REFLECTIVE LEARNING BY POST-GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHERS IN THEIR INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION YEAR

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Abstract

Student teachers are expected to learn from experience in order to become reflective practitioners and to achieve Qualified Teacher Status. This is a study of student teachers’ ability to reflect on their experience of teaching. This thesis is a qualitative study which forms one part of a longitudinal action research project studying whether and how different reflective learning activities introduced into a PGCE programme promote reflection and increase the capacity to learn. It takes an interpretative approach, generating qualitative data on the processes of reflection of students relating to their teacher training. The study took place over a one-year period in one teacher training institution. There were 13 participants aged 22 or 23 years, who were all taking a post-graduate route into teaching Physical Education. The data arose from student responses to different reflective learning activities and subsequent interviews followed by an evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall learning strategy.

Content analysis of the data demonstrated three levels of reflection. All 13 students, in some form began to reflect with superficial engagement, characterised by description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions; the reflection of five respondents followed Dewey’s (1933) framework: suggestion, problem, hypothesis, reasoning and testing. Two went further than Dewey reflection by showing what I termed ‘enhanced reflection’ demonstrating all of the following: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion.

Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, action learning sets, journals and interviews), the action learning sets had the most impact on the student teachers’ ability to reflect at all levels. All participants used an unexpectedly full and coherent narrative to reconsider their experience.

The study showed that Dewey’s framework is an effective analytic tool to identify reflection and the process of analysis enabled the recognition and formulation of two additional levels not formally identified in the literature: criteria for superficial engagement and enhanced reflection. The use of full and coherent narrative to articulate reflection evident in all data indicates an area for future research. Given the opportunity and appropriate context, student teachers will provide detailed and descriptive stories at a pre-reflective level of superficial engagement and a small number will engage more fully with Dewey and enhanced reflection. The oral reflective learning activities are the most effective way to promote this, but students require greater guidance than much of the literature suggests on how to reflect effectively.

The implication for initial teacher training programmes is that Schools of Education need to recognise the importance of these pre-reflective activities and provide opportunities to extend this into reflection by providing Dewey as a guide or framework for reflection and through the promotion of oral story telling.
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ABBREVIATIONS

ALS - Action Learning Set
CPD - Career Professional Development
HE - Higher Education
ITE - Initial Teacher Education
ITT - Initial Teacher Training
LEA - Local Education Authority
NQT - Newly Qualified Teacher
PE - Physical Education
PGCE - Post Graduate Certificate of Education
QTS - Qualified Teacher Status
TA - Training Agency
TDA - Training Development Agency
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My special thanks go to my family John, Alice and Anna for understanding and making this research possible.

Dedicated to my boys.
DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 22.02.2016
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introducing the study

This is a study of student teachers’ ability to reflect on their experience of teaching. This thesis is a qualitative study which forms one part of a longitudinal action research project studying whether and how different reflective learning activities introduced into a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme promote reflection and increase the capacity to learn. It takes an interpretative approach, generating qualitative data on the processes of reflection of students relating to their teacher training.

This thesis starts with the narrative of the research, starting at the inception of the work and the underpinning reasons and motivation for carrying out the project. I introduce myself as a person, as an educator and as a researcher, question the importance of reflection and frame the project within the context of Higher Education (HE) and teacher preparation. The work continues to consider if a student teacher progresses their ability to reflect, examining the most appropriate activities to encourage reflection.

1.2 Introducing myself

As a female from a working class and competitive sports background and with parents who ensured I regarded education as a means to ‘better oneself’ with the hope of improving my prospects, I became a teacher who has always tried to nurture and value learning. In other words I believe in ‘e-ducere’, the Latin definition that favours the process of education and means to ‘pull out’ or nurture, to draw out the abilities of an individual, to allow them to explore their strengths, to be creative and gain an insight into their own talents. I have always enjoyed learning and encouraged individuals to learn from themselves by reflecting on their own experiences.

When I first moved from teaching in a secondary school to HE, I was involved in preparing teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE); I valued ‘e-ducere’ and believed that personal learning or education underpinned both teacher preparation and in-service teaching. In fact my values echoed
those of the James Report (1972) written many years before, when 3/4-year undergraduate degrees were the route into teaching. The report provided guidelines for teacher preparation and divided teacher education into three stages: personal education, pre-service training and in-service training, clearly showing the importance of integrating personal learning and education with the phases of a teaching career. I viewed learning from personal experience as a key component of becoming a good teacher and was fortunate enough to work in an HE institution that held similar ideals.

As a lecturer involved in teacher preparation I was interested in the concept of reflection and how an individual considers and learns from their actions before implementing change. In my opinion, learning from experience, often regarded as reflective practice, is a vital component of being a teacher, but as there is a lack of definition for the term reflection I wanted to understand more about the process, how I might recognise it and finally improve the opportunity for student teachers to reflect. I wanted to understand more about reflective practice within HE and teacher preparation, hence providing the opportunity for student teachers to start the reflection process became a priority of my pedagogical practice.

### 1.3 Changes in teacher preparation

Since I moved to HE, the preparation of teachers in the past 15 years has seen change beyond recognition with a modification in the nomenclature and priority from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) (as introduced by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) in 1984) to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) (as referred to by the Training Development Agency (TDA) from 2006). The alteration in the emphasis from ‘education’ to ‘training’ signifies in my mind a move from the process to the product of education. This alteration in the nomenclature and focus, along with other changes such as the phasing out of undergraduate three- or four-year degrees and the revised ‘provider ITT allocation methodology (2014/15)’ increasing the number of student teachers in school based training (School Direct/Assessment Only/Troops into Teaching) impacting on the allocation of post graduate numbers to HE institutions (NCTL, 2014) and growth of
interest in School Direct and school-led approach, has created a feeling of apprehension for myself as a teacher educator and led me to re-examine my values and belief in ‘e-ducere’ within teacher preparation.

These Government changes to teacher preparation have seen a move toward more ‘choice’ for the individual wishing to become a teacher. There is now a choice of routes into teaching and an increase in the provision of providers, which has seen a change from the undergraduate B.Ed or B.A. (Hons) or post graduate PGCE within HE, to a range of programmes offered by a variety of providers. The de-regulation of teacher preparation has enabled more individual choice but created more difficulties in the standardisation and regulation of assuring the education of student teachers and production of teachers with ‘outstanding’ pedagogical skills. The different routes into teaching could be viewed as a productive way of recruiting teachers and with a competency-based system of achieving qualified teacher status being moderated by Ofsted the quality of teaching could be maintained. However, as universities and school-based trainers have become more closely affiliated to corporate businesses (Torres, 2012), Ofsted inspections completed by private companies and many schools maintained by private organisations, I have a growing concern for the lack of ‘institutional commitment’ to the learner from a provider (Del Gandio, 2014). The priority of the provider is to ensure an appropriate pedagogical approach to encourage student learning, but as pressures and future enrolment numbers are influenced by achievement grade rather than quality of learning, it is understandable why institutions prioritise other factors.

The changes in teacher preparation include: the ‘cost’ of training fees, to both the individual and the provider; the length of the training period (from 4 years to 1 year to 6 months for ‘assessment only’ students); the access routes (Troops into Teaching); and the difference between studying at postgraduate level (PGCE) as opposed to professional graduate (School Direct), a situation Burke (2012) would refer to as creating additional material barriers to furthering education. I have found these changes challenging and I acknowledge the changing landscape of education, the choice, the cost and
the difference of fulfilling a competency test to gain qualified teaching status to learning from reflection. However, I knew I was working in a micro-system where I accept many external factors but still maintain a focus on the PGCE students studying PE at one institution. Therefore I return to the focus of this research and my interest in PGCE student teacher learning through reflection. I wished to make a contribution to the working pedagogy in HE by understanding more about reflection and the learning activities that could increase the capacity for student teachers to reflect on their experiences. I felt the provision for reflective practice within the PGCE programme was inadequate and I therefore embarked on a longitudinal action research project, of which this study forms one part, to investigate student teachers’ ability to reflect in a one-year programme of study.

1.4 The PGCE route
The PGCE route has been established at the institute where I work for two decades. The programme takes 9 months to complete and comprises two school placements and ‘learning’ days based at the University. The student teachers follow a detailed pattern of study with a high percentage of contact time during study days between the lecturers and students but the students have very little, if any, ‘spare’ time. I began to question whether the intensity of the programme and the lack of available time and appropriate pedagogical approach were affecting the students’ ability to learn from their own experience. Hence I started to plan an action research project reviewing my own pedagogical practice.

I questioned what ‘reflective practice’ is and if reflection is an essential component of good teaching. As the process of reflection is difficult to define I started to doubt the purpose of my work, but I soon realised the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’ had become mandatory terms in teacher preparation, but with no real definition (Jay and Johnson, 2002). I believe reflection is a desirable practice among teachers, but with little consensus as to what reflective practice is and which activities actually promote reflection, I felt I could contribute to practice by gaining a greater
perspective of the process of reflection and the activities that promoted
reflective thinking in PGCE students.

Therefore, as a starting point, I sought the work of others who have studied
reflection within the HE context. Donald’s (2002) research showed that the
one-year PGCE course often failed to prepare a student teacher to adapt
quickly to classroom feedback and to reflect and learn from their teaching
experience. Donald was echoing my feelings. The PGCE training year is a
short period of time where students have to achieve a standard of
performance, satisfy the needs of the pupils and school-based mentor and
start to learn from experience, and I agree with Lovell (1982) that the one-
year training period is an intense learning curve where learning can be based
on a process of trial and error as opposed to a calculated and considered
approach. The time scale and demand of rapid learning places the novice
teacher on a short, sharp journey with a defined purpose and direction with
the learning being influenced by the priorities of the training institution. The
student may or may not have time to consider and contextualise the
learning. Even though I could not find a definitive definition of the term
‘reflection’, I acknowledged the importance of young teachers being able to
review past events, make judgements and then being able to alter their
behaviour in response, in other words I wished to increase the students’
capacity to learn from experience.

In order to learn and place the relevance of the learning into perspective,
West (2010) suggests student teachers need ‘time and space’ away from the
demands of the classroom, which the design of the PGCE programme made
difficult. Student learning is constrained through the demands of meeting
the Teaching Standards and by the conditions and requirements of the
PGCE year but also by the constraints of institutional policy and ethos. This
research looks to take forward the work of Parsons and Stephenson (2005)
and Donald (2002), who felt there is insufficient time to reflect in the PGCE
year. There was already evidence that students were reporting rather than
analysing through the use of the lesson evaluation summary. With this in
mind I wished to provide additional insight into the reflection of student
teachers, so I decided to alter the pedagogical approach of the PGCE year by introducing a reflective learning strategy to provide more opportunities for reflection. However, I was aware of the constraints of the University and Ofsted requirements for the student teachers so I made a decision to support my alteration to the PGCE programme by reviewing the importance of reflection in official documentation.

1.5 Teaching documentation

The term ‘reflection’ forms part of the Professional Standards for Teachers as defined at the time of this research by the TDA for Schools (2007a) and in the current Teaching Standards (Training Agency, 2012). In 2007 the Professional Standards expected student teachers to: ‘Reflect on and improve their practice’ and in 2012 to ‘reflect systematically’. The use of the term ‘reflect’ in the Teaching Standards implies a direct link between reflection and improvement in practice and appears to presume that reflection is systematic. The importance of reflection and reflective practice was echoed through a statement in the University’s PGCE Student Handbook, with one target being: ‘the development of reflective practice’ (PGCE Student Handbook, 2008 – see Appendix A). In 2011/12 one of the objectives of the PGCE year listed in the Student Handbook was that: ‘students will be equipped as reflective practitioners to continue their professional learning’ (see Appendix A). The Teaching Standards and PGCE handbook highlight several key phrases related to reflection: ‘Reflect on and improve their practice’, ‘reflect systematically’, ‘the development of reflective practice’, ‘reflective practitioners’ and ‘professional learning’, all of which imply an individual using their ability to learn from experience to influence future practice.

It was at this point I consulted documentation relating to teaching post-qualification and I discovered that in 2007, the term ‘reflection’ was mentioned by the Training Development Agency in the Training Standards but did not appear in any of the Teaching Standards post-qualification. The ‘core’, ‘post threshold’, ‘excellent’ and ‘advanced skills teaching’ standards of 2007 mentioned career professional development (CPD) but not
‘reflection’ as a way of meeting those Standards. This implies that reflection or becoming a reflective practitioner through reflective practice was not considered to be part of a teacher’s development post-training or that learning would involve a form other than reflection. The language used in the Teaching Standards omits the term reflection but, like Boud (2010), I would argue reflective learning occurs not only during the training experience but throughout an individual’s teaching career, and this learning should be regarded as equally important as achieving either pre- or post-training standards.

By mentioning reflection in the Teaching Standards for qualification but not the Post Qualification Standards, the Training Agency suggests reflection will only occur at the early stages of a professional career and not as part of career development. Taking a personal stance and as this thesis is evidence of continued reflection on my practice, I feel reflection is an on-going process and I refer to reflection as a ‘productive way of thinking’ (Cressey and Boud, 2006) that frequently, throughout the professional career, needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

1.6 My concerns
I feel definitions of reflection and reflective practice are vague, and agree with Moon (2008) when she highlights there is a frequent use of the term ‘reflection’ with little expectation of learning. Moon believed reflection is experiential learning but the term reflection is often used as shown in professional documentation (Training Agency, 2012), in isolation, without any consideration of learning. I therefore felt it was the responsibility of the University to ensure that the PGCE student teachers had an opportunity to reflect, encouraging the student to become a professional who reflects and learns from their practice. As Coultas (2008, p. 143) states:

‘An effective teacher is someone who sees herself or himself as a learner’

As the PGCE year currently stood there was little opportunity to reflect and learning from personal experience was often missing, overlooked or
undervalued. At the time the Teaching Standards expected teachers to be able to reflect upon their strengths, areas of interest and create an action plan, however, documentation did not state how the novice teacher was expected to do this. My aim was to address this issue by encouraging learning through reflection and considering how, when and where reflection occurs, in order to provide a more appropriate pedagogical approach to the training year.

I was conscious that each student had to achieve and prioritise the Teaching Standards but I felt the opportunity to learn from experience was limited. I felt the student and indeed the University, due to external pressures from Ofsted, placed priority on achieving the Teaching Standards and often failed to consider the actual learning. During the period of this research, in order to pass the PGCE training year and gain Qualified Teacher Status the student teacher had to provide evidence of meeting 33 Standards (reduced to eight in 2012) through a ‘tick box’ system, which involved an evidence-based portfolio; Hoult (2008) considers this as part of the ‘audit culture’ of teaching. Although I can see the value of a competency-based system that moderates standards across a range of routes into teaching through different types of institutions, my concern was that the Teaching Standards ask the student teacher to reflect but the learning from the reflection is neither explored nor monitored. Doubts should be raised as to whether the ‘tick box’ system of teaching has gone too far and that a more ‘holistic approach’, where the relevance of the learning from personal experience is placed into perspective, should be employed (Boud, 2010).

This study looks to provide additional insight into Boud’s ‘holistic learning’, by bringing together different types and contexts of learning through reflection, which when put together enable the student teacher to relate to a wider context beyond the teaching environment. I was not interested in the students ‘learning for a short term purpose’, although I did understand their need to pass the Teaching Standards, but I wished to encourage learning from experience for long term improvement in their teaching.
I therefore set about the challenge of increasing the capacity for student teachers to reflect by reviewing my current practice. As a lecturer with a responsibility for teacher preparation I faced a pragmatic problem and felt I had to discover a pedagogical approach that would provide opportunity for and the promotion of reflection. I understood the demands of meeting Ofsted approval, prioritising the participants’ ability to achieve the Teaching Standards and the expectation of working with staff in placement schools and acknowledging their role in the teacher preparation system. I had to prioritise the focus of the research and accept situations out of my control. Having acknowledged the context of the research and the things I could not alter, I embarked on an action research approach to a longitudinal study to investigate the effectiveness of a reflective learning strategy and make a contribution to the working pedagogy in HE. This research started with a prior study at a university in the south-east of England.

1.7 The prior study

With Donald’s (2002) findings in mind and looking to explore the work of Parsons and Stephenson (2005) further, my interest in the area of learning from experience developed and I became aware of the influence of the philosopher John Dewey. There were many theories associated with learning and reflection but I wished to return to an original source or as Tinning and Fitzpatrick (2012) would say a big theory, in order to create an analytical framework, draw my own conclusions and avoid the influence of others whose theories may have moved away from an original structure of reflection. Numerous, more recent authors have identified successful reflective activities and provided framework for analysis and teaching, but as few have focused on student teachers studying PE through a PGCE route, I hoped to make a contribution to practice.

Dewey (1933) believed that an individual learned from experience through reflection: a thought process that formalises learning. His focus was based on a ‘meaning-making’ process, which moves a learner from one experience
to the next; he considered this development to be systematic, occurring with the interaction of others and a process that held value and attitude. Dewey (1933) saw reflection as more than just ‘thinking’ about a situation, he viewed reflective inquiry as ‘active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge’ showing reflection as a thought process that considers the process and consequences of significant actions that can initiate change. In other words, reflection occurs to establish a connection between something that has been done and the results achieved. Dewey refers to education and learning as being an ‘interaction’ of ‘subsequent experiences’, statements later echoed by Moon (2010) when she says that reflection can be linked to ‘learning from, learning that, learning to do and learning to be’. Therefore, I locate my beliefs within Dewey’s philosophy of learning: reflection is a meaning-making process, reflection is systematic, reflection necessitates interaction with and requires personal attitudes that value intellectual and personal growth (Rodgers, 2002).

Dewey reflection enables an individual to solve a problem through self-discovery and may eventually help an individual to create an independent point of view. Dewey presented a five-stage model, suggestion, problem, hypothesis, reasoning and testing, that provided a framework of how an individual learns from experience. Dewey’s model, although simple in structure, showed that reflection is a complicated and involved form of learning. In fact I soon came to realise that reflection is one of the most complex forms of learning, a suggestion supported by Bloom (1979), who refers to reflection in the top categories of his cognitive domain.

I was initially interested in two areas:

- The frequency and quality of the student’s reflection through a selected problem solving framework of learning (Dewey);
- How my reflective learning strategy impacted on the students’ ability to reflect.
The prior study took place over a 9-month PGCE training period. There were originally 16 student teachers of Physical Education studying on the programme. Two students left the programme at different points of the year and one student refused to participate in the research, leaving 13 participants. All the trainees were aged between 22 and 25 years old and were placed in a variety of schools, either separately or in pairs. All trainees were white, British citizens with 14 of them completing the training period successfully.

My initial aims of this prior research project were:

1) To investigate the extent to which student teachers demonstrate reflection. This was analysed using Dewey’s (1933) framework.
2) To assess how reflective learning strategies impact on student teachers developing understanding of ‘inclusion’.
3) To assess the relative effectiveness of a range of reflective learning techniques (written, spoken, individual, communal).

The strategy for the prior study (intervention one) introduced five reflective learning activities: focus groups (topic provided), ALSs (topic provided), questionnaires, individual interviews and reflective diary and related link log. Thirteen student teachers took part; one participant refused to complete the consent form and decided not to take part in the research. Following the advice of Cohen et al. (2009), I asked the participant who had refused why he did so. He told me that he had declined because of the intense workload in the post-graduate year. He perceived the learning strategy as an addition to his workload. His refusal to participate influenced some of the procedures for the current research.

