or misunderstood – the understanding constructed by the student teachers from official discourse (i.e. the briefings and course handbooks) did not necessarily represent what was originally intended by the ITE course team. The formal information focussed less on the potential benefits of the PGCE/M than the risks, and at interview, the majority of student teachers were uncertain about the value of the PGCE/M in relation to their development as teachers. Student teachers' perceptions of M level study tended to emphasise workload and the academic work was seen as theoretical, additional, and separate from teaching practices. This is an inevitable viewpoint for student teachers at the beginning of their ITE and one which fits with findings (Hobson, 2003) that show that trainee teachers expect to learn more from time spent in schools than in universities. To better support student teachers' decision-making about their ITE it is important to recognise, as argued by Ashby et al (2008), that any initial understanding of the teacher's role and expectations of ITE is likely to be limited and largely informed by their own experiences as consumers of education. The findings show that student teachers had varied opinions about the value or otherwise of the PGCE/M and the relationship between theory and practice (Section 6.6). I concur with Younger et al (2004) that more priority should be given to helping student teachers to understand the interrelation between theory and practice, and why both work together to help them to develop as effective teachers.

A more effective way of conveying supportive and consistent information to all student teachers could be to provide reference material, separate to the course handbooks, and written with less of the technical discourse style (McClure, 2003). This could, for example, highlight the realistic differences in workload demands between the PGCE/H and PGCE/M; explain and provide examples of the ways in which practitioner research can enhance classroom practice; give clear examples of progression routes at the CSU and other institutions; and demonstrate the financial benefits of gaining additional M level credits on the PGCE without additional cost. It could be supplemented with short video clips from previous student teachers talking, for example, about the decision they made and why, and if they took the PGCE/M how they time managed the workload, with examples provided of how the PGCE/M enhanced their classroom practice. Such a style could enable both 'hot'

and 'cold' information to be conveyed. Ball and Vincent (2006) suggested that the 'hot' knowledge that comes from peers and other non-formal sources can have a more influential role within educational decision-making.

Student teachers were clearly concerned about the risk of failure, frequently linked with specific concerns related to academic reading and writing. Even without the risk of failure, such concerns may still deter some student teachers from aiming to achieve at M level. The CSU needs to acknowledge these fears and demonstrate explicitly to student teachers that support will be provided to develop these skills, for example, through a clearly visible integrated programme of support, the VLE and interventions to target individual needs. O'Donnell et al (2009, p27) warned against the assumption that 'once students graduate there is little (if anything) in the way of a transition to be undertaken' to manage PG study. I would argue that the transition to Masters level needs to be carefully acknowledged and embedded within the transition to the professional training course. Courses need to be developed that can effectively underpin quality of practice and critical engagement with theory.

HEIs need to actively search out the different expertise and life experiences that students bring to the field and recognise (and legitimise) different capitals (e.g. experiences as a parent or carer, experiences of education outside the U.K., linguistic competencies). These capitals can be acknowledged and valued through the design of programmes that value and help students to build upon their individual contexts. Students need the support of HEIs to help them to 'activate' (Reay, 1998) their cultural capital within the field. Although the ITE department at the CSU values diversity and has designed a course which demonstrates this, for example through its content and through the careful allocation of student teachers to school placements, the student teachers do not necessarily recognise individually the value of their previous experiences. This requires further intervention through the use of individual support to help student teachers to see how they can use their different experiences and expertise within the context of ITE, for example, using their experiences of parenting to notice learning or drawing upon their experiences of education outside the UK to explore a wider range of educational methods. All of this needs to be built into the assessed aspects of courses (e.g. use of such

scenarios provided as exemplars) so that recognition is fully integrated and accorded the same status as other experience and knowledge.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis I presented a case for viewing the introduction of M level credits within the PGCE as a progressive step towards developing high quality teachers. Government policy (DCSF, 2007) has indicated a belief that a highly qualified teaching force will lead to a better quality of education at classroom level. This is in line with Iacu's (2010) consideration of the developments within teacher education in Europe after Bologna which indicated that many European countries were moving to introduce and develop M level work within teacher training. Any long term impacts should be measured on the benefits to the school pupils. The two-tiered PGCE results in only some student teachers leaving their training with M level credits, and even if funding and encouragement remain for qualified teachers to continue with M level study, it is predictable that those who already have M level credits are more likely to do so. It is also predictable that those teachers working within less challenging school contexts may feel more inclined and able to find the time for further study. If school governing bodies begin to look for M level qualifications, and the PGCE/M carries more kudos, then it is possible that certain schools, e.g. popular schools, schools in more affluent areas, those that perform better, those that have a greater market value and in turn a more stable teaching force will be able to employ a higher proportion of teachers with the PGCE/M. Other schools, serving more disadvantaged populations may find it harder to recruit qualified teachers and in particular those with the more prestigious qualification. The potential net result of this could be a poorer quality of education for pupils in socially disadvantaged areas and at schools that are seen to be less successful. The current educational inequalities that we already see enacted within urban inner city contexts could become more pronounced.

As such, I would argue that it is important to ensure that this development of ITE is monitored carefully to ensure that participation is equitable. The policy and practice at different HEIs needs critical analysis to ensure that the imperatives of the widening participation agenda remain visible and transparent. Future research should monitor and investigate nationally which students qualify with the PGCE/M and which do not, and the reasons for these differences, with a view to developing

effective strategies to support all PGCE student teachers with PG study at M level. Such research should examine the complex interplay of factors, such as gender, ethnicity, age, educational, social and cultural backgrounds in relation to the choices made within ITE (and other similar kinds of educational decision-making). At the time of completing this thesis there have been further changes to the ways in which teachers are trained for school teaching. As highlighted in Section 1.3 there is an increasing emphasis on school based training and it is unclear how M level study will fit with these routes into teaching. I suggest that an additional area for future research will be to investigate the teaching qualifications of teaching staff in a range of different schools and to explore any patterns of inequality that might emerge in terms of the quality of teaching force for children in different areas and schools.

I hope that my study can alert educationalists to the potential dangers of educational decision-making at PG level in terms of either maintaining inequalities or reintroducing them. The justification for differentiated pathways should be scrutinised carefully; they can be viewed erroneously, in my view, as a means to cater for the heterogeneity of a student body. My study corroborates the findings from other studies (Section 2.2) that have shown that at all stages of education 'choice' tends to reinforce inequalities rather than offer disadvantaged groups opportunities as it is 'intended' to do. Misguided assumptions about aptitude can lead to a deterministic view point. There is then a danger that the impact of these smaller divided pathways can go unnoticed and unchallenged which can limit learning opportunities. If teaching is to become a Masters profession then all graduate entrants should be supported to embrace that professional identity, which I believe in turn can only enhance the quality of teachers more widely, and thereby maximising the ultimate benefits for pupils and their schools.

My research has already had an impact at the CSU – the early stages of data collection and discussions triggered the development of a more robust argument to change the regulations. The secondary team had become more empowered through possession of the knowledge that the policy and practice had led to unequal outcomes. They had gained capital advantage within the field of the CSU and were able to argue effectively for a change to the regulations. They had also gained institutional capital (Section 1.4) through successfully qualifying student

teachers at PGCE/M. As a result, it could be argued that there was some transformation of the institutional habitus. The new policy allowed secondary student teachers to be re-registered for the PGCE/M at a later stage if they had achieved sufficient M level credits on the assignments. This effectively removed the source of the risk factor since it meant that all could try to reach the M level standard without any risk of failing the whole qualification. This was a significant shift in that a greater degree of flexibility was introduced, and so some of the institutional barriers to widening participation were removed. However student teachers could still decide whether or not to aim to achieve the M level criteria and therefore there are still potential negative impacts from this decision-making on equalities of outcome.

This thesis adds to the wide body of literature that demonstrates how educational decision-making can reinforce inequalities and highlights the need for educators in all settings to be made more aware of this. They need to monitor policies and practices to ensure that no particular groups of students are disadvantaged.