The data from the activities within the learning strategy were transcribed and analysed (evaluation one). Results showed that four of the 13 students reflected through each of Dewey’s stages of learning. I was initially disappointed with the limited success of the Dewey framework but I felt an
alteration in the reflective learning strategy rather than the analysis tool would improve the students’ ability to reflect. As the prior study was the first part of this longitudinal action research project I felt the initial intervention had impacted on the students’ ability to reflect but required further analysis of the appropriateness of the activities used. Due to my desire to enhance the opportunity for learning, I decided to make improvements to the strategy and tested the effectiveness of these changes before altering the strategy once more. This procedure of action, review and change is consistent with the action research approach and each time I tested the strategy I felt the findings would be more robust.

As such, this study provided an additional insight into the emotional tension or trigger that stimulated the reflection building on the work of Moon (2008). I felt that the four students who demonstrated Dewey reflection showed a ‘positive’ emotion in the words selected, within their account of a situation. The data also identified five key areas that enhanced the reflection of some of the participants; these were: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion. I felt it was important to keep a holistic view to learning by considering the relevance of the learning to the individual’s life and transition from a student teacher to a qualified teacher and whether they distanced or took ownership of the situation. I therefore created three categories of progression of reflection: no reflection, Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection.

I included the term ‘power’ as one of the elements of my term enhanced reflection primarily because all students made reference to their school-based mentor and their perception of the ‘powerful’ role the mentor held in their training year. This was not surprising as the University works with the school to appoint an experienced teacher who supervises the student teacher and the structure found within schools often provides a hierarchical system. As the relationship between the student teacher and the mentor is complex I decided to accept the situation and provide an additional insight to any ‘differences’ from the perceived ‘norm’ or made reference to ‘other’ individuals. I was more interested in the difference between an individual
taking ownership of a situation and feeling in control of their actions compared to an individual who relied on the decisions or influence of others. The data from the prior study produced evidence to support and contribute to the work of Burke and Jackson (2007) by demonstrating the importance of individuals having a sense of their own place and that of others.

Finally, at the completion of the prior study I evaluated the students’ perception of the effectiveness of the individual elements of the learning strategy and concluded that the students felt the ALS were the most effective way to reflect. As the ALS at crucial stages in the training year produced the most data, I decided to increase the number of ALS. The feedback from the prior study also led to subtle but significant changes in the current project (intervention two) with the focus groups becoming discussion groups with the topic chosen by each participant. The questionnaires had produced little data and were felt no longer relevant. These conclusions influenced the components of the strategy in the current research.

I am therefore acknowledging the importance of reflection as a form of learning in teacher preparation and teaching and this study aims to provide a greater sense of understanding in three areas associated with reflection: reflection which solves a problem and is relevant to student teachers; reflection that is enhanced through a consideration of other factors such as the context of the reflection including the spatial, temporal, political, policy, structural, professional, cultural and global influences; and how a reflective learning strategy can promote reflection.

This current study therefore takes forward Schön and Argyris’ (1991) work relating to reflection ‘on’ action and builds on the theories of Dewey (1933) and Moon (2005) and benefits from other authors such as Fook (2010) and Burke and Jackson (2007) in gaining a greater understanding of the reflection of student teachers. By critically evaluating the theories presented by Boud et al. (1985), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) and Moon (2010), I look to
contribute to the theory of reflection and pedagogy by indicating the most relevant reflective learning activities for student teachers following a PGCE route into teaching through an HE provider by considering the proposals from Morrison (1996), Moon (2008), Burke and Jackson (2007) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005).

I now continue to demonstrate how this qualitative study forms the second part of an action research project, which drew on the findings and conclusions of the prior study. I had held an interest in student reflection and wished to establish if the PGCE PE student teachers in one institution demonstrated reflection through Dewey’s problem-solving framework, if the reflection was enhanced and if so what were the concerns or factors of consideration for these particular students. The conclusions drawn would assist the evaluation of the effectiveness of a new pedagogical approach and help to gain a better understanding of student teacher learning through reflection.
Chapter 2: Reflection in the context of the teaching profession

As Chapter 1 showed, the concept of the teacher as a reflective practitioner is an expectation set by the Teaching Standards and suggests that good teachers act with ‘thought’. The emphasis on reflective practice in teacher preparation holds an expectation that good teachers are reflective teachers, but the developmental, complex process based on the individual learning from experience is not fully explored or defined in the documentation. Although studies such as Redmond (2004) suggest a student who cannot reflect will tend to act on impulse and not learn from their experience, others contradict this, stating all experiences will be reflected upon and learned from (Habermas, 2005), but little analytical attention is paid to where and how the reflective process becomes part of teaching. The James Report (1972) divided teacher preparation into three stages, with the element of personal education underpinning all stages, and I believe if an individual can reflect on their experience, their journey through teacher preparation and into teaching will be more successful. The intention of this study is to provide an insight into how the process of reflection as a form of learning can be encouraged in teacher preparation.

The chapter will now focus on reflection as defined by Dewey and other key authors, before considering the components of critical reflection and the possibility of a progression from Dewey reflection to critical reflection and a consideration of how reflection can alter an individual’s perspective. The chapter will then look at how opportunities to reflect can be developed in the workplace through a reflective learning strategy.

2.1 Reflection

Bloom (1956) portrays reflection as a complex and ‘higher’ form of learning by citing reflection as a definition for the sixth level ‘evaluation’ of his taxonomy of learning. Although I accept Bloom’s classification as a helpful structure to understand the complexity of learning, the taxonomy is rigid and one dimensional with types of learning categorised rather than linking to each other, but for the purposes of this study it provides support for the
importance of reflection as a form of learning and some justification as to why the Teaching Standards cite reflection as important.

Figure 1: Bloom’s (1956) Taxonomy of Learning – original version (as cited in: Anderson and Krathwohl, 2000)

2.2 Defining reflection, critical reflection and reflective practice
Although Bloom and the Teaching Standards consider reflection important, there is no single definition but there are various explanations suggesting the meaning of reflection. Dewey (1933) views reflection as an active, persistent and careful consideration of an event that is likely to initiate change, creating a connection between something that has been completed and a future event. Moon (2010) views reflection as a way to ‘learn from, learn that, learn to do and learn to be’, with Rodgers (2002) seeing reflection as a meaning-making process, that is systematic, and requires interaction with intellectual and personal growth. Dewey’s (1933) original thoughts show that reflection includes a feeling of perplexity, hesitation and doubt. Dewey associates reflection with asking questions about an experience and he provides a framework for the reflection process. He suggests an individual learns from reflection through a stage-by-stage thought process
that turns an experience into learning. He proposes reflection is a process where an individual stops, reviews or looks back and then tries again in order to improve a skill or gain additional knowledge and suggests an individual should be open-minded, responsible and wholehearted (Farrell, 2004).

Dewey’s original work focuses on reflection as a process, a concept other authors have reconsidered and developed to call critical reflection. Schön and Argyris’s (1987) double loop theory in particular the ‘governing variable’ I believe helps to explain the difference between reflection and critical reflection.

Figure 2: Schön and Argyris’ (1987) – Double Loop Theory

In my opinion, reflection that focuses on solving one problem without the consideration of ‘other’ factors can be associated with Dewey reflection. Reflection that does consider ‘other’ factors via the ‘governing variable’ is critical reflection. According to the literature the ‘other’ factors include: the individual’s views or values of a previous experience, the importance of additional factors such as perception, personal habits, social pressure (Mezirow, 1983, 2000), their ‘emotional state’ (Moon, 2010), how the individual assigns meaning (Moon, 2008), or makes sense (Boud et al., 1985), all of which may result in a change in behaviour (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993) and is referred to as critical reflection.
The Teaching Standards place an emphasis on reflection and mention CPD as a way of ensuring reflection. However, authors such as Richert (1990), Morrison (1996), Moon (2005) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) view reflective practice as more than just an exercise which forms part of a CPD programme. An individual who critically reflects on their own practice is someone who considers ‘other’ contributing factors on each and every experience in order to improve their teaching. Therefore, reflective practice is not an exercise but a process that becomes an integral part of teaching, is contextualised and assigns meaning, creating a change in pedagogy.

2.3 Dewey reflection – a mechanism to solve a problem

*Dewey's stages of learning*

Dewey suggests reflection is a process that helps to formalise the learning that has taken place and is concerned with how thinking creates knowledge, but ultimately he values the thinking process when he says (1966, p. 151):

> 'all thinking results in knowledge,[but] ultimately the value of knowledge is sub-ordinate to its use in thinking.'

Dewey’s philosophy of learning sets out a process whereby an individual considers their own actions in order to learn. This conscious contemplation of a personal action and of viewing alternative options is referred to as reflection. Dewey believes reflection deepens learning (Moon, 2005) and he provides a new view of learning by initially linking learning to problem solving. Dewey regards reflection as a form of experiential learning rather than cognitive acquisition.

Dewey states that an individual experiences various situations throughout their everyday or professional life. These situations will come and go. Some situations may require thought and perhaps learning, other situations will just pass. If the individual stops and reviews the experience, learning from the situation is formalised. The process of considering the learning is referred to as reflection. This can be viewed as a ‘Deweyite’ approach to learning, or even ‘service learning’, in other words, learning by doing, an
approach that creates a pragmatic method of pedagogy. Reflection is an act of conscious thought and this work looks to build on a ‘Deweyite’ approach to learning by showing how student teachers see a ‘problem’, consider a hypothesis, and reason and test their thoughts by changing their actions.

I adopt Dewey’s belief that reflection is a prerequisite for professional growth (Peters, 1977) and pre-service teacher preparation and used, in the prior study, the five characteristics or processes of reflection through which an individual passes that Dewey identifies as a starting point for analysis. As Russell and Munby (1992) suggest, reflection is a process of organising ideas and thoughts. The formats may vary but authors appear to agree that reflection is a process and is developmental. Dewey emphasises that reflecting on an event or situation does not have to follow the given order sequentially and the process could be circular or spiral but each element is initiated by another (Redmond, 2004):

1) Suggestion  
2) Problem solving  
3) Hypothesis  
4) Reasoning  
5) Testing

(Dewey, 1933; Skilbeck, 1970)

Dewey (1966, p. 151) does however stress that:

‘Thinking includes all of these steps – the sense of a problem, the observation of conditions, the formation and rational elaboration of a suggested conclusion and active experimental testing.’

Dewey’s theory constructs a framework that enables an individual to acknowledge a problem and work systematically to improve their knowledge of how to resolve the initial difficulty. Therefore it becomes a pragmatic approach to learning from experience: a useful concept when encouraging student teachers to reflect. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) suggest learning is most effective when behavioural change occurs
following an experience. As theories of reflection have developed, different approaches to experiential learning have been formed. However, recognition is given to Dewey for his apparent constructive approach to the advancement of knowledge, especially for individuals like student teachers who are embarking on a new and very different form of learning (Skilbeck, 1970).

Dewey (1966, p. 151) provided the following explanation of each of the five stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>‘Stimulus to thinking. We wish to determine significance of some act’</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>‘anticipate consequences. Situation is incomplete’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>‘proposed tentative solution’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>‘situation carefully scrutinized and implications developed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>‘suggested solution. Idea or theory is tested by acting upon it’</td>
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The first stage is ‘suggestion’: when an individual views a situation that may need further consideration. Parsons and Stephenson (2005) and Loughran (1996) support Dewey’s theory of a problem initiating the reflection process, but they feel reflection is stimulated by a need to know or a desire to apply thought to practice. Dewey felt the individual internally debates only if the ‘suggestion’ is a ‘problem’, such as a practical problem within a lesson. If the suggestion or situation is solved by a third party or by the actions of the individual, the situation may never become a problem or need further investigation.

If the individual views the suggestion as a problem, a process of solving the problem is initiated. In order to solve the problem the individual enters the hypothesis stage and Dewey presumes the learner will consider several different scenarios. If the individual gains success and solves the ‘problem’ with the first solution the situation may never be reviewed, but if a problem is not easily solved the individual may formulate several hypotheses. Dewey suggests an idea may just ‘pop into the mind’ of the person (Skilbeck, 1970), but with thought and consideration the individual will review several
other alternatives. Dewey mentions that the maturity of an individual may ‘mean more multiplied or intimate contacts’ (Dewey, 1955, p. 8) between the new and old experience, but he did not provide an insight into how this could affect the learner or provide more options. Dewey, perhaps naively, expects the learner to consider alternatives and move into the fourth stage of reasoning.

At this point in Dewey’s framework the individual may either have to, as Bulman and Schutz (2004) suggest, reason with their own experience, or as Moon (2005) stresses, relate to their own beliefs from their previous learning or socialisation or consider the advice of Parsons and Stephenson (2005) and seek guidance from an experienced mentor. If a solution to the problem is discovered, the individual will ‘test’ their theory. The reasoning and testing stages of Dewey’s reflection enable the individual to build a ‘bank of responses’ to certain situations, but they will begin to realise that no two situations are ever the same: similar maybe, but not identical. The acquired ‘bank of responses’ or set of previously made decisions provide informed guidance to solve a new situation, but the process of reflection is likely to be initiated to solve the new ‘problem’.

This study benefits from the theories of a variety of authors considering reflection but looks to build on and contribute to the work of Dewey. The first level of reflection for this research follows a basic structure or process of thought from highlighting an initial difficulty to considering alternatives before deciding which course of action provides the best solution. I wish to provide a greater perspective to Dewey’s original framework by investigating in more depth the early stages of his work and understanding the thought process of solving practical teaching problems by young student teachers: I therefore interpret Dewey reflection as a method to solve a problem.

Moon’s stages of reflection
Although this study owes much to Dewey’s theory of learning from action it also benefits from the work of Moon (2010), who considers reflection as a
thought process in a situation of uncertainty that eventually has an outcome or solution. Moon’s stages are also presented as progressive:

1) Noticing
2) Making sense
3) Making meaning
4) Working with meaning
5) Transformative learning

Although Moon’s theory shows similarities to Dewey’s, I felt Moon’s theory is moving away from problem solving towards critical reflection; a process I deemed too advanced for student teachers in the early stages of teacher preparation. I chose to address this issue by considering Moon’s stages; I realised the first two stages of her model are useful with the PGCE student teachers, but after due consideration I felt the latter three stages were more appropriate for more experienced teachers or those with an advanced capacity to reflect. It is true that Moon’s initial stage of ‘noticing’ resembles Dewey’s stages of ‘suggestion’ and possibly solving a problem, but does not show how, why or when an individual notices an event that requires further thought other than when she states: ‘we reflect on ideas that are not straightforward’ (Moon, 2005, p. 22). In fact both Moon and Dewey present a first step to reflection presuming the individual acknowledges a situation. I feel Moon’s first stage of ‘noticing’ like Dewey’s ‘suggestion’ is key for this research because noticing signifies the first step towards thinking and hence reflection. Moon’s second stage is ‘making sense’, which indicates the learner must place the reflection into the context of the situation. This second stage, like Dewey’s, suggests the reflection process moves very quickly from the first acknowledgement of a situation to a position where an individual starts to manipulate their own knowledge in order to make sense and gain meaning from the event.

Moon’s second stage enables the individual to decide whether the situation becomes objective and distanced as opposed to subjective and personal. Moon considers how the process of reflection will affect the individual. At this stage the individual is conscious of a value judgement, for example
whether the delivery of the lesson content is more important than the pupil learning. The student teacher may view the issue or problem from a variety of perspectives or adapt a former learning experience to suit a new teaching experience. Moon associates her second stage with the term ‘cognitive housekeeping’ (2005, p. 26), which provides an image of a person organising and tidying their personal ideas and beliefs. Moon talks about putting ideas together, perhaps blending old ideas with new situations. Moon’s analogy of tidying ideas could be problematic especially with student teachers, because organising and moving things does not always involve progress and in fact may not result in learning, merely a circular motion of moving issues, situations and/or items from one place to another.

Moon stresses that our previous experience and any influencing factors affect what we notice as well as influencing how we make sense and has relevance to her third stage of ‘making meaning’. Moon’s criterion of noticing is supported by Hoult (2008), who believes learning is influenced by previous experience but warns that any reference to a previous, perhaps similar, situation invokes a form of sentiment which may prevent learning. Moon’s third stage raises some interesting concerns and I wish to gain a greater perspective into the students’ feelings and how these may influence their learning. Moon appears to support Dewey’s belief that reflection is experiential learning rather than cognitive acquisition, but unlike Dewey highlights age and prior experience as possibly being significant. As I was working with participants of very similar age and background all studying the same subject, I value Moon’s suggestions but initially felt this is less of a concern for this study.

The capacity to work with complex ideas is considered in Moon’s fourth stage, ‘working with meaning’. Moon’s framework now differs from Dewey for the second time because Moon suggests the learning process is no longer based on the original event that was ‘noticed’ by the learner. Moon refers to an ‘accumulation of ideas’, which influences the ultimate learning. I suggest student teachers in the early days of training do not have a ‘bank of experiences’ that will readily solve a problem. The ‘accumulation of ideas’
takes time to build and I therefore believe a student teacher will initially focus on one problem at a time and their thought process remains on one situation until it is resolved.

The final stage of Moon’s model shows how learning or making informed judgements based on a series of facts occurs as an individual starts to ‘transform their learning’. Moon’s final stage refers to an evaluation of the individual’s knowledge with a consideration of previous knowledge and the knowledge of others. Moon’s fifth stage goes beyond Dewey’s focus of testing a solution and learning from personal mistakes. Moon’s transformative learning stage relies on experience and the ability to frame personal knowledge, which, like Donald (2002), I suggest is something beyond many PGCE student teachers because their focus is still on practical problems. I believe the value of Moon’s transformative learning is for more experienced teachers who critically reflect on their practice and considers ‘other’ external factors when reflecting on a practical teaching situation.

The following table shows a comparison between Moon and Dewey in order to identify the differences between the theories of Dewey and Moon.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestion</strong></td>
<td>Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Stimulus to thinking. We wish to determine significance of</td>
<td>‘perception…stage of acquisition … organises input’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some act’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem</strong></td>
<td>Making Sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘anticipate consequences. Situation is incomplete’</td>
<td>‘sense – becoming aware of coherency – slotting ideas together’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
<td>Making Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘proposed tentative solution’</td>
<td>‘Assimilation of new material. Relate new to old material.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning</strong></td>
<td>Working with Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘situation carefully scrutinized and implications developed’</td>
<td>‘Doesn’t need contact with original material of learning. Learning process guided by accumulating ideas manipulation of meaningful knowledge to a specific end’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Testing</strong></td>
<td>Transformative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘suggested solution. Idea or theory is tested by acting upon</td>
<td>‘Learning capable of evaluating frames of</td>
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In summary
This study draws on the work of Dewey but benefits from understanding the contributions made by Moon. In summary, Dewey presents a theory of learning that relies on reflection to stimulate thinking or formalise learning. His theory has five stages that are initiated by a suggestion, which becomes a problem and requires a response. The theory maintains a focus on the initial suggestion and how the problem can be solved. Dewey’s theory is not concerned with how people change after reflection, merely the process that has taken place. Moon also presents a five-level model but I feel her theory of learning is more appropriate for experienced teachers who consider academic and situational problems to further their reflective practice, and I chose to use Dewey’s framework because his theory of problem solving through reflection is more appropriate to student teachers in their early days of training.