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Appendix 1 Survey questionnaire

(For purposes of exemplification this has been completed fictiously).

Factors influencing engagement or otherwise with the M level PGCE

Please answer the following questions which have been designed to help me collect information for a research study as part of my EdD. I am looking at the factors that can influence professional/academic choices made by trainee teachers on PGCE courses. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your contributions will remain anonymous. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions please contact me on xxxxxxxxxx Victoria Brook (PGCE Secondary Science Course Leader)

Top of Form

Personal information

For which sector are you training to teach? Secondary

If you are training in the secondary sector what is your subject area? Citizenship

Please indicate your gender? Female

What was your age at 1st September 2009? 26 - 39

Do you have a disability or learning difficulty? No

If you answered yes to the previous question please add further details.

What is your ethnicity? Please tick the box that best describes your ethnicity. Please use the 'no White British

Is English your first or an additional language?

English is my first home language

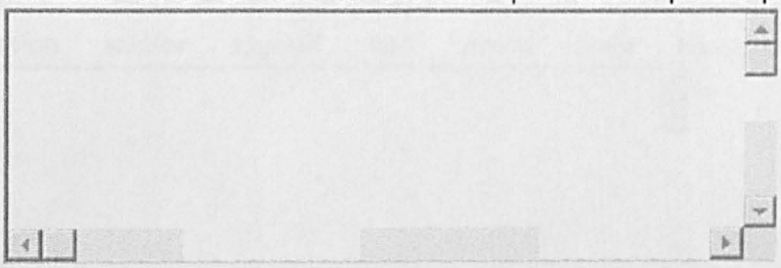
Where did you attend secondary/high school? UK

If your secondary education was outside the U.K please indicate which country?

What was your degree classification? If you have studied more than one degree please indicate the classification you achieved in the degree most substantially related to your PGCE subject. 2.1

At which University did you take your degree? If you studied more than one degree please indicate the name of the University for the degree most closely related to your PGCE subject. Mancheste

If you indicated 'other' or have an overseas qualification please provide details below.



Please indicate if you have a postgraduate qualification

None

What is the highest level of qualification achieved by your father?

A Level or equivalent

What is the highest level of qualification achieved by your mother?

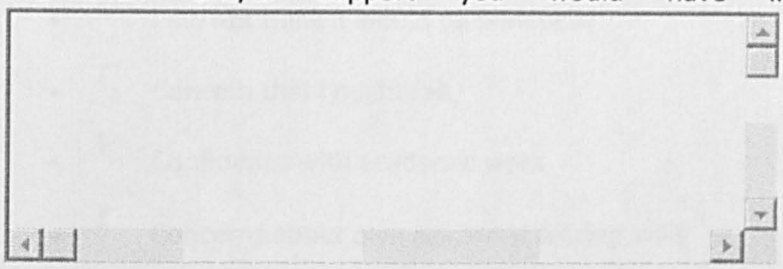
First degree or equivalent

Do you have any dependent children?

- ○ Yes
- ◉ No

Would you like to have received more information and/or support when making the decision about whether or not to engage with the M level PGCE? Yes

If you answered 'yes' to the previous question please state briefly what additional information and/or support you would have liked to receive?



Did you apply for the M level route?

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Non engagement with M level route

Please answer the next two questions if you decided not to apply for the M level route

To what extent did you consider taking the M level route? Do not answer this question if you are registered on the M level route

Which of the following factors influenced your decision NOT to engage with the M level PGCE? Please tick the boxes that apply to you. Please consider if the following factors INFLUENCED your decision, not just whether or not you agree with each statement. Please do not answer this question if you are registered on the M level route. Thank you.