2.4 Critical reflection - adding value and giving consideration to other factors that influence reflection
Having considered Moon’s theory of reflection, it became obvious that the learning/reflection process has a number of factors that add complexity or provide an additional level by giving consideration to the context of their learning, the relationships with other people, their detachment or emotional involvement with the situation, factors that ‘enhance’ the reflection. Having taken the decision to use Dewey’s stages as an assessment framework, my research of other theories is to provide an insight into the complexities of reflection. Although the initial analytical focus is on student teachers’ capacity to reflect, I sought to provide an additional contribution to pedagogy in HE by looking at how the participants ‘enhance’ their reflection. This chapter now looks at an additional level of reflection by showing how student teachers studying on a PGCE course in HE enhance their reflection, to reflect critically.
I feel it is helpful to consider Schöhn and Agyris’ (1991) double loop theory, in particular the ‘governing variable’, to fully understand critical reflection. The governing variable, i.e. revisiting an experience, enables the consideration of the influential factors that add to or cause the reflection and I believe move the individual from reflecting on a problem to reflecting with a critical consideration of factors that relate to the problem.

Schöhn provides a theoretical model of reflection, whereas I am trying to establish a practical understanding of student teacher reflection. The student teachers in this study are going through a ‘transition phase’ (Burke and Jackson, 2007) in their learning by moving from being a pupil to teacher, and after the initial period in a school placement a student who can solve pragmatic problems in teaching delivery may start to view a wider context of education, considering and indeed questioning factors relevant to their current but temporary position as a student teacher.

Consideration of other authors such as Boud et al. (1985), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), Mezirow (2000), Fook (2010), Moon (2010) and findings from the prior study (Mantle, 2010) informed my creation of an additional level of reflection as shown by the more reflective PGCE PE students. As theories of reflection develop, detail and consideration of additional factors are added and a supplementary level of reflection is created, which I will refer to as ‘enhanced’ reflection. I felt in order to critically reflect, a student teacher has to transform their learning from problem solving by becoming objective or distanced and considering ‘other’ influential factors such as the context of the moment, the policy or political setting of the event, their professional and cultural belief. The data from the prior study evidence the following five areas that I use to form my criteria for ‘enhanced reflection’: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion.

My criteria for enhanced reflection are supported by Moon’s (2008) view of critical reflection: reviewing, utilising and moving forward. I see ‘reviewing’ or assigning meaning as a situation where the person is asked to
think in an alternative manner, which may contradict the ‘easy’ option or even go against ‘common sense’ as the start of the reflection process. I interpreted Moon’s second term, ‘utilising’, as an individual’s contemplation on how a past experience and the emotional context (Wullf, 2007) of that experience helps to resolve new situations. I felt Moon’s ‘utilising’ forms an extension of Dewey’s hypothesis stage encapsulating my criteria for enhanced reflection. I understand Moon’s idea that a teacher could have a ‘bank of previous experiences’ to be able to draw upon, i.e. a similar situation that could assist with understanding the new situation, but as I was working with student teachers I felt the ‘bank’ of experience is likely to be limited.

Moon’s third criterion ‘moving forward’ indicates a behavioural change (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993) or as Burke and Jackson (2007) suggest creates new knowledge regarding a situation but with the interpretation based on previously formed and calculated opinions, in other words, using prior experience to move forward to a new situation. Student teachers need to ‘move forward’ and form a ‘particular way of working with knowledge’ (Moon, 2010) to become outstanding teachers, but I felt there has been little analytical attention paid to how this is achieved. As Moon’s model of critical thought is dependent on the influence of past experience and other people, the model may be more suited to the more experienced teacher at a later stage of lifelong learning than, I suggest, is possible for a student teacher.

The prior study had given an insight to the components of critical reflection that were relevant to student teachers. The literature shows the areas of context, distance, ownership, power and emotion to be important and the data of the prior study evidence signs of each component. The chapter will now justify the selection of each of the criteria.

Context
Boud et al. (1985) provide a model of an evaluation process that contains four elements: association (to material already known), integration (to
current situation), validation (confidence in emotion) and appropriation (confirming knowledge), a model that provides a better understanding of how student teachers associate, integrate and validate their knowledge. The student teacher may associate with many of the circumstances in the new environment and may progress to integrate (Boud et al., 1985) this familiarity or old knowledge with a new situation or context. The student experiences many familiar situations when working in a school. The student attends school as a pupil and spends many hours in the school PE area. They also attend sports fixtures and therefore visit different schools and various PE facilities. Hence, the student teacher is likely to feel ‘safe’ in the PE environment, but this acceptance of the working space is based on an association or presumption of the student teacher’s pre-determined expectation of the defined area of PE within the school. However, the position of the student teacher is altered from pupil to teacher and although their association with the environment is familiar, the context is very different. If a student teacher can make sense of the new situation, Boud et al. (1985) suggest the individual is capable of making a transition from reflection to critical reflection.

PGCE courses provide two different school placements for each student teacher, hence the individual adapts their knowledge of a prior experience to meet the demands of the new situation. Although many schools are similar, the functions and systems of each school are slightly different. An experience in the first placement is likely to influence the actions of the individual if a similar experience occurs in the second school. Boud et al. (1985) refer to an association to material that is already familiar to the student teacher. My interpretation of ‘association’ within teacher preparation is that the student teacher will be in both familiar and unfamiliar situations, often at the same time.

However, the important issue for those involved in teacher preparation is how the individual values both the old and the new situation: a value that will alter the temporal context of any judgement made by the individual (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998). I wished to gain a greater insight to the
participants’ association of former experiences and integration of this knowledge into the new experiences on school placement. This integration may be temporal, continually changing and influence how an individual perceives their position not only within the school system but in society.

**Distance**

The individual is ‘shaped’ by their existence and how they react to the new situation is a result of the integration of the old knowledge with the new. How the individual views the experience or highlights the importance of additional factors such as perception, value, personal habits, social pressure (Mezirow, 1983, 2000) or reviews their ‘emotional state’ (Moon, 2010) will affect their capacity to reflect. From experience as an educator, I have noticed student teachers are initially totally immersed in their lesson delivery and find it difficult to view their learning in a 3-D form (Moon, 2010). As a lecturer I would benefit from establishing if the experience of resolving problems enables a student teacher to distance themselves from the mechanics of the lesson delivery, start to review or evaluate their pedagogical decisions and comprehend the meaning of the new situation (Moon, 2008). Individuals hold a set of previous experiences that will influence their present or current thoughts and actions or identity. Previous thoughts or actions prevent the student teacher moving ‘away’ from the current situation and make it difficult for them to view the situation without being personally involved.

**Ownership**

Mezirow (2000) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) both refer to the value of a situation when they attempt to explain how an individual prioritises certain events, experiences and decisions more than others, usually based on the meaning the individual places on the experience. The value influences how an individual ‘owns’ the situation or takes responsibility for their actions. The individual understands the context of the experience and is able to place a value of importance on the situation. Taking ownership does not always
involve the use of the word ‘I’, but the participant prioritises and highlights any related meaning ascribed to the event.

Fook (2010) suggests individuals need to take a ‘fresh view’ of education, perhaps moving from being a pupil to a teacher and seeing an old situation differently. I knew that student teachers often alter their ‘frame of reference’ (Mezirow, 2000) of a situation, from pupils to teachers and from accepting decisions made on their behalf to taking responsibility for their actions and following events. I was aware this process of adjustment evokes feelings of discomfort or often uncertainty, as an individual learns to alter their view of a situation and take ‘ownership’ of their actions. Boud et al. (1985) referred to this modified view as validation. This thesis looks to provide a better understanding of how and when the student teacher starts to take ownership and perhaps responsibility of their actions.

**Power**

There are many ‘power relationships’ within teacher preparation, for example: teacher–pupil; mentor–mentee; experienced–inexperienced teacher; HE tutor–student teacher, which according to Karban and Smith (2010) an individual needs to acknowledge before they can reflect. I accept these relationships as ‘given’ and took Boud’s (2010) advice that as reflection involves multiple stakeholders it is difficult to ascertain if an individual acknowledges all the stakeholders in order to learn. A school as an institution has an order of authority. The educational institution will ‘conform’ to a line of authority stretching in a downward direction from the government, the constraints of the National Curriculum, Ofsted, the Local Education Authority (LEA) or academy trust, board of governors, senior teachers, teachers, pupils and not forgetting the parents. Somewhere between the teacher and pupil sits the student teacher, in my view, on ‘borrowed’ authority. The acceptance of this line of authority enables conformity and any rejection of it causes disturbance. The deconstruction of the LEA and reconstruction of power to parents and academy trusts enables parents to select the most appropriate school for their child’s schooling
resulting in some schools struggling to recruit and others being at capacity. Student teachers appear to be entering a competitive world of schooling.

The influence of other people and the systems in the workplace may affect the student teacher’s ability to reflect. In teacher preparation the assigned authority of the school-based mentor may be perceived as a position of power, and the systems prescribed by the Training Agency (TA) for a pass or fail whilst on placement may influence the meaning the student teacher assigns to a situation such as a formal lesson observation. As Scott et al. (2014) state, feedback provides an important insight for the learner to the rules, practices and expectations of assessment and I suggest the eventual teacher qualification.

The school placement is an integral part of teacher preparation and a school naturally has a structure of organisation and power in terms of decision-making. Taking this situation as a ‘given’ helps to illustrate the position of a student teacher within the placement institution. During placement a student teacher is aware of and forms part of a variety of different conversations associated with choice, constraint, pressure to conform and a feeling to resist both internal and external influences. The routine activities of a student teacher and indeed practising teacher are not always the product of pedagogical choice but on occasions may be a response to factors within the environment. The confines of the teaching situation are often a product of the educational institution, which in turn, is influenced by not only the state or independent education system but also the ethos of the academy trust or governing body, which are also constrained by certain power relations and principles of social control. Thus there is an inevitable tension between the notion of empowering a student teacher to be an individual and the process of socialisation into a collective or acceptable order. In other words student teachers feel the necessity to conform to the constraints of the working environment in order to succeed whilst on placement, at the same time trying to establish their own teaching identity, a difficult position, Burke and Jackson (2007) describe this as ‘the sense we have both of our own place and that of others’. Literature suggests power is an important but complex
component of reflection. I took the decision to include power as a component of enhanced reflection but have an interest in emergent power relationships.

**Emotion**

According to Wullf (2007), a feeling or sense comes from a complex set of emotions. The feeling gained from an emotional response is influenced by the value assigned to the situation by the individual. The value is described as the importance, significance and meaning the individual gives to the situation. The feelings generated from the emotional response are likely to influence how the individual responds to any future event or experience. Ehn and Löfgren (2007) believe an emotion is contained within the thought process and forms part of everyday life but is influenced by the individual’s cultural experience or expectation. The most important point here is the meaning of the emotion that is attached to the situation. Through experience of working with young teachers I am aware that individuals have certain feelings associated with a particular event or situation. Although numerous authors (Ghae and Ghae, 1998; Mezirow, 2000; Fook, 2010; Moon, 2010) identify the importance of the emotion, which helps to build a person’s resilience and understanding of their own feelings, I feel little attention has been given to how an emotion associated with a previous event affects future reflection and learning.

I adopt Fook’s (2010) suggestion that as an individual takes a journey through life the person acknowledges different feelings, values different episodes and hence builds an ‘emotional scaffold’ on which to place any future feelings that might not be the same as those already experienced. Fook (2010) suggests individuals use this emotional scaffold to understand and validate their feelings toward and consequent response to a new context.

Although authors consider the influence of emotion in learning there has been little research focusing on the emotional context of student-teacher reflection. It is important at this point to note Burke and Jackson’s (2007) thoughts that learning involves an individual constructing an identity, which
may be influenced by an emotional process. Emotion is the result of the feelings generated by an experience, but more importantly the emotional response holds a meaning that could be ‘culturally shaped’ (Wullf, 2007) and influenced by the temporal context of the moment, the situation and other people. As this research takes place in a micro-system of the PGCE year, any emotion is likely to be temporal and possibly not transferable to other settings or situations.

Ahmed (2004) suggests there is a hierarchy of emotion. She believes some emotions are elevated and are seen as positive factors whereas other emotions are viewed negatively. These emotions are generally understood by all individuals and are collectively constructed by society and related ‘others’, but the person’s emotion or response to a feeling is unique. I support Ahmed’s (2004) theory that emotions can be ‘cultivated’ and the attitude related to the emotion turned from negative response to a positive effect. For example, Ahmed (2004) suggests fear is a ‘temporal dimension’ with the anticipation of the event creating a physiological reaction of sweating palms and raised heart rate rather than the actual experience. Ahmed’s interpretation could explain how the anticipation of a lesson observation, for example, can create fear of failure and a reaction to the oncoming situation, perhaps altering the quality of the lesson delivery. The actual lesson and the observer are not necessarily a threat to the student teacher but the student teacher is fearful of the situation or anticipated observation grade. In other words the emotion belongs to the individual but is stimulated by an event that actually may not present a threat, but the student teacher’s perception of the event or result of the grade instils anxiety and ultimately fear. Ahmed’s (2004) concern is not the emotion itself but the relationship between fear and the situation. The emotion is ‘owned’ by the individual but the individual’s emotional reaction is likely to be a result of both the current and former situations that are set within a similar social or cultural context at the time. As the PGCE year has two school placements, the individual could develop emotional ‘habits’ (Ehn and Löfgren, 2007), which ‘belong’ to a particular institution. Ahmed (2004)
explores the idea that emotions come together to shape both the individual and collective bodies, which includes educational institutions.

The context of the school creates an environment in which teachers react to each other. The student teacher may acknowledge the authority of the ‘senior’ teaching staff. Ehn and Löfgren (2007) believe educational institutions have a competitive mentality, especially where individuals are assessed on achievement. Competition is evident in the observation grade attained in teacher preparation and the perceived success of others, such as fellow student teachers, can initiate a feeling of envy or even resentment. How the individual reacts to a situation of envy can provide an indication of the personal value or importance the individual places on success or failure, but it should be remembered that different emotions have different effects on different people and that envy is not necessarily a negative emotion.

I therefore accept emotion is a key factor in the enhancement of the reflection process. The individual brings emotional inheritance to any school-based situation but in particular to a familiar setting such as a school. The school environment is likely to contain a structure of institutional emotion and the individual is likely to have an emotional response to any situation, but ultimately the feeling is subjective and impacts on how the individual reacts to a situation or event.

The experience of teacher preparation and related reflection and learning can enable the individual to view life differently and change the perspective of their experience.

2.5 Summary of Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection

There are many theories relating to the process of reflection with each theory presenting a different format for the way we learn. There are differences and similarities between the theories but the reflection process is developmental, complex and based on the individual learning from experience. Dewey created an early model of learning from which many theories developed. As the theories became more complex, ‘other’ factors
that ‘enhanced’ the process have been included. This chapter has presented these factors as an extra level to reflection more complex than Dewey’s stages of learning underlining the elements of context, distance, ownership, power and emotion as additional factors that enhance the process.

The theories suggest certain factors influence reflection such as age, background, experience, emotion and context and show how a process of reflection can change thoughts and opinions of individuals and help to shape an individual’s identity (Burke and Jackson, 2007).

### 2.6 Progression – Dewey reflection to enhanced reflection – a student’s change of perspective

Although numerous authors (Mezirow, 1983, 2000; Boud et al., 1985; Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998; Moon, 2010) consider how old and new experiences integrate to create knowledge I feel there is little attention paid to how and when this integration takes place. Scott et al. (2014) make reference to ‘learning transitions’ with Burke and Jackson (2007) referring to ‘transition phases’, but I suggest this transition is a progression from reflection toward critical reflection and ultimately toward becoming a reflective practitioner. I propose the biggest transition for a student teacher is gaining a new identity when reflecting on the personal experience of teaching from the perspective, as Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) suggest, of both an actor and an observer. The venue may be the same but the perspective is totally different (Mezirow, 1983). This change of view or perspective may be a key component in trying to understand how a student teacher moves from being a pupil to a teacher and starts to create an identity as a teacher.

Brookfield’s (1995) work suggests an individual must have undergone a variety of experiences in order to be sceptical and to start reflecting, and Burke and Jackson (2007) believe that identities are ‘fluid, multiple and contradictory’ and are reinforced by a variety of factors that include gender, social class, education and life experiences. Burke and Jackson (2007) feel the identity a student teacher forms will have been ‘negotiated, contested,
multifaceted, fragmented and will be ever changing’. These theories suggest student identities are formed and then reformed and I, like Scott et al. (2014), suggest through reflection the student identity can evolve.

Burke and Jackson (2007), Moon (2008) and Fook (2010) explore reflection and highlight the contributing factors that enable an individual to learn from their experience. They feel if the individual places the event and consequent learning into the context of their life and blend old and new experiences together (Fook, 2010), are conscious of the structural and ideological inequalities that exist (Burke and Jackson, 2007) and create meaning from an event (Moon, 2008), the individual can form new personal knowledge and develop their identity.

The assumption is that more experience and more reflection equals more learning, which makes age and prior experience key factors and emphasises an important difference in the reflection process between novice student teachers and more experienced teachers. However, the focus of this study is on student teachers and it is important to relate the theories of reflection to teacher preparation in both the university and the school environment. Nonetheless, the student teacher will eventually become qualified and enter the profession of teaching where they will be expected to reflect on their experience, and learn and implement any change as part of their daily lives.

Having considered the complexities of the theories presented by Boud et al. (1985), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) and Moon (2010), the thesis will attempt to establish the most appropriate reflective learning strategy for PGCE PE students studying in HE, following advice presented by Morrison (1996), Parsons and Stephenson (2005), Burke and Jackson (2007) and Moon (2008). I believe an appropriate reflective learning strategy in a suitable environment increases the capacity of the individual to reflect and I look to find the most appropriate strategy as an aim of this project.

2.7 Situational reflection – reflection in the workplace

The term situational reflection is derived from Hillier’s (2005) suggestion of ‘situated learning’, in other words reflecting in or on the working
environment. As this research is situated in teacher preparation it is important for a lecturer to review when the reflection occurs: either immediately after a taught lesson or following a period of time, in order to improve pedagogical practice.

The study differs from the work of Schön and Argyris (1987) because although the focus is reflection ‘on’ action, the reflection is delayed and taken out of the context of the environment. However, it is important to acknowledge Schön and Argyris’ theory of reflection in the workplace (Redmond, 2004) because, ultimately, I seek to establish a reflective learning strategy that enables the PGCE student teachers to learn from experience within the school environment as opposed to the university. Schön and Argyris’ theory is based upon both individual and organisational learning and when the reflection occurs. Schön (1991) took Dewey’s notion of problem solving and linked reflection to the action by categorising reflective learning into two main categories: reflection ‘in’ action and reflection ‘on’ action (Schön, 1991; Brockbank and McGill, 2004). Due to the context of this research it may be difficult to investigate reflection ‘in’ action, hence the focus is reflection ‘on’ action but more specifically ‘on’ delayed reflection.

Although studies such as Billett and Newton (2010), Boud (2010), Fook (2010) and Hunt (2010) identify the need for reflection to be contextualised within the workplace, little attention has been paid to teacher preparation in an HE context. Meyers (1986) and Fautley and Savage (2010) argue individuals need to move away from the site of experience to be able to reflect in depth; and that the ‘hurly-burly’ or hectic school day does not allow time for reflective practice, therefore supporting delayed reflection ‘on’ action rather than ‘in’ action. Meyers and Fautley and Savage look to find a practical solution to solve the perceived problem.