- ☐ I was put off by the application process
- ☐ Influence from the course leader/tutor
- ☐ Satisfaction with the academic qualifications that I currently hold
- ☐ I already have a Masters/higher degree

- ☐ I don't think you need a Masters to become a good teacher
- ☐ I did not think it would be beneficial
- ☐ Concern that I might fail
- ☐ Confidence with academic work
- ☐ Concerns about own academic writing skills
- ☐ Concerns about amount of reading required
- ☐ I don't think I am 'clever' enough
- ☐ Degree work was challenging
- ☐ Concerns about working within a different subject discipline, i.e. *education*
- ☐ Prefer to minimise the amount of academic work I have to do on the course
- ☐ Concerns about time and workload
- ☐ Concerns about the quality and availability of teaching and/or support on course
- ☐ I didn't really understand what would be required
- ☐ Other: ☐

Continue to end of page 3

Please go to the end of page 3 to submit your responses. I am hoping to conduct interviews at a later stage and if you are happy to leave your contact details there is a space at the end of page 3 before you submit this form. Thank you.

Engagement with the M level route

Please answer the following question if you decided to apply for the M level route.

Which of the following factors influenced your decision to engage with the M level PGCE? Please tick the boxes that apply to you. *Please consider if the following* factors INFLUENCED your decision, not just whether or not you agree with each statement. Do not answer this question if you decided NOT to engage with the M level route. Thank you.

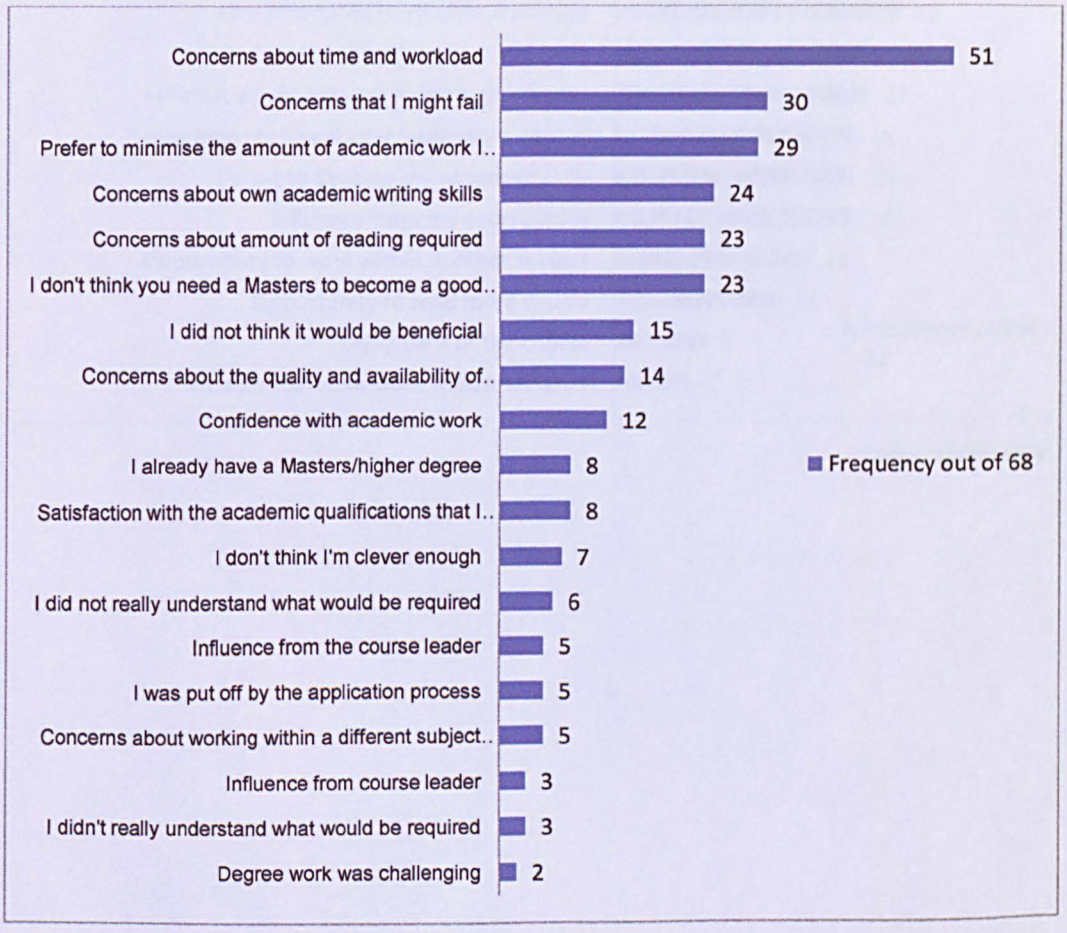
- ☑ Influence from my course leader/tutor
- ☑ I think it could help me to become a better teacher
- ☑ It may help me to get a good teaching post
- ☐ It may help me to get promoted more quickly when I qualify
- ☑ I enjoy academic work
- ☐ I want to develop my academic skills
- ☐ I am interested in educational issues and pedagogy
- ☑ Opportunity to read more widely
- ☑ Motivated by the academic challenge
- ☐ Enjoyment of the course
- ☐ Opportunity to work within another subject discipline (i.e. education) at a higher level
- ☑ Personal ambition
- ☐ My parents/family have Masters/higher degrees
- ☐ Other: [ ]