There is some debate regarding where reflection takes place. Boud (2010) believes reflection has to be contextualised but he does not specify if the learning is temporal and belongs to one establishment or whether an
individual is able to transfer the learning from one institution to another. Boud questions whether reflection does occur in artificial environments, such as in taught university lectures, and this question forms an aim of this project to identify a suitable pedagogical approach that establishes the most appropriate environment for reflection. An adopted reflective learning strategy needs to ensure the use of ‘unfettered spaces’ (Hunt, 2010), where individuals can explore the ‘inner self’ and reflect on practice.

One reason I feel the student teacher finds it difficult to reflect within the school environment is because the individual is trying to manage a dual identity (Scott et al., 2014): that of a student teacher and a student in HE. There is a difference in expectation between the two contexts; for example, the student learner is expected to challenge and examine government policy, institutional, social and cultural constraints; and yet the student teacher is expected to conform to the rules and regulations of the institution and accept procedure.

Burke and Jackson (2007) believe ‘spaces for reflexivity’, both physical and mental, are vital for learning from experiences throughout life and they provide suitable suggestions to assist future pedagogy. These spaces are both communal and personal so that an individual can absorb and reconsider events in order to establish themselves, as both a teacher and as a person. Unfortunately, every practical space such as a university seminar room or school staffroom holds a social, cultural and even political context for the individual. The institutional constraints and the perceived line of authority in both the school and university environment may prevent student learning. In the placement school, the student teacher controls their pedagogical approach but may still feel vulnerable because of the perceived power of the school-based mentor; but the university setting also contains a line of authority where the student teacher may feel ill at ease talking or sharing with a lecturer or may feel intimidated by members of the cohort. The student teacher places a value on the site of the reflective learning and this in turn influences the reflection and consequent learning process. Hence, the
physical setting for reflection is important and strategies to promote reflection require more deliberation.

Dewey (1933), Mezirow (1983), Brookfield (1995) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) argue that reflection can be developed and an individual might progress giving reason to consider the need for a reflective learning strategy within teacher preparation either during school placement or when students return to university.

2.8 Reflective learning strategy

This study benefits from the work of Richert (1990) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), who suggest student teachers require a ‘toolbox’ of methods or variety of ways to assist with their reflection. The ‘toolbox’ should consist of a variety of activities that encourage an individual to consider their learning. They suggest the ‘toolbox’ of methods or a strategy to encourage reflection should cater for all types of learners. Individuals may prefer to verbalise their reflection to a variety of audiences either in small or larger groups and some prefer to write down their thoughts.

The prior study provides a greater sense of the activities that belong in a ‘toolbox’ appropriate for the PGCE cohort studying PE, but as not all participants showed reflection, I embrace the ideas of Richert (1990), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), McDrury and Alterio (2002), Moon (2005) and Malthouse and Roffey-Barentsen (2013) to devise a more appropriate reflective learning strategy, which includes both oral and written reflection. I acknowledge McDrury and Alterio’s (2002) suggestion of a formal group storytelling process to explore different perspectives and responses to a variety of situations and proposals for organised group discussions.

Although numerous studies (Richert, 1990; Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998; Moon, 2005; Malthouse and Roffey-Barentsen, 2013) advocate the use of a written journal, little analytic attention is paid to the use of a journal with PGCE PE students. I acknowledge the journal provides the opportunity to think and has the advantage of being a permanent record of those thoughts, but writing
a journal is an individual task, time consuming and is often used as a tool for assessment purposes.

Richert’s (1990) work is of interest because the study includes various learning activities to investigate the reflection of 12 ‘beginner’ teachers and looks to gain a greater sense of the most appropriate reflective learning strategy. Richert devised four different contexts in which to work: no teaching partner and no portfolio, a portfolio but no teaching partner, a partner but no portfolio, and a partner and a teaching portfolio, and the data demonstrate significant similarities between the participants, in relation to feelings and assessment in the four activities and concludes that beginner teachers must be offered a broad range of opportunities in which to reflect on all issues of their work (Russell and Munby, 1992). With Richert’s work in mind, I looked to select appropriate ‘tools’ for the students to reflect.

**Ways of reflecting**

Parsons and Stephenson (2005) highlight a concern that reflection usually takes place in the form of a lesson evaluation written on a university pro-forma. This form of evaluation is often descriptive with helpful hints of how to cope in the future but may not be sufficient to ensure experiential learning. Oral reflection or the opportunity to verbalise thoughts may be an appropriate tool to move the student evaluation toward reflection.

The term ‘oral reflection’ is used here to describe a form of reflection that involves an individual talking about their experience to either one or several other group members. The term oral reflection in this study does not refer to a casual conversation despite Zwozdiak-Myers (2011) advocating the use of all three distinctive parts to verbal reflective practice: the descriptive reflective conversation, the comparative reflective conversation and the critical reflective conversation. In this instance the term oral reflection relates to Zwozdiak-Myers’ (2011) critical reflective conversation, which attempts to demonstrate how the individual analyses their own position within the wider context of cultural, social and political agendas as the
critical reflective conversation enables an individual to challenge and question their practice.

Although numerous studies (Richert, 1990; Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998; Rolfe et al., 2001; McDrury and Alterio, 2002) identify oral reflection as a successful way to reflect, there is little evidence that oral reflection is an effective way to learn for students studying a PGCE in PE. Oral reflection requires an audience, but the influence and type of audience is a key factor and can affect the type of discussion and extent of the reflection. McDrury and Alterio (2002) imply the number of people listening impacts on the outcome of the story, and oral reflection within a discussion group where individuals are allowed to interrupt, support or contradict may limit the reflection. They suggest the discussion group or action learning set situation gives the story being told multiple perspectives. Each environment, discussion group or ALS provides a different atmosphere in which to reflect and may result in varying levels of reflection (McDrury and Alterio, 2002).

Consideration is given to these different ways of achieving reflection and it must be remembered that student teachers are individuals who learn differently from one another. Rolfe et al. (2001) highlight that some students wish to express values or feelings orally to a professional member of staff or a peer-group member or even a concerned family member. However, in these instances the comments are often descriptive or random. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) feel the conversation or ‘reflective discourse’ is a crucial element of the reflection process and oral discussion provides the opportunity for the student to place the situation temporarily in context at that particular time and provides the opportunity for the speaker to make sense of their own thoughts.

McDrury and Alterio (2002) believe storytelling opportunities such as a reflective conversation should be maximised. I am interested in and wished to gain a better understanding of the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who deliberately use storytelling as a vehicle for their research, with Clandinin stressing the power of narrative in the use of reflection throughout
his studies. There are many different forms of narrative: stories in magazines, books, newspapers and stories people tell about themselves in coffee shops or over lunch (Denzin, 1989). Hunt (2010) suggests individuals need to share and reflect with others, not only on the how or why of practice but on myths and narratives of life experiences. The use of narrative is possibly one of the oldest forms of communication known to mankind and is suitable for the profession of teaching (Elbaz, 1990) because narratives are used as vehicles of sharing and learning from childhood to old age. Stories are often regarded as a powerful and essential part of our communication (Hammond, 1990), primarily as the story enables the individual to organise their thoughts into a logical order, perhaps by creating a beginning, middle and an end. The narrative is a vehicle for reflection because during the story the individual makes choices: what to include, what to leave out, where to place extra description, why highlight a particular point and so on. Oral reflection, because it is usually spontaneous, does not always incorporate narrative, but if narrative were to be used it is interesting to identify if there is a range of detail in the narrative provided by the participant. The extent of the use of narrative may range from a description of linked events to a full and coherent story.

Writing is another way to reflect and although authors such as Richert (1990), Morrison (1996), Moon (2005) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) all use reflective journals or diaries with either student nurses or student teachers to encourage learning, there is little evidence to show reflective journals are successful with PGCE PE students. I realise writing could be utilised as a pedagogical tool to encourage learning, but individuals use the written word in a variety of different social, cultural and political contexts including personal or formal letters, e-mails, personal diaries, formal essays or examinations, with each context involving a different style of writing, therefore written reflection has several implications. First, individuals are taught from a very early age to write for a purpose and gradually learn to write in order to attain an appropriate response. The required response may be personal from a letter or a high grade in an assignment, but either way the individual will constrain the written document to conform to the given
situation or context: writing for a purpose. Second, the introduction of writing for the purpose of learning from a personal experience may be unfamiliar to an individual who has spent their schooling and university years writing for an academic reward.

Despite Morrison (1996), Moon (2005) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) all using reflective journals to encourage experiential learning in student teachers, there are reservations concerning the effectiveness of the journal, which may be used to deposit painful experiences (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). I, like Burke (2008), feel there are academic boundaries relating to writing that inhibit rather than promote learning and feel the student teachers may feel an academic expectation and a lack of familiarity with journal writing that constrains, or impacts on, reflective writing. I realise other authors promote the reflective journal because it provides the student with choice: completing the journal in an academic style or taking the option to write freely. However, the written word forms a permanent record of that moment in time and the permanency may evoke a fear for the individual who provides an insight into their experience.

Although Morrison (1996), Moon (2005), Burke (2008) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) promote the use of writing as part of the process of learning, the use of a reflective journal is difficult to introduce in teacher preparation where student teachers are completing academic assignments at Master’s level, writing lesson evaluations to achieve the Teaching Standards and working with a range of individuals who hold ‘perceived’ power. As Richardson (2000) says, writing is a pedagogical tool, which enables an individual to create meaning and enhance their knowledge but only if the use of a reflective journal is implemented with empathy, understanding and reassurance. The institutional conditioning of writing to achieve high grades and a reluctance to ‘share’ personal information with a person of perceived power who may read the journal, results in the student undermining the purpose and context of using a reflective journal as a learning tool. One positive aspect of a written journal is that the student teacher is given a ‘voice’, which helps the individual to locate themselves in the wider context
of teacher preparation, the education system and indeed life, thus helping to create a personal identity (Burke, 2008). Student teachers often cope with or understand the power relationships and emotional situations that occur in the school setting and by having the opportunity to write down their experiences and feelings as a way of inquiring into their own practice they start to understand their position within, and the constraints of, the educational environment.

I am aware of the debate relating to journal writing and wished to gain a greater insight to the effectiveness of the journal as a reflective tool. A reflective journal has a variety of purposes, such as turning a negative response to a positive effect (Ahmed, 2004) or providing a period of time between the experience and the writing, where a student teacher comes to terms with the fear of a forthcoming event (Ahmed, 2004). An individual’s adjustment to the range of emotional contexts helps the individual to construct an identity (Burke and Jackson, 2007) and control their own learning, however the behaviour experienced from emotional feelings such as fear and anxiety of sharing an experience may actually restrict reflection.

If those involved with teacher preparation follow Moon’s (2005) suggestion and value writing as a pedagogical tool, there will be a shift in the cultural expectations from both the HE lecturer and the student teacher from academically acceptable forms of writing that are graded to a form of writing that is constructed as a ‘voice’ for the student to include all thoughts and the underlying reasons for any actions taken. Lillis (2001) identifies how some forms of writing can actually ‘exclude’ students because they are only familiar with essay or narrative writing and such a shift of expectation for the student results in a negative response unless this form of writing is embedded into practice. Burke and Jackson (2007) look at ‘other’ ways of writing, the advantages of using different forms of writing and how writing could be used to enhance connection and involvement in the learning process (Lillis, 2001). This shift in student expectation results in the student valuing the reflective journal as a written piece of work without any form of external approval or assessment. However, the use of a different form of
writing requires careful consideration and evaluation as it may cause feelings of apprehension for the student and indeed the HE lecturer.

For this reason, Morrison (1996) supports the notion of learning journals but feels they should be woven into the university/school-based experience as part of modular assessment. This provides the student with the opportunity to link theory to practice and reflect upon professional aspects. However, Moon (2005) offers a different view by saying journal writing is a way of demonstrating what has been learnt and, because learning is personal, the journals should be written as a form of speech with the most important factors being the starting point and with the absence of a link to a form of assessment. Authors such as Richardson (2000), Lillis (2001) and Burke (2008) suggest that if writing is to be an effective tool for learning, the students need to accept the importance of this form of written work within the academic setting. Authors suggest if the written reflection is poorly framed in the training year or the student has a negative experience of writing at school, the student teacher will not value the reflective journal.

The suggestions above influenced the components selected for a reflective learning strategy designed to encourage student teachers to consider their learning. A reflective learning strategy includes various activities such as reflective journals, discussion groups, learning sets or focus groups. Some students learn from one activity more than another, hence it is more beneficial to offer a range of activities rather than a single one. In order to provide the opportunity to reflect, those involved with teacher preparation may need to establish the most effective learning activity for a particular cohort. McDrury and Alterio (2002) advocate the use of formal storytelling groups in order to give the student a communal experience to reflect, but Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), Richert (1990), Parsons and Stephenson (2005) and Moon (2008) all favour a form of written reflection.

I felt this study adds to the debate created by Moon (2005) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) as to whether journal writing should be assessed. Moon (2005) advocates the introduction of a non-assessed reflective journal
without an external audience, because the journal is beneficial to learning rather than an objective tool of assessment (Burke and Jackson, 2007). However, Parsons and Stephenson (2005) found that reflective journals are rarely completed unless the journal has some form of assessment attached.

Drawing on Dewey, I advocate reflection as a form of learning, but in reality it is very challenging to ‘see’ reflection in other people in any reflective learning activity and to quantify the extent of the learning because reflection is problematic to assess. As this work looks to take forward Moon’s pedagogical suggestions for encouraging reflection making the activities appropriate for PGCE PE students working in HE, the issue of assessing reflection in order to account for individual progression is a key consideration.

2.9 Assessment of reflection

Reflection is difficult to assess for several reasons. First, there is a lack of a single understanding of the term ‘reflection’, hence the recognition and analysis of reflection is open to interpretation. To assist the interpretation many authors use a framework to either encourage reflection or as an analysis tool, however there is a danger the adopted framework is too rigid to identify the reflection. Another difficulty is in selecting the most appropriate methods to encourage reflection or to collect any consequent data as the chosen tools may not suit the individual’s learning style. Finally, the reflection may still occur but outside of the chosen methods and void of any form of assessment.

Considering and benefiting from the knowledge of the complexities of the work of Hatton and Smith (1995), Moon (2001), Donald (2002) and Boenink et al. (2004), I look to add a more appropriate assessment tool for lecturers working in HE to assess the reflection of PGCE student teachers. Authors have found the interpretation of data difficult and have adopted frameworks in order to assess reflection. Hatton and Smith (1995) provide a framework for assessing reflection, which ranges from descriptive,
descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection toward critical reflection, a range of undefined categories, leaving the data collected more open to interpretation than in a more defined framework. Similarly Moon (2001) specifies a model of assessment of reflective practice and suggests only three levels: progress from description, some analysis of the perspective toward and a recognition of the frames of reference relevant to that account. Moon (2002) appears to have concerns relating her assessment framework as her findings led her to advocate the use of a pedagogical approach that fosters critical reflection and encourages both peer assessment in group situations and the self-assessment of reflection rather than assessment post-reflection.

Donald (2002) and Boenink et al. (2004), like Dewey, provide frameworks with more levels than Hatton and Smith and Moon, with Donald adopting a six stage assessment framework of description, selection, representation, inference, synthesis and verification. I suggest, Donald’s stage of ‘synthesis’ is very difficult to achieve in a 1-year training period, when the learning is new and challenging to associate with any prior learning. It is possible Donald recognises this issue and explains why Donald’s work concentrates on the progression from student teacher to novice teacher where the synthesis of the reflection and consequent learning has time to be achieved. Like Donald, I question if this is possible during the PGCE year.

Boenink et al. (2004) use a greater number of levels and suggest a 10-point scale from which assessors assess student vignettes portrayed in a semi-structured questionnaire. The answers are scored for overall reflection through a process of interpretation and defined boundaries. I felt Boenink et al.’s (2004) framework is too complex to analyse the reflection of a student teacher, but the study is of interest due to the use of student vignettes. The idea of collecting data from a variety of reflective learning activities and creating a student vignette over a training period enables a detailed analysis of a student’s journey through the PGCE year.
Dewey (1933), Kolb (1984), Hatton and Smith (1995), Donald (2002), Moon (2002, 2005) and Boenink et al. (2004) provide models of reflection to promote a greater understanding of the learning process, which also serve as assessment frameworks, but there is a possibility the adopted framework is too rigid or lacks sufficient detail to identify reflection. The use of a framework can focus the interpretation of the data but a concentration on detail can mean the research fails to gain a more general view of the participant’s experience.

A framework can assist analysis, but evidence of reflection depends on the effectiveness of the methods used to collect the data. The method has to suit the type of learner and even when a variety of methods are employed the learner may still reflect ‘unnoticed’, away from the learning activity: the individual may reflect ‘in’ action, reflect through a casual conversation or complete a private diary.

Macauley and Winyard (2012) conclude there is no definitive means of assessing reflective work and support Moon by advocating a template of reflection to assist students with their reflection rather than assessing the final product. In other words, Macauley and Winyard, like Moon, give the students a reflective model on which to frame their experience and place a greater emphasis on the process of reflection rather than the product. Moon (2001) believes reflection is personal and learners should be encouraged to follow the lines of their own thinking and work without a curriculum, perhaps making the assessment agenda relevant only to themselves and their experience.

Moon and Macauley and Winyard feel that assessing reflection that has been guided by a set of pre-determined criteria can result in the student answering the task and providing insincere answers. It appears reflection can be gained from two different tasks: a reflective piece of work with assessment criteria set before a school placement commences and assessed after the event, or the student teacher is allowed to experience and then
reflect with assessment criteria or reflective framework applied after the event.

As I believe the reflection is emergent rather than planned with a pre-determined set of criteria, I feel I can only interpret the ‘product’ of the reflection: the oral or written data produced from a learning activity after the experience. I will apply assessment criteria to the piece of data, a different method of assessment than is usually seen within HE.

2.10 Moving forward
I adopt Dewey’s idea that through the use of reflection the learner solves a problem. I acknowledge more complex theories presented by Mezirow (1983), Boud et al. (1985), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) and Moon (2005), but I chose to use Dewey’s structured analytical framework to establish evidence of reflection and any enhancement. I am aware that reflection is a complex process and individuals may require different learning activities to encourage or support reflection. Consideration, initially by those involved with teacher preparation and later CPD programmes, should therefore be given to prioritising the reflection process by placing the reflection into the context of the workplace. This literature provided the framework for a reflective learning strategy on which this study is based to encourage reflection, which include the written or oral form, with or without an interacting audience as in a discussion group or ALS and for ways to assess how effective this strategy was. The learning activities vary, but deliberation is given to additional factors that influence the reflection process.

Literature shows the difficulties of analysing reflection and in order to provide an analytical structure I adopted Dewey’s framework on which to base my interpretations. I am interested to see if reflection initially helps to solve the student’s teaching problems and secondly to see if the student reflects critically, but ultimately my desire is to encourage student teachers to become reflective practitioners. I evaluated my first intervention (the prior study) and refined the reflective learning strategy and now present the aims for the current project.
The four questions of the current project are:

1) To what extent (frequency and quality) do student teachers demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning?

2) Did the students ‘enhance’ their reflection by referring to all of the following at some point: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion?

3) Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, ALS, journals and interviews), which activity was the most successful in producing data that demonstrated reflection?

4) To what extent (frequency and quality) do students use narrative to reflect?
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter seeks to make transparent the research process and to engage with the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions that arise. Grix (2004) presents a relationship between the building blocks of research: ontology (what is out there to know?), epistemology (what and how can we know about it?), methodology (how we can go about acquiring that knowledge?), methods (which precise procedures can we use to acquire the knowledge?) and sources (which data can we collect?).

In terms of ontology, Grix presents two ontological positions: the first refers to a ‘foundationalist view’, which is the perspective that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it. This view is most frequently illustrated by positivism and scientific method. However, I relate to Grix’s anti-foundationalism or what Blaikie (2010) calls ‘idealist assumption’, in believing that reality is socially and discursively ‘constructed’ by human actors and that there are no central values that can be rationally or universally grounded.

Having adopted an anti-foundationalist or idealist stance, I see knowledge as socially and historically constructed and reconstructed and understand that my overall perspective of a perceived problem is likely to alter as my understanding increases. Hence, my epistemological position was interpretivist or as Blaikie (2010) calls it constructionist, I therefore assumed a strategy that took into account the subjective meaning of a social action.

I acknowledged that there are many ways of ‘knowing’ and ‘being known’. Burke (2012) points to different forms of knowledge ranging from ‘traditional sacred’ and ‘academic’ to new forms of ‘working knowledge and perspectives’. The working knowledge that this study aims to generate can only ever be a partial contribution to academic knowledge but will have an influence on ‘working’ pedagogical knowledge for lecturers in HE. As I was seeking an awareness of the experiences of others in order to increase
my familiarity with, and consciousness of, my working environment, this study will influence my teaching. The answers gained might not be constant and were likely to be continually in a state of flux but would enable tentative conclusions relevant to the context to be drawn. I was extending my understanding by building or ‘constructing’ (Cohen et al., 2009; Blaikie, 2010) my knowledge by gaining an awareness of other people’s descriptions and explanations of their lives as student teachers. As Williams and May (2000) describe, I was gaining meaning of the world in which the students lived. I was constructing and often re-constructing different perspectives, through my interpretation of the student’s interpretation, a method supported by Hollis (1999) and referred to by Giddens (2001) as ‘the double hermeneutic’.

At the start of this research project my intention was to explore my perception of a ‘problem’, which was the apparent lack of reflection shown by the PGCE PE students studying at the institution where I worked. This assumption that there was a lack of reflection affected how I viewed the ‘problem’, the research questions and the decisions, direction and path upon which I embarked. It was my desire to improve the opportunities for student teachers to reflect that led to the following methodological considerations.

I was aware of literature that discussed student reflection and began to notice that the PGCE year at the research institution did not provide the time or opportunity to reflect. There were several explanations relating to the apparent lack of student reflection and I concluded that possible explanations might be:

- the students were not being given the opportunity to express their reflection
- the students were reflecting outside of the university and school environment
- the student reflection was not being recognised
- the reflection could not be assessed
- there was no reflection
• the students did not know how to reflect

I decided there was no obvious or systematic reflection demonstrated, but the training year involved writing explanatory lesson evaluations focused on lesson content. I knew student teachers completed lesson evaluations because I had seen the evidence in their teaching files, but I also knew these evaluations were based on pragmatic decisions that assisted pedagogical aspects such as pupil learning, behaviour management or pupil participation. My prior experience and observations led me to believe that the lesson evaluations did not show obvious signs of reflection and hence might not add to the teaching skills of the student.

I considered the apparent lack of reflection to be an issue, but realised as Sparkes and Smith (2014) stress that a researcher’s problem may not be viewed as such by others. My assumption that reflection did not occur systematically influenced the methodological and instrumental considerations and eventual data collection and interpretation (Cohen et al., 2009).

3.1 The paradigm
This investigation is therefore located within an interpretative paradigm with a focus on the individual and the individual’s actions. This project provides an insight into the working environment of the student but through the eyes of the student (Cohen et al., 2009). I have used Denzin’s (1989) definition of the term interpretation: to clarify a meaning. I was seeking to understand what is felt and meant by the individual through their explanation and gain an insight into the participant’s experience, but I accepted this was their interpretation of an event (Kohler Riessman, 1993). The words and terms used by the participant created a ‘picture’ of the events but as identified by Usher (1998), it can be extremely difficult to capture life and present the happening in text. I recognised and accepted that the student voiced a current representation of their ‘truth’ (Groves and Laws, 2000) as does this thesis. I followed Denzin’s (1989) suggestion and interpreted the
data by breaking the participant’s re-lived experience into small units to allow me firstly to construct, reconstruct and eventually clarify a meaning.

I knew the conclusions drawn would be dependent on the data gathered and influenced by my expectations, both implicit and explicit (Swann, 2005). I knew I could not be totally neutral (Habermas, 2005) because I am immersed in and have an understanding of the professional/research world, as Sparkes and Smith (2014) say, I am a ‘passionate participant’. Therefore I had to accept my subjectivity and the impact this had on any interpretation of the data. I knew the task of finding meaning in the students’ words would be challenging, therefore I decided to employ an analytical framework such as Dewey’s stages of learning (1933) through which I could initially interpret the data. I felt I needed to analyse within a framework to focus my interpretations.

The project is rooted within the context of my on-going teaching style and held significance for my development, as Fernàndez-Balboa and Brubaker (2012) imply I was working within a dimension that was significant for me. In attempting to provide the most fruitful opportunities for reflection I was continuing to improve my own pedagogical approach and understanding to assist future cohorts.

3.2 My reflexive stance
I knew there was a connection between myself and the study, which stretched beyond my involvement as the PGCE co-ordinator. I was a former student teacher and school-based mentor who had pre-conceived opinions regarding the approach to teaching and the problems or issues the student teachers could face. As explored in Chapter 1, I had to acknowledge my positive attitude toward education and how I view learning as both exciting and rewarding. I was aware of my roots in the working class and how I had always worked in the state education system and had enjoyed the challenge of behaviour management and working with less able children. I had found some of my teachers inspirational and I had always wanted to inspire my pupils.
I realised the student teachers in this study may not share the same motivation for teaching. I acknowledged that student teachers may approach teaching differently from myself, but there would be similarities in our teaching because of the subject area. The participants and I shared the world of sport, the vehicle through which PE is taught.

I was therefore aware of my positional reflexivity and acknowledged that I had used both education and sport to my advantage, to improve my status in society. With this in mind I attempted to transform the issue of subjective interpretation into an opportunity to explore and make meaning from the data. It is easy to see the advantages of this research project for myself, both as a practitioner (insight into student reflection and the effectiveness of a reflective learning strategy) and as a researcher (the opportunity to present, write and produce this piece of work for examination), but I believed I was actually ‘giving back’ to the participants by providing them with the opportunity to relive and make sense of their experiences. As such the learning activities used provided the chance for them to be listened to, to be heard, to be understood by others and perhaps facilitated a better understanding of the self. The telling of events or stories can clarify an individual’s intention; give greater self-awareness and a feeling of self-empowerment.

Having acknowledged my own positioning within the research project (Vannini et al., 2012) I feel I have come to terms with the interpretative paradigm and accepted that my personal knowledge of the student teacher’s situation is in fact limited (Swann, 2005) even though originally I thought I knew everything about teacher preparation. On reflection, I have realised that my initial interpretations were less focused from my final analysis because my interpretations have developed and evolved over time as I have attained more knowledge about the participants and indeed myself.

Therefore in order to fulfil my aims, I introduced a reflective learning strategy to encourage reflection in the PGCE PE programme. Using
Bassey’s (1995) classification of research (theoretical, evaluative and action research), the series of actions and consequent two projects form the basis of a longitudinal action research investigation.

3.3 Action research approach to the longitudinal study
Townsend (2010) describes action research as a ‘fusion between research and action’ and is usually described as a qualitative form of research that highlights the ‘quality’ of current practice. In this instance my main concern was my practice, hence I initiated a self-reflective enquiry of my actions, over several years. Although this work has an action research approach, the focus of this study is only one part of the overall cyclical process, hence this thesis only reports on one part of my attempt to improve my pedagogical approach. I will now explain the longitudinal study since the original intervention of the prior study.

The conclusions drawn from the continual spiral of research and action (Webb and Scoular, 2011) followed by evaluation and more research, since the original intervention of the learning strategy in 2007/8, have informed understanding and created change (Cohen et al., 2009), which could be used to influence future PGCE programmes. The reflective learning strategy was an intervention positioned into the PGCE training year (intervention one). I initiated an action that I later evaluated or researched, which is referred to as the prior study (evaluation one). This deepened understanding informed future developments or alterations (intervention two) to the strategy for future PGCE cohorts. Action research is different on each occasion (Swann, 2005) and I knew I could not assume the same result from the two studies. Hence, conclusions drawn from an evaluation (evaluation two) of intervention two will result in future changes (intervention three) to the PGCE programme.

The overall research process included both ‘action’ and ‘research’. Following the advice of McNiff and Whitehead (2010), I created a ‘transformation in the mechanics’ of the PGCE course within one institution by introducing alternative activities to encourage reflective learning. The
design of this longitudinal project supports Somekh and Lewin’s (2005) views of action research as the bridge between research and practice, and has followed the four-stage model presented by Rossi and Tan (2012): planning, action, data gathering and an evaluation.

There are some commentators who add further criteria to the definition of action research. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that action research is a self-reflective enquiry and emphasise the importance of two aims: to improve the programme and to involve the participants in decisions. Carr and Kemmis and indeed Somekh and Lewin (2005) highlight the need to involve the participants in the evaluative phase of the project, with Somekh and Lewin concluding that a group decision, which includes the participants, can lead to positive social change. My project from the original start date did not include feedback to the relevant participants. The conclusions drawn, however, were evaluative and did create change (Rowan and Reason, 1981). Greenwood and Levin (2007) support the notion that the participants should be fully involved in the action research, but unfortunately the participants who evaluated and helped to introduce the new structure to the programme had left the university and the subsequent developments were explored with a different cohort. This was a functional decision because the project was designed to increase the learning opportunity ‘with’ the participants rather than changing the programme ‘for’ those particular students; a pragmatic approach to course design. The conclusions drawn from each element were informative in both professional and research terms in line with the criteria (Somekh and Lewin, 2005) for action research, but as this project reports only on 12 months of the overall investigation, I have referred to this research as a qualitative study of the processes of reflection.

This project gives detailed consideration to the reflection of a small group of student teachers from one institution, studying one subject area, over a period of time. The data from this sample group have produced points of debate. Some of these topics have created a change and an improvement in practice, with other discussion points either supporting general consensus or suggesting a different perspective. I acknowledge the sample size is too
small to produce generalised statements, but refute the implication that the results cannot influence the work of others because the impact on practice is evident by the changes made to the PGCE programme. Swann (2005) supports the value in finding an alternative answer or opinion and I have contributed to knowledge by providing a different view of reflection in student teachers.

This longitudinal research project started with a prior study, as detailed in Chapter 1. The prior study was evaluated and alterations made to the reflective learning strategy in preparation for the current research project.

3.4 Research design of the current study

Changes to the programme

The PGCE course originally had no activities to encourage student reflection other than the completion of a lesson evaluation form, which concentrated on a ‘tick box’ system of pupil/teacher learning. I introduced a reflective learning strategy to promote student reflection, which included two focus groups, two ALSs, a reflective diary, questionnaires and an individual interview. The modifications for the current project included a change of name from focus group to discussion group and from reflective diary to reflective journal, and an increase in the number of ALSs and the newly named discussion groups.

The overall aim of the new reflective learning strategy was to give the student a spatial context or a ‘voice’, allowing them to give an account of and demonstrate learning from previous experience. The range of activities within the strategy gave a variety of reflective situations that could suit each individual (oral, written, communal and individual).

The current project was designed as in Figure 3 The following table of events outlines the reflective learning strategy throughout the training year. It shows when each activity within the strategy occurred. The training year commenced in September, with two discussion groups and the distribution of the reflective journals. This was followed by two ALSs before the
Christmas holiday. Two more discussion groups occurred after the Christmas break with two further ALSs taking place after the spring holidays in April. The interviews were held between June and August. The journals were kept by the students until they were collected, photocopied and returned in June.
**PGCE PE programme outline of the reflective learning activities**

*of the reflective learning strategy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thirteen students</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form – outline of research</td>
<td>Journal – initial reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Groups (1/2) (September)</td>
<td>Discussion Groups (1/2) taped and transcribed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students experience 5 weeks in placement school A

| Action Learning Sets (1/2) (November) | ALSs (1/2) taped and transcribed |

Students complete 4 weeks in placement school A

*Christmas break – University contact*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment One completed – which has a reflective element</th>
<th>Discussion Groups (3/4) taped and transcribed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Students experience 8 weeks in placement school B

*Spring Holiday – no University contact*

| Action Learning Sets (3/4) Assignment Two (non PE) completed – which has a reflective element (April) | ALSs (3/4) taped and transcribed |

Students experience 7 weeks in placement school B

**Selection of 5 participants**

| Individual Interviews – 5 participants Collection of Reflective Journals Assignment Three completed, which has a reflective element (June–August) | Interviews of 5 participants taped and transcribed |

| Journals collected and photocopied |

**PGCE PE trainees complete 1-year course June**

Figure 3: Outline of the reflective learning strategy
3.5 Research population

The research population for the main study consisted of one group of 13 students who were studying a 1-year PGCE in PE at one training institution. All participants were 22 or 23 years of age and all had previous sport/PE-related or coaching experience but had not taught or worked in a school environment. In order to prevent a re-occurrence of the situation in the prior study when a student refused to take part and participant numbers decreased leaving a limited number of participants to interview, I initially formed one large group of all 13 PE students before selecting appropriate participants for a final interview.

The 13 students were divided into two, as Brockbank and McGill (2004) describe, as an ‘organization initiated set’ based on gender and location of school experience, for the discussion groups and ALS. I feel it is important to explain the gender split of two organised groups. My main concern was to make sure no two participants had completed their school experience together at the same school. Due to the nature of PE it was very unlikely that two female student teachers would be placed at the same institution. I could therefore guarantee that each participant, in each discussion group and ALS, had undertaken a different and unique training placement. The transcripts from the activities formed the data and were added to the photocopies of the student journals. A set of data, called a vignette, was created by collecting all the data from the reflective learning activities for each participant.

At the end of the training year and after the data had been analysed I selected an extension group that consisted of five of the 13 participants. I wished to clarify and extend some of the conclusions being drawn from the data and the selection process was based on the student’s ability to reflect. I selected students who demonstrated at least one episode of reflection through all five of Dewey’s stages of learning (suggestion, problem, hypothesis, reasoning, testing) at some point in the training year. The selection process was based on an analysis of the data, which will be explained later. This second group was an ‘extension’ group (labelled the
'Dewey' group) formed of these five students (two male and three female) who were then interviewed.

The students were coded Female 1–6 (e.g. F1/F2/F3), Male 1–7 (e.g. M1/M2/M3).

3.6 Methods of data collection
My aim was to collect five sets of data:
- data sets from the discussion groups (all 13 participants)
- data sets from the ALS (all 13 participants)
- data from the reflective journals (all 13 participants)
- data from the interviews (Dewey Group – 5 participants)
- data for each participant across the reflective learning strategy as a vignette (all 13 participants)

Approach to the first reflective learning activity – discussion groups
The discussion groups were included as an activity to provide the opportunity for oral but communal reflection. The justification for using discussion groups in this research was not to discover just ‘what’ the trainees were thinking but with questioning from others in the group establish how and perhaps why they came to that opinion (Morgan, 1993). The concept behind a discussion group was to create a situation where participants who had shared a similar experience could listen and respond to comments made by others in a relaxed, natural atmosphere and allow ‘emic’ or natural information to be gained. The participant could opt to verbalise an experience or listen to the accounts of others. In the prior study I had used focus groups as a means to collect data. The name ‘focus group’ had inadvertently led to students discussing themes of their academic assignment rather than a personal experience. I therefore renamed this activity as a discussion group. This change of name appeared to provide a more appropriate context for the participants in the current project to discuss in-depth issues that had a relevance to their own development or learning, i.e. a topic of their own choice, which may not have had a shared focus. This
was a deliberate change in terminology to encourage the participants to take ‘ownership’ of the topic of reflection (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). In other words the topic was personal to one student but being discussed in a peer group through oral communication.

An academic colleague, who had experience as a qualitative researcher, took on the role of a moderator, facilitator or supervisor, but on the advice of Walker (1985) and Krueger and Casey (2000) did not attempt to conduct individual interviews in a group situation. This allowed the discussion to develop and ‘flow’ with very little direction or influence. It was hoped this would limit the amount of ‘-etic’ data or conversations used to ‘please’ the researcher (Cohen et al., 2009) or members of the audience.

Discussion groups – procedure
Each group of students was involved in four discussion groups. As Figure 3 shows, the first two discussion groups took place in September at the start of the PGCE training year. Discussion groups three and four took place in January following the Christmas break.

The discussion groups took place in a small seminar room within the University. The chairs were positioned in a circle facing inwards with the tape recorder on a table outside of the circle. The students were asked to initiate the discussion and in most instances a student would start the discussion with an account from their current school placement. Other students were allowed to interrupt, ask questions or contradict the opinions of others if they wished. The ‘topic’ was chosen and instigated by the individual student. This resulted in very few occasions of silence on the tape recordings. This is an interesting observation because silence can indicate some complex issues such as resistance, non-conformity, contradiction or just thinking (Faith, 1994), but a lack of silence implies an acceptance, familiarity of a situation or a relaxed conversation. This would suggest the participants felt comfortable with both the discussion group and the topics.
The academic colleague facilitating the discussion was asked to take notes and give particular attention to the non-oral data such as posture, expression, humour and voice intonation to identify any personal concerns, awkwardness or inability to cope with the situation (Jones, 1985; Burns, 2000). This non-oral communication was later linked to the transcript.

**Approach to the second reflective learning activity – ALS**

I had discovered from the prior study that the discussion group had assisted some trainees in their spoken and communal reflection but had not allowed each student the same opportunity to speak. The ALS gave each participant the chance to talk about their practice to an audience: an opportunity to articulate their learning. The ALS were included as an activity within the learning strategy to provide the opportunity for oral reflection without interruption but within a communal setting. The other participants became a silent audience. This structured approach varied from the apparently random conversation of the discussion groups and gave the individual an opportunity to talk with no interruption. This is significant because as implied earlier, the silence of others can create a feeling of vulnerability for some individuals but can also empower the student who is talking (Faith, 1994). However, the effect of a silent audience can create additional methodological issues. Linde (1993) suggests any life experience or story that is shared with an audience is always altered to fit the dynamics of the situation, possibly to produce a reaction from the peer group.

The data produced in the ALSs like the discussion groups provided time and space (Hunt, 2010) in a very hectic training year for the participants to stop and think about critical situations (Brockbank and McGill, 2004) and even acknowledge their learning (Howes, 2004). The ALSs were used to provide the opportunity (Fook, 2010) for participants to vent their frustration, emotion, be resistant to authority or acknowledge the value of a relationship or situation by giving an account of their experience.

I took a conscious decision to prevent questioning at the end of the ALS. This was to eliminate any inhibitions the students may have had concerning
the content of their topics. I was attempting to maintain a consistent context and I felt by allowing questioning I would have altered the ‘lens’ or purpose of the explanation (Knott and Scragg, 2007), which may have altered the thought process, the ultimate reflection and lead to several versions of the same account. However, I was aware that this decision may have hindered rather than promoted critical reflection.

**ALS – procedure**

Each group of students took part in four ALSs, two in the autumn and two in the spring. The ALS took place at the University away from the school environment. This was a pragmatic decision in line with advice by both Meyers (1986) and Hunt (2010), who suggested moving away from the workplace and temporarily changing the environment, in order to reflect effectively. I felt the student teacher needed to move physically away from the policy and procedures of the school. I anticipated from my own previous experience that it is very difficult to think objectively when working within a school environment. The atmosphere is dominated by rules, regulations and the school ethos and it can be difficult to focus on your own learning, especially if a student has a different perspective on life. I therefore felt it was important that I established the ALS, however the individual participant selected a relevant focus or topic.