Was your application for the M level route PGCE successful? [Yes ▾]

I am hoping to conduct some interviews at a later stage. If you are happy to be contacted for this purpose please provide your email address and/or phone number. Thank you.

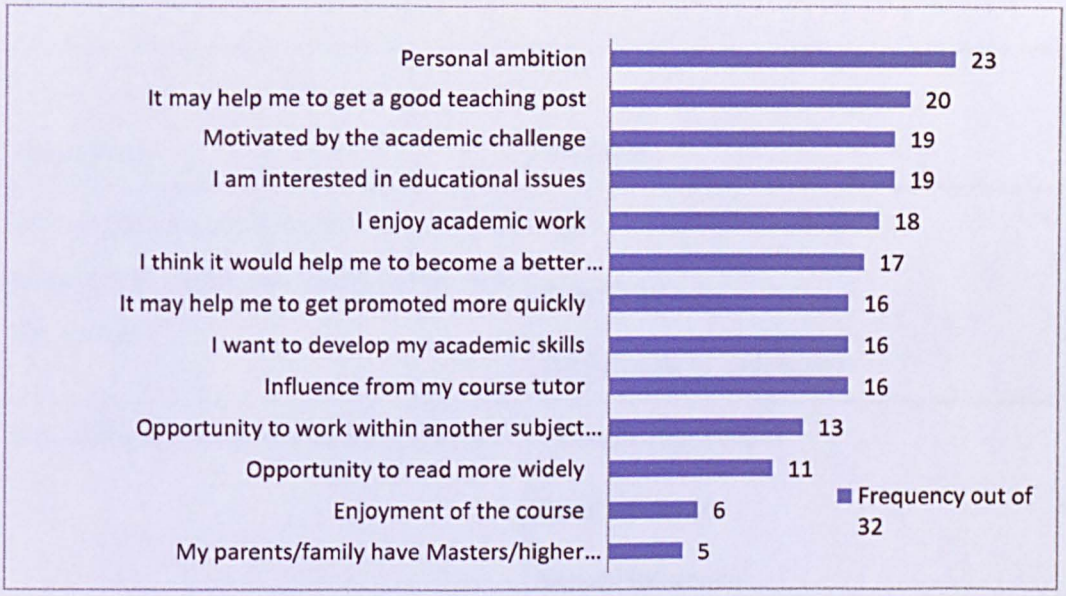
Appendix 2 Full responses to survey question about reasons for deciding whether or not to take the PGCE/M

Figure 8.1 Numbers of student teachers selecting the listed reasons to explain the decision not to take the PGCE/M



Source: Survey data

Figure 8.2 Numbers of student teachers selecting the listed reasons to explain the decision to take the PGCE/M