The ALS took place in a small seminar room with the chairs organised in a circle during ‘study days’. The tape recorder was placed on a table outside of the circle. Each participant was given a defined period of time (5 minutes) to talk to the rest of the group, uninterrupted, about a personal topic. The order in which the students spoke was left to the participants within each ALS to decide. The participants’ talks were timed by the academic colleague. The ALS concluded with a brief acknowledgement.

**Approach to the third reflective learning activity – reflective journals**

I changed the name of the reflective diary to journal in the hope the student would write in the journal when appropriate rather than complete a description of events every day, which had occurred in the prior study.
However, the diary had provided an opportunity for written reflection, which was something I needed to maintain in this current project in order to provide a variety of learning contexts. My objective through the use of reflective writing in the journal was to aid learning (Rolfe et al., 2001), but the use of the journal over a year-long period may not have represented learning to the students (Moon, 2005) simply because they were unfamiliar with the notion of ‘reflective practice’ or linking theory to practice (Morrison, 1996). The students were initially not given any assistance about ‘how’ to write the journal because I felt I had to allow them to develop their own style of writing. I did not want to provide rules and regulations surrounding the journal (Rolfe et al., 2001) but wanted this written reflection to occur naturally rather than with strict guidelines.

As the study progressed I realised that my simple objective to aid learning through the use of the journal had far more complex implications. Cortazzi (1993) for example would regard the process of writing as a way to ‘force’ the learner to write about what they know, whereas Moon (2008) suggests the journal is a written way of developing a meaning from an experience. I became aware that there is a difference between a student writing down what they actually ‘know’ and writing to gain meaning from that knowledge. In this research the journal was introduced as a written context in the hope the student would learn from his/her experience.

I made a conscious decision that the journal in this study was to be used for personal written reflection only, but other research such as the work of Walker (1985) and Fook (2010) used journals to stimulate oral comments in a discussion group. I did not want to impose such a restriction because I felt the use of the journal as a prompt sheet would compromise the ‘position’ of the journal as written reflection. The journal belonged to the student and was completed at any time in a ‘private’ and ‘safe’ setting, hopefully avoiding any ‘public’ emotional discomfort (Francis, 1995). The ‘power’ to write and control the topic belonged totally to the individual. The ‘emotional trigger’ (Moon, 2008) was personal and would not be judged or questioned by anyone.
The prior study had shown there were two disadvantages of using a reflective diary/journal to gain data. The first was the inconsistency of participant use. I had no control over the use of the journal and was even uncertain if the journal had been completed. I had to ‘trust’ that the participants used the journal. As the journal was the only written reflective learning activity, non-completion of the journal could equate to the participant choosing to reflect in the oral rather than the written form. Second, reflective writing involves the participant writing to learn, but with no previous experience of writing a reflective journal the contents could have been a description of events.

*Reflective journals – procedure*

All 13 students were issued with a reflective journal at the beginning of the training period. The journals were collected at the end of the year, photocopied by an administrative assistant and returned to the students. The students were told that it was not essential to complete the journal every day but to use the journal when they felt writing would assist their development or help them to cope with a situation in school.

I was aware that I required a starting point of analysis for this research. So in order to commence the writing process and provide a ‘base line’ point the students were initially asked to write about an educational episode of their life that had influenced or affected them. With hindsight I can see how I prioritised this section of the journal by instructing the participants to write about a previous school experience. I inadvertently influenced this part of the research but withdrew my influence from any other part of the journal. My instruction was probably motivated by the findings of the prior study and the discovery of an emotional prerequisite to the reflection process. I wished to explore the emotional context of the student’s initial reflection, hence I asked the participants to complete this section as a written task. I had permitted my subjective interest to influence the data.
I later analysed the content of the initial reflection to highlight any words or phrases that demonstrated reflection. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) had found that each individual brought with them a set of experiences that could alter his/her ability to reflect and Moon (2008) found that an ‘emotional trigger’ often initiated reflection.

The participants were aware from the outset of the study that the journals would be collected and analysed. This gave the student the understanding that the information contained in the journal was for both a private (themselves) and public (researcher) audience. However, I did encourage them to personalise their thoughts and even write in a form close to that of speech (Moon, 2005).

**Approach to the fourth activity – interviews**

Having initially removed myself from the reflective learning strategy I was now in control of the interview situation and perhaps in a position the student may perceive as ‘powerful’. This altered the dynamics of the research (Linde, 1993). I had read the data from the previous activities and had prepared questions that were relevant for each individual. I acknowledged that I knew more about the participant than perhaps they imagined. However, the use of semi-structured questions quickly allowed the ‘power relationship’ to shift from myself to the participant as the participant’s answers had potential to lead the interview in a direction of their choice. The student was being given an opportunity to talk directly to me. This change of situation may have altered his/her views or comments from previous comments because the audience had changed from the peer group to the researcher for the first time (Linde, 1993). I felt this situation of becoming directly involved in the data collection was a potential conflict of interest for myself as researcher and teacher (Bassey, 1995). I accepted I was a practitioner-researcher and made the pragmatic decision to distance myself from the data collection. This ethical dilemma will be dealt with later.
It was at this point in the research project that the emergent theme of the students’ use of a full and coherent narrative became evident. At first I was not sure why I was so surprised at this finding, especially as Swann (2005) warns researchers of a limited personal knowledge despite believing they understand and know everything about their area of research, but on consideration I realised the prior study had not created sufficient opportunities or appropriate activities to allow the narrative to develop. I recognised the students’ use of such a coherent narrative to provide an account of their experience and used on the advice of Kohler Riessman (1993) an ‘aide memoire’ of questions rather than pre-set questions. I found this a more flexible approach that allowed the participant to develop a story or chapter within their account. The ‘aide memoire’ was based on the student’s original story from the transcripts, but over the training year the student’s perceptions of his/her experience had changed. The story or account of the event had changed. This in itself was a valuable observation.

**Individual interviews – procedure**
Five participants were selected based on their ability to demonstrate Dewey reflection in the preceding learning activities. The five participants formed the ‘extension’ or ‘Dewey group’.

The interviews were held post-assessment in July or August and were booked in advance with the student. The interviews took place in a small room in the University. The setting was formal but relaxed with the room being organised to facilitate a ‘friendly’ atmosphere. The tape recorder was placed on a small table at the side of the room. As the interview took place on an individual basis I took detailed notes of any non-verbal communication (Kvale, 1996).

**Organisation of the data**
As the reflective learning activities were completed the transcripts were transcribed and the journals photocopied by an administrative assistant. This created data which were organised into files, with a coding system replacing the names.
I had gained four sets of data. Three sets of data came from the main study, which included all 13 students:

- Data sets from the discussion groups
- Data sets from the ALSs
- Data from the reflective journals

The fourth set of data came from the five selected participants who formed the Dewey group:

- Data from the interviews

Once the data were assembled I organised the data sub-sets into reflective learning activities (discussion groups, ALSs, journals) and interviews and reviewed the content of each activity. I was able to reorganise the data sets in a variety of ways to assist with my analysis. Weiss (1994) would refer to this type of data organisation as a form of inclusive integration as I then took each data set, identified individual participants and rearranged the data per student so that I could view any longitudinal development of reflection, using the initial reflection as a starting point of assessment and the combination of the other activities as a final point of assessment. This provided an inquiry into each activity of the overall strategy but also provided a cross-sectional investigation (time within the training year) of each participant. In other words I held longitudinal data for all 13 participants throughout a 1-year period and cross-sectional data from the four discussion groups, the four ALSs, the reflective journals and five interviews.

3.7 Data analysis

I acknowledged my position as a practitioner-researcher and took a reflexive stance with regard to teaching, education and teacher training. I knew my data analysis would be influenced by my expectations, both implicit and
explicit (Swann, 2005) and by what I expected to see. I accepted my subjectivity and the impact this would have on any interpretation of the data (Sparkes and Smith, 2014) and how judgemental my analysis could be.

I initially held three areas of interest on reading the data. I was analysing words and phrases using a summative content analysis approach followed by my interpretation of any underlying reflection. The first two areas of interest involved analysing the data on a continuum ranging from no reflection, initial reflection, Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection and eventually summarising any progression between. The third area of interest was comparing how effective the learning activities were in producing reflection. Whilst undertaking this analysis and with the assistance of a fellow researcher who discussed and verified my findings, I refined the fourth area of interest, which was the student’s use of narrative to relive an experience. It had become evident that the students were telling a story as suggested by McDrury and Alterio (2002), but to my surprise the narrative was detailed, coherent, sophisticated and presented in chronological order. This finding led to a clarification of the final aim. I would therefore like to confirm the four aims for this study as:

1) To what extent do student teachers demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning?
2) Did the students ‘enhance’ their reflection by referring to all of the following at some point: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion?
3) Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, ALSs, journals and interviews), which activity was the most successful in producing data that demonstrated reflection?
4) To what extent do students use narrative to reflect?

The data appeared initially to have one layer of information, but within the content there were two structures: the macro-layer (the story) and micro-layer (how the story was constructed) (Linde, 1993). As a starting point I decided to read the complete data in order to become fully immersed in the
students’ experience. I later realised I had unintentionally adopted a hermeneutic approach to the analysis (Ricoeur, 1984), because I continually read the data, drew some conclusions, raised areas of interest and then re-read the data for evidence of reflection. On each occasion of analysis I moved between being a naïve reader to a questioning examiner, gradually constructing my opinion, consciously being aware that any analysis could be perceived as judgemental. This hermeneutic process of continually revisiting one part of the data made me aware of how I was being influenced by my prior understandings (Denzin, 1989) of teacher training. With this recognition of my own position or assumption that I understood the context of the data (Rowan and Reason, 1981), i.e. teacher training, I was able to see beyond the description of the student experience and start to analyse the content, using Dewey’s framework, initially as a whole before dividing the work into themes of interest and then re-establishing as a whole. Eventually the data started to gain meaning (Crotty, 1998).

Looking for evidence of reflection

As the initial section of the journal was the first piece of data I had collected I used this as a starting point for each participant. This was regarded as my first interpretation of whether the student was demonstrating Dewey reflection. The written paragraph related to a point in the student’s life before the commencement of their training year. I therefore analysed this short written piece using Dewey’s framework to identify any word or phrase that could be interpreted as a form of reflection, drawing of conclusions or reconsidering a former experience. Using the framework, I categorised and compared the student’s statements to gain an insight to the amount or quality of reflection each participant showed. I analysed the content of each reflective learning activity in date order and created a grid that placed the data into a time frame. I then analysed each section of the grid to identify if the participant demonstrated more reflection from a combination of the learning activities than at the initial point in the year. I was analysing the data hoping to see an increase in the participants’ capacity to reflect and learn from their experience. I now realise I was fully expecting to see an
increase in the amount of Dewey reflection and a progression to more enhanced reflection as I compiled the data grid.

My initial focus was to set a starting point on which to judge any change, but I was also looking to identify any emotive terms that could demonstrate either a prior negative or positive emotional stance toward teaching. In hindsight, it would be true to say my enthusiasm to read the data was heightened by an indication of any positive reference to a previous experience and I may have initially not highlighted data that were negative. I was aware that it was my interpretation of the data in the prior study that suggested a student who demonstrated a positive emotion early in the study went on to be a more reflective student and therefore I may have been somewhat biased in my approach to the data analysis of the main study. I was searching for comments such as shown by F3 in the initial section of the journal: ‘A positive experience that happened to me in school’. F3, unlike many of the other students, had joined the PGCE cohort from another university. She held a positive outlook but her comments often lacked maturity when contributing in lectures. Although she was of a similar age, to the other students, her experience of life beyond education appeared to be limited.

My main focus of analysis involved finding evidence of reflection through Dewey’s framework. I scanned the data looking for terms, sentences or phrases that indicated a student had given thought to a situation. On occasions the participant did not show evidence of reflection through Dewey’s stages, so in order to support my findings I consciously looked for examples of these students to place into context their journey through the PGCE year, creating a vignette of each student. I was aware that the students may have been reflecting and learning but not within the reflective learning activities. I then continued to analyse the data looking for evidence of enhanced reflection (context, distance, ownership, reference to power, emotion), the effectiveness of the learning activities for reflection and finally I considered the students’ use of narrative.
Looking for Dewey’s stages of learning

Dewey’s stages of learning (suggestion, problem solving, hypothesis, reasoning and testing: Dewey, 1933; Skilbeck, 1970) had been selected as a framework to indicate that the participant was learning from experience. I started to look for phrases that indicated learning, such as ‘I have learnt to become more inspirational’ (M2 Journal) demonstrated M2 was reconsidering and learning from a prior experience. M2 was the only student in the cohort who had been schooled at an independent school. He was very confident and often opinionated. I was particularly drawn to this phrase due to M2’s use of the word ‘inspirational’. On consideration I may not have highlighted M2’s use of the word ‘learning’ in isolation and possibly only noticed the statement because of my high regard for and interest in inspirational teachers. A similar phrase that drew my attention was from F1 when she wrote in her journal ‘This incident made me realise’. F1 was a highly motivated individual who had joined the PGCE programme with an alternative degree (not PE related). She was very determined to achieve her potential and justify her chosen route into teaching. This statement appears to indicate F1 had a moment of reconsideration. The terms ‘learnt’ and ‘realise’ provided an indication that the student was demonstrating reflection and that I needed to continue my analysis for any sign of learning through Dewey’s stages.

The example given below illustrates the application of Dewey’s framework, when F1 raises a suggestion followed by a problem in the initial ALS when she says:

‘In PE no TAs used! at all!  
A boy called R….. in my OAA class. He’s not the nicest boy, not nice to other pupils [suggestion – the boy called R ... could cause a problem]. He is always in external exclusion. Before half term I had him for Netball which was horrendous because [he felt] it was for girls but now he is doing OAA. My last lesson with him wasn’t amazing; [he was] still a bit chatty and stuff. But this week in OAA he was brilliant’ [problem – is that R ... appears to behave in some lessons but not in others. This
could mean the PE subject area rather than the child is the problem].

(F1 – Action Learning Set – November)

F1 continues to hypothesise, reason and test her solutions.

I originally analysed the data to identify any form of reflection by using Dewey as a framework. It became apparent that all participants showed some form of initial reflection but only some students showed Dewey reflection. However, there were a few participants who were considering ‘other’ factors in addition to Dewey reflection. I was interested in highlighting the factors that were most relevant to the student teacher, so I explored the data looking for factors that ‘enhanced’ reflection and in my opinion gave an indication of a higher level of reflection.

**Looking for enhanced reflection**

My selection of the term and criteria for enhanced reflection was stimulated by the results of the prior study and the work of Fook (2010), who blended the theories of Mezirow (1983) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) to consider the influence of age and previous experience. Five key areas were highlighted to identify enhanced reflection and those participants who had started to reflect in a critical way. The content analysis which related to Dewey’s stages of learning showed variations in the type of language used by the participants. Words that related to or demonstrated an emotion, a value, a power relationship or the student’s own learning were noted. In my opinion based on an analysis of the findings of the prior study, the key areas that demonstrate an enhancement of reflection were: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion.

**Context – continuity of learning (personal development – creating an identity)**

The first element of enhanced reflection was how the individual blends the current with previous learning and how the person views other factors that influence the ownership of any actions. Thus, the first distinguishable characteristic of enhanced reflection that I identified was a continuity of the
individual’s learning process through time, with the student placing their current, temporary situation into an historical period of their life. There may or may not be a point of criticality where the individual makes a decision that affects future proceedings. The individual could then relate the current learning to past events and to possible future scenarios.

I was also looking to establish if the student showed a development of themselves in terms such as: ‘where I’ve come from’, ‘how I look back’ and any reference to the age or experience of others, the influence of the school policy, the development of the national curriculum or their own positioning within the experience. I also viewed the data to see if reference was made to any prior experience that could alter their opinions, views and consequent reflection, such as F2’s mention of previously being a coach. The individual may have placed the reflection into a historical context of their educational experience starting as a child or within the training year. The participant could have also placed the reflection in the school/working environment or other wider context.

*Distance (use of meta-discourse)*

Enhanced reflection shows the individual looking beyond their subjective opinions and feelings and attempting to distance themselves from the situation by considering wider influential factors such as school, institutional or government policy or social, cultural considerations. This was the second criterion for enhanced reflection. The content of the transcripts revealed two different types of expression. The students had relived their experience by using the word ‘I’ and put themselves in the centre of the situation or had used the third person and hence distanced themselves from the story. The data were either personal and involved the individual as the central figure, or the individual viewed everything from a ‘removed’ position where nothing was personal. I analysed the content to investigate if the students had used meta-discourse to disassociate themselves with the topic or relevant issue. The use of meta-discourse, words or phrases that distanced the author from the comment, may have been an attempt by the student to be divorced from the situation. I also
viewed the data to note any reference to outside agencies that may have influenced the individual’s reflection. However, some participants demonstrated their involvement in a situation and took responsibility for their own actions; I referred to this as ‘ownership’.

Ownership (understanding of self)
In some instances the participant took ownership of the experience, which usually involved taking personal responsibility for an event rather than attributing blame to an external source. They were able to acknowledge situations of perceived power, influence and emotion but managed to position themselves in the context of the situation, understand the constraints on their learning and take temporary control of any actions. This recognised that the individual could see the ‘whole picture’ of the event and had developed the ability to view a situation through a variety of ‘lenses’. In other words they were able to see all angles and perspectives of a situation. The content of the data were analysed to identify the use of the word ‘I’ and any other terminology that claimed ownership of the situation. The association between the term ‘I’ and the action provided evidence that the participant had taken responsibility for their actions and any related learning.

Reference to power
A further criterion of enhanced reflection related to the students’ perception of the relationship they had with other people. I analysed the contents to identify any reference to a situation where an individual or situation was perceived to hold power or have influence over the participant. The participants were young inexperienced trainee teachers who were searching to improve their knowledge. It may have been the participant’s interpretation that an individual within either the cohort or the school placement held more knowledge and resultant power. I was investigating the student’s perception of power and its impact on the novice teacher. I also needed to consider any ‘professional’ relationship such as mentor/mentee to identify any reference to power in this situation.
The data were then viewed to identify any reference to individuals or groups of people that maintained a power relationship in the school context. The first instance was a power relationship within the University and research structure. I was aware that my presence and perhaps that of the academic colleague may have presented a situation that inhibited the participant and made them reluctant to share their full experience. I also became aware that certain dominant characters within the cohort may have asserted a presence that made some individuals feel uncomfortable. This could have resulted in the participant being reluctant to admit failure in front of the peer group. Equally, some individuals may have been reluctant to show success and therefore never value the success they achieved. I therefore looked for specific phrases that implied success or failure. I then listened to the original tape recordings for pauses, sighs of relief or pressure, laughter or in fact any sound other than speech that may provide an indication of any power-related issues within the group. This enabled me to place the student’s statement into context, i.e. if the student felt comfortable or awkward with the topic or situation.

I was also intrigued to see if the student valued or resented any perceived power situation within the school structure. If the student wished to gain more knowledge I was interested to see if they were prepared to accept or acknowledge that a more experienced colleague may have power or accept a school policy merely because it is written on official paper. The following example from F1 implies the mentor holds a position of superiority. F1 acknowledges the position of the mentor by dismissing her presence and reassuring herself that she is more concerned with the teaching than the observation. By raising the situation, F1 is obviously equally concerned by the mentor being there.

‘I’m doing it to get a good grade rather than because my mentor is observing me’

A further example from F3 demonstrates how the student perceives two different teachers. The emotional ‘outburst’ of the word ‘hate’ accompanies
the term negative. From this statement I assumed F3 did not like the class teacher but was aware the class teacher held a position of authority.

‘my subject mentor is positive but this class teacher is just so negative – I hate it’

I was particularly interested to attempt to clarify the relationship between the student and working colleagues, either their mentor or other staff within the department. I felt this was important because this close working relationship would have a direct impact on the student’s development and hence ability to reflect. The data were investigated to identify if both success and failure were referred to and how the student attributed the responsibility within that particular experience. I was looking to identify any language that indicated either power or vulnerability. I was also investigating why the power relationship was evident by analysing any explanation of the situation. I was looking for key words, which may indicate a student’s respect for an individual. In other words I was trying to identify who influenced the student and whether the participant felt at ease or vulnerable on school placement. I was looking for markers of causality (Linde, 1993), words such as ‘since’, ‘therefore’, ‘the reason that’ and for words or sentences that attributed blame or responsibility to a person.

I was looking for indicators that gave a hierarchical structure or acknowledged someone else having greater wisdom. I was interested in the students’ perception of their own position within the school environment or within the peer group. The students’ interpretation of their own position in society could provide an indication of their perception of power, how they viewed themselves in relation to others and provide an insight to how they viewed their own identity. The participant may indicate a position of authority over their pupils or indicate a feeling of inadequacy when referring to their mentor. However, I believe this concept of ‘positionality’ is only relevant if the student highlights a power situation, which may involve an element of inadequacy, failure (Swann and Pratt, 1999) or vulnerability.
I was also aware that student teachers tend to accept written school documentation without challenging the contents. I was interested to view the data for any reference to documents, policies or structures that overtly influenced the reflection of the student. I have often been aware of school behaviour policies that do not suit the student’s way of teaching and the implementation of the behaviour procedures can have a detrimental effect on the quality of the teaching. Student teachers can also find it difficult to teach a school-based scheme of work to a class, due to a lack of subject knowledge or a misjudgement of pupil ability, therefore I was keen to note any reference to school-related policies.

**Emotion**

The next criterion I used for enhanced reflection derives from Boud et al.’s (1985) suggestion that feelings, value and emotions are key to the reflection process. In the prior study, I found that an individual’s willingness to reflect could be influenced by their positive emotional view of the situation or their ability to identify a challenge (Mantle, 2010). Emotions evoke different feelings for different individuals, and the emotion experienced could quickly alter. Ahmed (2004) refers to this ever-changing feeling of emotion as a ‘temporal dimension’. I had become aware that a positive term or expression did not necessarily hold a happy emotion. I had therefore become interested in the discursive nature of the expressed emotion rather than the terminology used.

The content of these data and notes taken by the academic colleague in the discussion groups or ALSs were therefore analysed to view the emotional context of the comments and to help to draw conclusions relating to the emotional ‘habits’ (Ehn and Löfgren, 2007) of the situation and the emotion ‘owned’ (Ahmed, 2004) by the individual (Moon, 2005; Parsons and Stephenson, 2005). The use of grammar and vocabulary was analysed to try to establish why the student had chosen to use a particular word or punctuation.

**Progression**
Having analysed the data for evidence of enhanced reflection I went on to see if any of the participants developed their ability to reflect through the training year. I used Dewey’s framework as an indicator of reflection at the start of the research and at various points throughout the project. I initially used this analysis to provide an indication of any progression through Dewey’s stages and then to identify if there was any progression from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection to enhanced reflection.

Once this initial analysis was complete I considered whether the reflective learning strategy had enabled the participant to demonstrate an increased capacity to reflect and learn from their experiences over the year.

In summary, the data were analysed to identify Dewey’s stages of learning and the criterion of enhanced reflection (context, distance, ownership, reference to power and emotion) and to highlight any progression through my levels, which I took as an indicator that the participant had increased their capacity to reflect.

*When the reflection occurred*

In order to look at the effectiveness of the reflective learning strategy the data were reorganised into the activities (discussion groups, ALS, journals). I undertook a process of investigation that counted the number of times reflection occurred during each activity within the strategy. I was not concerned which participant had revealed their learning through reflection; I was just concerned with the effectiveness of the activity to achieve student reflection. The total number of times reflection had occurred during one type of activity indicated the type of reflective learning activity that produced the most reflection. With the research of others (Richert, 1990; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; McDrury and Alterio, 2002) in mind, I analysed the data to detect any difference in the type or use of language between the ALSs and the discussion groups. I felt that two or multiple conversations occurring in the discussion groups could prevent an organised or structured story whereas the ALS may have encouraged more detailed
narrative. I was interested to see if the contents of the story differed between the learning activities.

It was at this point of the analysis that I realised the detail in the student’s story. Each student had used a full and coherent ‘narrative’ to communicate with the audience, especially in the ALSs and discussion groups.

*Discovering a story*

Some of the conclusions from the analysis of the data were emergent and had not been predicted (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). It soon became evident that much of the student reflection was told as a detailed story. The extent of this detail was unexpected. One reason for my surprise may have been the lack of descriptive storytelling in the prior study. The previous research had a smaller number of reflective learning activities, which may have given insufficient time for the participant to develop a narrative. In light of the use of narrative the content analysis had to be adapted to consider the role of the story in the students’ reflection. Once I realised the relevance of narrative I started to review all the reflective learning activities to investigate both oral and written storytelling.

As the students’ use of narrative was a new area of investigation, I had to consider the functions of a narrative, so I adopted Grumet’s (1990) ‘model of voices’ for the analysis of narrative:

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Situation --------- narrative --------- interpretation
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The situation from this model in my study was the teaching experience which was relived through narrative. The narrative may be told within the journal or at a later date in an oral learning activity. Interpretation of the narrative was made by the audience and then through my analysis of the data.

Grumet (1990) stated that the writing of a journal and seeing ‘oneself’ was an important aspect of developing as a teacher. I adopted Grumet’s
suggestion as a basis for my investigation. I decided to identify when, how and why the participant talked about themselves. This could have been through the use of the word ‘I’ or by highlighting their involvement in the story being told. I linked this to the ‘ownership’ of the situation, which mirrored a category of enhanced reflection.

My analysis then adopted Linde’s (1993) suggestion that all narrative can be viewed in units: narrative, chronicle and explanation. The narrative was told in discontinuous units via the different reflective learning activities and I was initially interested to see if there was a common thread or theme that evolved in each student’s narrative or if the individual stories from each reflective learning activity formed small chapters of their training year. Once the experiences were mapped I was interested to see if the participants summarised accounts that they would later expand upon. I was conscious that this ‘signalling’ of an event was more likely to occur within a conversation such as the discussion group or ALS when the participant wished to gain the attention of the other members of the group.

I also viewed the data to see if the participant used an orientation clause, i.e. established characters, time or place (Linde, 1993) and whether this was more apparent in the oral activities or written journal. The data were analysed to identify clauses that formed the outline of the story and to see if the participant provided an evaluative clause that I could link to their personal reflection. Linde’s chronicle stage examines how the students recount a sequence of events, i.e. how they place them in order, which is normally followed by an evaluation of the event.

Kohler Riessman (1993) emphasises the importance of listening to the way the story is told and the researcher should be interested in ‘why’ the participant has chosen to refer to a particular experience. She would argue that the events in the story are of little value compared with how the events are linked together. Kohler Riessman’s theory suggests that each participant has a subjective story, which will be set in a time and place relevant to their
own personal experience. I was therefore interested to see how events were linked together and how the story was told.

This chapter has sought to explore the methodological issues as well as some of the practical and theoretical problems encountered during this research into the reflection of student PGCE teachers. Some of the issues were extremely challenging and I found myself constantly changing my opinions and evolving as a researcher.

3.8 Ethics
There were a variety of ethical considerations that could arise from this research. The issue of informed consent and my moral obligation to the participants was more than just following a code of conduct. I had to support the students in their learning and demonstrate a respect for their ‘right to privacy’. I had to establish a culture of ‘trust’. I was fully involved in the PGCE programme and the participants would eventually become fellow professionals, hence I followed the guidelines set out by BERA (2011) to secure firstly the voluntary informed consent, secondly to ensure the participants’ anonymity and privacy and finally to prevent any emotional damage.

An initial consideration was the age and ethnic background of the students. With this research being based within a HE setting with post-graduate students, all of a white British background studying PE with qualified teacher status, it was guaranteed that all participants were over 18 years old and hence classified as responsible adults with a similar ethnic background.

Consent
The participants formed one cohort within the University, which made it extremely easy to arrange group meetings. BERA (2011) provided a four-stage procedure for ‘voluntary informed consent’. An oral meeting was arranged where my interest in student reflection was discussed, the reasons underpinning the research were noted and informed consent gained. The students were told that I would not view the data until the end of the training.
year just before participants were selected for interview, how I would store their personal data, what I was going to do with it and how it would be used in the future. Each participant was encouraged to ask questions and debate the ethical value of the project. One area of concern was the feedback from this project to the participants. The students were made aware that the conclusions from this research would be reached after they had finished their training year. The students understood that this project would not necessarily inform or assist with their training but would affect the programme for future cohorts. I supported Riessman’s (1993) suggestion that it is desirable to take work back to the students who took part in the study, but acknowledged in this instance that this was not possible. However, the participants were informed of how the prior study had impacted on the reflective learning strategy of the current programme. I hoped the students would understand that this action learning project was a continuous process which was taking place with a series of cohorts. I felt each participant was aware that this research was a longitudinal project, which did not have immediate feedback for the current participants but the conclusions would help to assist the training of future PGCE cohorts.

Once the project was orally outlined each student was given a letter that provided information for the participants (see Appendix B). After allowing each student to read the contents and ask any questions, a letter of consent was issued, which the student was asked to sign. The letter contained an acceptance of withdrawal at any point of the research period (see Appendix C). The prior study had included one student who had refused to take part in the research. At the time this had caused me to reflect on my own practice and had made me realise that the student’s priority was successfully completing the training year, whereas my priority had been to gain data. BERA (2011) raises this as an issue of concern where I had not fully considered my dual role as educator and researcher. With this in mind I was very aware during the oral explanation of the research and whilst the students were completing the consent letter I made sure I was ‘open’ to any questions relating to the research and gave assurance that the students would be consulted again at the conclusion of the study. I therefore followed the
advice of Mauthner et al. (2002) and reproduced the consent letter at the end of the training year when each participant was asked to confirm their agreement and to allow me to reproduce any comments made. In summary each participant was asked for their informed consent to take part in the research at the beginning of the PGCE training year and was asked to confirm this consent at the conclusion of the year and to acknowledge that the data produced could be used in this project.

**Anonymity**

Having gained consent, the next ethical issue was the anonymity of the students. I recognised the participants’ right to privacy but I was conscious that in this type of study, it is not always possible for the researcher to totally retain the anonymity of the participants or training schools because of the detailed information provided in the data. In order to maintain the anonymity of the placement schools and reference to staff members or colleagues, names were removed by an administrative assistant when she transcribed the data from the tape recordings (BSA, 1996). I took note of Oliver (2003), who stressed the difficulties involved with keeping the organisations and participants anonymous and asked the administrative assistant to reduce the name of the school to initials and replace any school staff names with ‘Mr or Mrs X’.

I followed the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998) by coding the participants M1, M2, F1, F2 etc., with the identity of each respondent being kept by the typist, away from the transcripts, in a secure filing cabinet. It was only once the data had been analysed and I wished to explore intonation and expression and select participants for the interviews that I asked to view the coded list. It was at this point that I listened to the original tape recordings and was able to identify the participants through voice recognition and the coding system. After the participants had been selected for interview, the interviews completed and notes relating to intonation and expression added to the previously transcribed data, the coding system was destroyed and the participants were then always referred to as F1, F2 etc.
The final set of data was from the respondents’ journals. The participants were aware from the outset that the journals would be collected and photocopied. They were aware the content would be used as data. The students were asked to submit their journals to the subject office at the conclusion of the training year. The administrative assistant photocopied the journals, assigned the previously used identity code, e.g. M1, and offered the journal immediately back to the student. The written data were added to the data from the oral activities and stored in a secure filing cabinet. All data will be destroyed after the conclusion of this project.

**Privacy**
I knew I would eventually have to identify the participant in order to complete the interviews, but initially I wanted to read the data anonymously primarily because I did not want knowledge of the data to compromise the relationship I had with the students in a teaching capacity or my knowledge of the participants to influence my interpretation of the data. I felt it was important to separate the research from my teaching and to respect the privacy of the students.

I recognised the ‘academic’ relationship (BSA, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1997) between myself and the participants and therefore selected five participants to form an extension group, organising the individual interviews after the completion of the training year when the students had gained qualified teacher status. I felt it was important for the student to retain an element of privacy during their training period and I did not wish to gain an insight to their experiences during the year. It was also important to make sure the participant did not feel inhibited by my questioning. By deferring the interviews until after the completion of the course I was attempting to alter the interview relationship (Weiss, 1994) to a more formal research situation. I used the knowledge I had gained from reading the data to make the questions in the interview more personal to each student (Walker, 1985; Kvale, 1996; Burns, 2000).

**Confidentiality**
Through the coding system and the removal of the names of colleagues, staff members and schools by the administrative assistant when transcribing the data, I ensured the confidentiality of the participants was maintained (Cohen et al., 2009). The data were stored to prevent any connection being made between the participant, school or event. The participants were fully informed of this procedure in both the ‘Information for participants’ letter and in the consent form (Appendix B and Appendix C).

*Emotional damage*

Despite the distance I had endeavoured to create I knew I was invading the privacy of the students by asking them to discuss topics, which would normally be addressed in a more personal environment, such as with selected friends over coffee. Unfortunately I could not reduce the internal pressure they may have experienced from reliving a potentially painful situation, but by providing a range of different learning activities I hoped to provide at least one activity where the participant felt comfortable to reflect in an honest and sincere way. I was aware that the imposed reflective learning strategy was not only asking the students to reflect on their practice but the activities could be used to discuss private and personal issues in a public setting. I made sure the participants knew that all information found in the journal, including any personal notes, would be used as data. I felt by removing my presence from the discussion groups, ALS and journal completion (completed at home) I was reducing the student–lecturer contact which could have made the student feel vulnerable or made the student obliged to provide data to ‘please’. In order to distance myself from the data collection, I made the decision to ask a fellow academic colleague to conduct the discussion groups and ALS. The colleague merely outlined the format and organised the proceedings, she made no interpretation and did not question the participants. Once the oral activities were completed she had no further contact with the data produced.

The decision to use the colleague to organise the oral activities was a direct result of my evaluation of the prior study, which indicated that some participants were reluctant to talk about school placement difficulties.
because I was in the room. The colleague reinforced the procedures of the project at the start of every oral activity to ensure the students were aware that the data would not be viewed until the interview selection. I did not want the participants to think I would read the data and gain personal information about them whilst they were still training. I hoped by removing myself and reminding the participants of the procedures of the project, they would feel relaxed and prepared to talk openly about their experiences.

The creation of a relaxed and comfortable environment had been a priority in the project design. I felt the reflective learning strategy had to have a priority on learning and not assessment. I was therefore determined to avoid any form of academic assessment of the participants’ ability to reflect and avoided linking the reflection to an assignment. I felt assessment would have an impact on the data. Other authors such as Parsons and Stephenson (2005) have debated the use of journals, ALSs or discussion groups and have only found the activities successful if used as part of an assessment process. I did not wish the reflection in this research to be compromised as this project was designed to investigate the reflection of student teachers rather than their ability to meet assessment criteria.

The ethical issues that have been highlighted were not ‘one off’ situations that were considered at the start of the research but were issues that were constantly reviewed and reconsidered. My ethical dilemma was that as a teacher I wanted the student to learn from their experience but as a researcher I required the data. Elliott (1988) refers to this situation as an ‘insider/outside’ relationship: I was on the ‘outside’ of the data collection but when I came to analyse the data, I was on the ‘inside’ of the educational situation. In some ways it was an advantage to have a knowledge and understanding of the educational context in which the students were working, but on the other hand this understanding had the potential to influence my interpretation of the data.
3.9 Validity

I was aware of my position as a practitioner-researcher and I acknowledged there were two types of relationship in this research: researcher–participant and HE lecturer–student teacher. Therefore I had to be aware of the researcher bias in this project. As Rowan and Reason (1981) emphasise, a researcher must accept any prejudgements brought to the understanding of data, but I knew my interest in the results gained from the data was two-fold: to produce a thesis but more importantly to gain a better understanding of student reflection. I found it was relatively easy to remove myself from the ‘mechanics’ or data collection of the research but far more challenging to divorce myself from the educational situation. First I had to acknowledge this conflict of interest and then take action to enhance validity through the project design, and within the data collection and the data analysis.

Project design

Each component of this longitudinal project has been evaluated and tested. Each time the procedures have been evaluated, I have felt the findings have become more valid and robust. An evaluation of the prior study influenced the choice of activities in the reflective learning strategy, for example: focus groups were exchanged for discussion groups, the diary became a journal and more ALS were introduced; the organisation of the activities was altered with an academic colleague managing the ALS and discussion groups; an administrative assistant transcribed the data and an impartial, fellow researcher verified the data analysis. The re-assessment of all procedures in the prior study was an attempt to increase the validity of the data of the main project.

Data collection

My intention was to make the text produced faithful to the stories told by the respondents, a concept Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to as ‘authenticity’. To make the transcripts as authentic as possible I used an administrative assistant to transcribe the data. I wanted to read the transcripts anonymously in order to keep my role as teacher separate from that of a researcher. By keeping the transcripts anonymous I knew I could
not orchestrate ‘member checks’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) throughout the data collection. I was also unable to return the transcripts to the participants after the project because their training year was completed and they had left the university. I knew my actions may have impacted on the credibility of the data. Like Rowan and Reason (1981), I rejected the notion that employing certain procedures guarantees the ‘truth’ of an account, but I was confident the data were authentic in terms of accuracy and therefore took ownership of my interpretation ( Riessman, 1993) and the conclusions drawn.

_DATA ANALYSIS_

I was aware that my understanding of education could affect the interpretation and hence validity of the data. I also acknowledged the time it had taken to produce this piece of work and how I had changed during that time, not only as a researcher but also as a person. I had become a ‘new’ person and had forged new opinions and had acquired new knowledge, which could influence my second, third and any subsequent interpretations of the data. As this study developed and evolved I was continually reading and re-reading the data, drawing conclusions based on my interpretation and then reforming my opinions as I gained experience in analysis and a greater understanding of relevant literature. In other words each time I read the data I saw something different. I was gaining confidence, knowledge and creating a new identity as a researcher. Hence my initial analysis was somewhat different to the final product.

I was initially conscious that my interpretation could be influenced by my knowledge of teaching, schools and teacher training, but Elliott (1988) argues educational researchers have all been to school and are automatically on the ‘inside’, unlike researchers in other social practices such as social care who may not be able to relate to insiders in the same way. Being on the ‘inside’ of the educational system assisted my understanding of the terminology and context of the statements made by the participants. I felt this was beneficial for my interpretation but I was mindful that I could analyse accounts told by the students that might seem similar to my own
experience (Bassey, 1995) and I was also conscious that I had my own issues of concern or interest which may have influenced any emergent ideas or information. I had to accept my subjectivity and acknowledge my own background, education, values and experiences in order to interpret the data. I knew I could not be totally objective and used my reflexive stance to my advantage. In fact, I rapidly became aware that I was following a similar pattern of development to the participants: experiencing, reflecting, interpreting and taking action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005) and was sensitive that my knowledge of education and subjectivity could influence the interpretation of the data (Bassey, 1995).