Source: Survey data

Appendix 3 Interview with student teacher

Questions	Prompts
Tell me about your previous educational experiences from the point when you left school	Age Qualifications Entry route to University
Why did you decide to go to University?	Family expectations Peer influence School influence Home life Enjoyment of study/subject, career.
How did your family support your education?	Books, newspapers, trips to museums Conversation Hobbies/interests
How did you feel about your undergraduate study?	Enjoyment Challenges/difficulties Finances Workload Friends
Why did you decide to take the PGCE?	Why teaching Experiences School Other routes into teaching Career

	Academic component Reputation
Is there anything specific about your undergraduate experiences that influenced you to do the PGCE?	Previous experiences Education components
What do you know about M level study?	Differences Expectations Difficulty Research Reading/writing Criticality
How did you feel when you had to make the decision?	Uncertain Worried Disinterest Informed Support
Why did you decide to take (or not take) the PGCE/M?	Reasons for choice made Influences Motivations Concerns
Do you think the M level PGCE could be beneficial?	Classroom practice Theory Research Jobs

Do you think there should be a choice?	Flexibility Compulsory M level No M level
Do you regret your decision?	Reasons

Appendix 4 Interview with secondary subject course leader

Questions	Prompts
What were your immediate thoughts when M level credits were introduced on the PGCE? Have your ideas changed?	Benefits, appropriate or inappropriate. Relevance Demands
How would you identify the additional skills/knowledge required for M level study?	Are these additional to those required for PGCE? Academic, writing, critical reflection
Do you think these additional skills and knowledge can be developed /acquired by all graduate trainee teachers? Is M level suitable for all trainees?	Degree background, classification and subject. Classroom practitioners. Academic study skills
Since the M level credits were introduced have any of your students opted to do the PGCE at M level?	Changes to numbers
What reasons would you give to explain why trainees choose to engage or not with M level study? Particular reasons for your trainees?	Perceived benefits, number of credits, relevance, academic background, degree background, skills, jobs, workload
Do you think you may have influenced some trainees – intentionally or unintentionally?	Tutorials, advice, persuasion
Are you satisfied /disappointed with number of trainees from your course who opted to take M level?	Reasons

Impact of choice? Should there be a choice?	Advantages, disadvantages, alternatives

Appendix 5 Informed consent forms

Informed consent for interviews

I am doing a research study as part of my EdD programme. This is being supervised by Merryn Hutchings in IPSE and she can be contacted on m.hutchings@londonmet.ac.uk should you have any further questions. My research project aims to investigate the factors that impact on students' engagement with M level work on the PGCE.

Thank you for agreeing to take part. I would like to emphasise that:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary
- Your participation will not in any way positively or negatively prejudice your performance/assessment in this course
- All assessment decisions are subject to moderation at internal and external level by independent bodies
- You are free to refuse to answer any questions
- You are free to withdraw at any time

The interviews will be taped for transcribing at a later stage and a transcript can be made available for you if you wish to see it. The interview will be kept confidential, although parts of the interview may be used within the final research report. Pseudonyms will be used where appropriate in order to take all efforts to protect anonymity. I anticipate that interviews will last up to a maximum of 45 minutes. There will also be an opportunity for you to ask me any questions regarding the research and/or to make any suggestions.

Thank you for your time.

Please sign this form to show that you give informed consent.

----------signed

---------- date

Informed consent form for briefing

I am doing a pilot research study as part of my EdD studies. This is being supervised by Merryn Hutchings in IPSE and she can be contacted on m.hutchings@londonmet.ac.uk should you have any further questions. My research project aims to investigate the factors that impact on students' engagement with M level work on the PGCE.

Thank you for agreeing to take part and allowing me to attend and listen to your briefing to PGCE trainees. I would like to emphasise that:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary
- You are free to withdraw at any time

Your briefing will be taped for transcribing at a later stage and a transcript can be made available for you if you wish to see it. The transcript will be kept confidential, although parts of the transcript may be used within the final research report. Pseudonyms will be used where appropriate in order to take all efforts to protect anonymity.

Thank you for your time.

Please sign this form to show that you give informed consent.

----------signed

---------- date