To increase the authenticity of the data, Denzin (1989) suggests a verification of the findings. This was achieved by an independent, fellow researcher who scrutinised my findings after the data were categorised. The early data analysis established 16 areas of interest. Some of these original areas such as relationships with mentors, parents, or other interested bodies were later merged to form one topic of interest: ‘power relationships’. The data from each category were interpreted and summarised. Each brief summary with examples from the original data were given to the additional person who was independent from the study. She was given time to read the transcripts before meeting to discuss my interpretations and analysis. I used the discussion that followed to focus my analysis and to secure the consequent findings. Key topics which required review were highlighted such as the use of narrative, the reference to power and the emotional context of the statements.

However, the discussions were not always straightforward and on occasions the impartial researcher felt I should highlight different areas of interest from the data. There were two examples when the researcher felt I should create an extra category for enhanced reflection, but I felt the topics resulted in a ‘rant’ or a list of negative points rather than reflection. The two areas were the teaching of different genders and the use of learning assistants in PE.
An example to illustrate this point was when M4 refers to the difficulty of teaching girls compared with boys. In hindsight this was not unsurprising as M4 held a very traditional approach to the teaching of PE. He had attended an all-boys school and often found it difficult to work in the mixed PGCE group. M4 states in a discussion group:

‘Obviously at B…… I never taught girls but I’m teaching six classes of girls now – I always thought my behaviour management was good but I don’t know how to deal with the lack of motivation – if the boys come in chewing I shout at them but if the girls come in [chewing] the first week, I was like yeah that’s alright’.

Instead of creating a new category I felt this topic was more related to behaviour management and the ‘ownership’ category of enhanced reflection. Another area that concerned some of the participants was the use of learning assistants in PE lessons. Unfortunately I felt the students used the opportunity to be negative or criticise the school situation rather than reflect on their own learning from the situation. For example, M5 states in a discussion group:

‘he does that [misbehaves] and then he’ll just wander off the Learning Support Assistant doesn’t stay with him, [or] help him I think the Learning Support Assistant sees Physical Education and thinks a bit of time off’.

Interestingly, M5 was the only participant to join the PGCE cohort with a first class honours degree. He was always articulate but often failed to understand or recognise the difficulties of others. I did not want to venture into the world of school politics or what is right or wrong in lessons of PE and I felt the relationship between a student teacher and a learning support assistant could be categorised as a power relationship. This additional scrutiny of my data analysis did however provide the opportunity to discuss and clarify my own categorisation of the data.
As identified by Guba and Lincoln (1989), it is difficult to create a truly authentic final written account, however strategies in the form of alterations to the reflective learning strategy, utilising the assistance of impartial individuals to distance myself from both the data collection and analysis were employed to enhance the validity of this research.
Chapter 4: Results and discussion

This qualitative study was initiated by my desire to explore the reflection of students studying PGCE PE. As a practitioner, I was interested in the students’ reflection and whether I could pinpoint the most effective context for reflection. This chapter has been divided into four sections, with each part centred on the findings associated with the identified research question.

1) To what extent do student teachers demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning?
2) Did the students ‘enhance’ their reflection by referring to all of the following at some point: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion?
3) Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, ALSs, journals and interviews), which activity was the most successful in producing data that demonstrated reflection?
4) To what extent do students use narrative to reflect?

My initial data analysis centred on the first research question and identified whether the participants had demonstrated reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning in any of the reflective learning activities. I found that only five of the students did so. Further analysis addressed the second research question and showed that two students demonstrated ‘enhanced reflection’. These questions were the primary focus of my attention until I noticed examples of activities that did not meet the criteria of Dewey but showed the early stages of considering a personal experience. I established that all 13 students showed signs of this stage of pre-reflection – that I called ‘superficial engagement’. All the students at some point during the research period had demonstrated a description of events, a ‘mulling’ over of a situation and an unjustified conclusion relating to an experience. I therefore created a continuum of reflection in the following order: no reflection, superficial engagement, reflection through Dewey’s stages and ‘enhanced’ reflection.
Using this continuum, I will now focus on the first research question:

**To what extent do student teachers demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning?**

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<th>No reflection</th>
<th>Superficial engagement</th>
<th>Dewey reflection</th>
<th>Enhanced reflection</th>
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4.1 **No reflection**

No participants were placed in this category. This is not surprising as the participants in this study were asked to complete lesson evaluations and discuss lessons with their school-based mentors. The lesson evaluations are a requirement of the course and are seen by agencies such as Ofsted to be good practice and form part of the Teaching Standards. It is therefore not surprising the participants in the study were evaluating their experience hence conforming to the requirements set by both the University and the
school. The students were themselves a product of the education system and had learned how to conform to institutional requests especially if an assessment grade was linked to the requirement.

Although I do not regard an evaluation as reflection, completing an evaluation form does initiate a consideration of an event. The constant expectation of completing a lesson evaluation pro-forma may be the reason why the students in this study did superficially engage with the reflection process in non-reflective dialogue. In other words, they were conforming to training requirements but not necessarily reflecting.

4.2 Initial reflection – superficial engagement (first level of reflection)

When reading the data it became apparent that the reflective learning activities were successful in encouraging the student to talk about their own experience through the use of non-reflective dialogue. Several authors (Dewey, 1933; Mezirow, 1983; Brookfield, 1995; Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998; Moon, 2005) consider the first part of the reflection process an acknowledgement that an experience has caused the individual to think. Dewey calls this ‘suggestion’, Moon ‘noticing’, Brookfield ‘identification’ and Mezirow’s first level focused on basic awareness of an action or meaning, but the data add to these theories through evidence of a level of pre-reflection. I hypothesised that the student would only formalise their learning if the reflection revealed Dewey’s stages of learning; however, the data showed there are three stages of what I called ‘superficial engagement’: description, mulling over and forming unjustified conclusions, a process that could initiate the reflection process. In other words, activities that showed signs of describing an event, reconsidering an experience and coming to conclusions with no explanation or reasoning were grouped under the heading ‘superficial engagement’.

It soon became apparent that all 13 students showed examples of all components of superficial engagement and, as such, this study provides an
additional insight into pre-reflection. The most noticeable activity was to describe an experience.

Description
All 13 participants at some point during the reflective learning activities described an event from their experience on school placement. These data support Zwozdiak-Myers’s (2011) suggestion that reflection begins with the ‘descriptive conversation’, however evidence shows that description does not necessarily lead to reflection through Dewey’s stages. The participants took the opportunity provided in a learning activity to outline and illustrate an experience. The explanations often contained detail, explored the event, the characters and contained interesting features, but these were simply described rather than analysed. For example, F5 states in a discussion group: ‘They were the ones that gave me a Christmas card when I left and wanted me to come back’. F5 was a timid, very quiet group member who quietly but efficiently completed her work. F5 was describing a situation when she left her first teaching placement. F5 could just say she left the school but she has chosen to describe the event in more detail by referring to the class, Christmas card and expresses the feeling the class did not want her to leave. F5 had been accepted by the class and had been the subject of their attention. F5 may have chosen to describe this event because this social acceptance made her feel positive about the class and the experience of teaching them.

Participants such as M5 and M7 also described their experiences. Throughout the learning activities M5 makes reference to situations in either a descriptive or factual way. Early in the first discussion group M5 stated:

‘I’ve got a lot of children with a disability. Luckily I had a session the week before on Autism because there you get a massive folder on 5 children but I did teach one of these in Yr 7’. (M5 – Discussion Group – September)

M5 continues to describe an event later in the year as follows:
‘He [pupil] struggled to do anything for ages and I had him for football and I actually got him to do something for four lessons. It was the first time he was doing anything. So I thought I was doing really well. Until the fifth lesson and then I saw him half way through the lesson throw a ball at this other lad and then try to punch him. So I called him over and tried to explain to him what he had done wrong, because he has no concept. He is really intelligent. His CAT score is really high. He has no concept [that he is wrong] he can’t talk about it’. (M5 – Action Learning Set – November)

Within the description there were opportunities that could be expanded, analysed or given extra thought. But in each of these cases the key part of the narrative was ‘skipped’ over, almost avoided or not given any real attention. M5 may have been conscious of time constraints and did not wish to ‘waste time’ with what he perceived as irrelevant material or he may have lacked confidence to explore the situation in more detail. M5 refers to a situation where a ‘fight’ has occurred in his lesson. He shows how he talked to the boy concerned but instead of reviewing the effect the situation had on him, the class or the lesson, he changes focus and starts to talk about the boy’s intelligence. M5 does not go beyond describing what happened. As he ‘skips’ over the important part of the ‘fight’, he does not provide a theory to resolve the problem or even demonstrate how he solved the situation. M5 appears to struggle with the situation where an intelligent child has caused a disturbance. Perhaps M5’s upbringing has been such that he finds it difficult to see how intelligent people could cause a fight. I have classified this as description and would suggest M5 does not learn from this narrative within the ALS but I do feel this is an important starting point in the reflection process.

There is a similar situation later in the year where M5 once again describes an event involving a child with special educational needs.
‘The class teacher – we discussed the child’s disability with some of the other teachers and that – it was just the strangest situation and when people say they haven’t had much support, I felt that I did, to discuss it quite a lot and to be honest we don’t think he should be in mainstream school.’ (January – Discussion Group)

M5 shows he has discussed the situation and appears to be satisfied with the support he was shown but he does not provide any detail. M5 reports back to the group with comments I have judged to be non-reflective but it is possible M5 reflected on the event and considered all options with the mentor in school. He may then have concluded that the incident has been dealt with and therefore no longer appropriate for discussion with the cohort.

The data gained from M5 continues to demonstrate description or a report of previous events. This theme is continued toward the end of the training year when he states:

‘In subjects I don’t know about, I am capable of reading up on it but I do need to broaden it to suit the learners more – breaking it up (the content) or making it harder, just so they can understand what they need to achieve. I am not knowledgeable enough to do that.’ (April – Action Learning Set)

M5 has adopted a way of improving his knowledge or learning that does not appear to involve reflection. The data from M5 were descriptive and showed no signs of Dewey reflection.

F1 was an interesting student because she only describes one event when she says in the January discussion group: ‘I have the class for tutor in the morning and follow them down for PE’. This was significant because F1 frequently reflects through Dewey’s stages and shows enhanced reflection, holding the capacity to reflect from the start, but on this occasion she described an event. It is possible she considered a number of alternatives
before the discussion group and decided to describe what had happened. F3 was another participant who reflected through Dewey’s stages but frequently described her experiences. Participants may have felt that a description of an event was acceptable within the group situation.

In the extract below, F3 refers to two boys in a female-dominated lesson. The boys are described as outsiders – an interesting observation perhaps reflecting F3’s prior experience of single gender PE, and the child with SEN is very quickly labelled, indicating F3’s cultural experience of placing individuals into a criteria-based system: those who adhere to the norm and those who fit outside of her criteria. Having completed several lectures during the PGCE training year on inclusion as opposed to integration I was shocked to see how F3 labelled children in such a way. F3 used detail in her description when she says:

‘I found when I was teaching that the two boys did work really well with the girls but the girls did not like them in the class especially one of the boys [added detail of the girls not liking the boys is not necessary to the story but is included]. It was gymnastics [it is not clear if the subject area is relevant here]. They hated the thought of having to touch this boy and work with him. The other boy who had severe SEN they really encouraged him and liked him. I asked him and he would rather be with the girls [added unnecessary description]. The first boy said the same but he obviously didn’t realise what the girls were saying. It was really evident that the girls did not want the first boy to be there’. (F3 – Action Learning Set – November)

M7 described a situation which appeared to be outside of his lesson. As M7 reveals:

‘Me and L… organised a cross country. This was off site so we had all the staff out with a few of us on walkie-talkies. One pupil had an issue running around so we had to park him with one of the staff
marshals. The pupil had all sorts of behavioural issues. He decided to run up through the “Warren” so L... got on the phone to me and I had to “leg it” chasing this kid. God knows what that would have looked like to members of the public. I had to get hold of this pupil in the area quite away from everyone else. My walkie-talkie kept going off with these senior teachers saying C...... where the hell is he? Just grab him! So this poor kid was sitting there in tears with my walkie-talkie going off every sort of second. So I had to turn it off for a while and just sit down. Finally managed to persuade him, I would walk with him all the way back to the school’. (M7 – Action Learning Set – November)

M7 provided a detailed narrative of events and described how he found himself in an awkward situation. Interestingly, M7 joined the PGCE cohort with an interest and experience in an alternative sport. He found it very difficult to associate himself with the ‘team’ players in the cohort. I have always held an interest in how student teachers cope in unusual situations because I often feel uncomfortable in an unknown situation and can relate to M7’s statement. M7 is conscious of how the public or society would view this situation. He feels he is working outside of the preferred lesson/management structure of the school. I suggest M7 feels uncomfortable working beyond the policies/constraints of teaching a ‘normal’ lesson because he is aware of the public and society’s view of the situation when he says: ‘God knows what that would have looked like to members of the public’. M7 appears to be concerned about what others would think and possibly finds it difficult to be in a situation that is outside the PE ‘norm’.

Once again there were key personal situations within the story that are not explored. For example, why was M7 concerned about the child hearing the walkie-talkie? How did this affect the situation or relationship between the student and the pupil? What prompted M7 to turn the walkie-talkie off? How did M7 persuade the pupil to return to school? How did M7 feel about this situation? The lack of detail in the story means the participant did not
offer any hypothesis of how to resolve the situation or show whether he tried any other theory to see if he could persuade the boy to return to school. Interestingly, no one within the discussion group asked any clarification questions, so the story remained as it was, as if the group accepted the response.

The data that I classified as ‘description’ were informative and usually took the form of a narrative. The narrative was always told in a chronological order with events following a logical sequence. The description showed no clarification of meaning or exploration of ideas expressed by the participant.

There are several reasons why the data revealed description rather than reflection. The first being the participants were reflecting elsewhere, possibly with the school-based mentor, with each other or individually. Second, there are also disadvantages of using discussion groups within a reflective learning strategy. The initial discussion group was very early in the training year and the students did not really know or perhaps trust each other. Participants may have found it difficult to talk to members of the peer group. I am aware that I am classifying the data as descriptive, but the participants may not have felt the discussion group setting appropriate or did not feel comfortable in the environment to elaborate or expand on the situation.

Finally, I was also conscious that the ‘tone’ of the reflective learning activity was set by the first participant: if a participant opted to describe an event it may be seen as more acceptable to follow the pattern of description rather than go into more detail. The participants may have felt the audience required the detail in the story, in order to fully understand the event, hence describing rather than reflecting. This was a disadvantage of using only oral learning activities.

*Mulling over*

The next stage that I identified within superficial engagement was mulling over. All 13 participants demonstrated the ability to ‘mull over’ an
experience, predominantly in the ALS. This was when an individual, describing an experience, reconsidered a particular point of interest, posing a question to themselves but not really understanding why and with no intention of finding the answer; perhaps they were waiting for the answer to be provided. This is a situation that can frequently occur in education where students are given insufficient time to formulate their own opinion or answer because the instructor or teacher has already provided the information.

Boud et al. (1985) used the term to ‘mull over’ to explain how an individual considers an experience once a problem had been identified and Mason (2002) suggested individuals often ‘consciously weigh up’ a situation considering various alternatives before a decision is made, in a similar way to McIntyre et al.’s (1994) second stage of reflection focused on questioning. Although the studies above have highlighted a stage where an individual reconsiders an event, I feel ‘mulling over’ occurs prior to any reflection and comes after or as part of description. The individual is superficially engaged and raises questions but does not provide an answer to the audience.

My classification differs from previous theories as the main difference between description and mulling over was that participants started to challenge themselves but in a personal way, i.e. not seeking answers from the audience. An example is M7, who asks the following question but does not expect an answer from the audience, he is merely reconsidering: ‘but were the other three girls benefiting from the lesson?’ M7 does not seek a response from the participants in the ALS, he appears to be assessing an answer, albeit in a public situation, or alternatively he has considered this question many times over and has in fact drawn his conclusions. My suggestion of ‘mulling over’ builds on the theories of Dewey (1933) and McIntyre et al. (1994), who associated this stage with ‘questioning of experience’ or as Moon (2010) says a ‘situation of uncertainty’, but my data raise doubts as to whether the participant raises a question to the audience or just to themselves.
The reflective learning activities provided an audience for the participants but the questions they raised were as if they were talking alone with no audience present. Nevertheless, these statements demonstrate a progression from describing an event to challenging a situation, and a step closer to reflecting through Dewey’s stages. As M1 shows:

‘Behavioural respect? Yeah probably through my knowledge and good demonstrations.[I know what I am talking about]. Whereas my football is not very strong and I’m probably the same level as them [the pupils]. My lack of knowledge or confidence? I get the feeling they know more than me!’ (M1 – Action Learning Set – April)

M1 was an exceptional basketball player and had performed at the national age group competitions. He was an efficient, organised individual who instantly gained respect from the cohort. M1 asks two questions of himself: ‘Behavioural respect?’ and ‘My lack of knowledge or confidence?’ He was referring to an issue that caused him concern. He suggests if a teacher can demonstrate an action the pupils will respect the teacher’s knowledge and hence behave in the lesson. M1 then goes on to doubt his own ability within a subject area and questions if his lack of knowledge affected his confidence. The closing statement that the pupils know more than him appears to close the debate. M1 appeared to have accepted that his lack of knowledge, which may have been reinforced by tutors or the mentor, affected his confidence and ultimately the class behaviour. M1 is not looking for an answer or any reassurance from the group – he just seemed to be talking to himself. I found this an interesting comment from M1 because later on in the ALS M1 praises the basketball knowledge and ability of his former teacher. M1 obviously feels respect for his former teacher based on the perception the former teacher had more knowledge than himself.

F4 was a hockey player of a relatively good standard. She was a team player, enjoyed working with others and requested a placement in a non-
selective school. F4 also talked to herself as she considered a behaviour management situation. As F4 says:

‘See what I did “Miss” look! Try not to get drawn into it but I do give a bit of attention because one day she had a tube of fruit pastilles and said “Miss, do you want one?” “I’ll have a red one.” Next minute she gave me all the red fruit pastilles. “Thank you K…..” Things like that I just find so….. [long pause] that’s what makes it for me.’ (F4 – Action Learning Set – November)

F4 seemed to have a concern with a pupil. She is prepared to give the child some attention and when she succeeded in gaining the trust of the child, she paused and considered or mulls over why she wanted to teach when she said: ‘that’s what makes it for me.’

In these two examples M1 and F4 are considering issues that have more importance in teaching than the actual topic of the story. The participants have used the opportunity presented by the ALS to consider a larger educational issue such as respect for other members of staff and the satisfaction of being accepted within the school. M1 identifies respect as a key element of his teaching, which possibly stems from his own schooling experience shown early in the journal when he highlighted his admiration for his former teacher. This respect shaped his perception of the teacher/pupil relationship, whereas F4 dwells on being liked or accepted by a pupil. The emotional context is positive, because the child has accepted her not only as a teacher but an individual. I would suggest F4 holds a desire to be liked, perhaps be considered a friend rather than the professional relationship of teacher/pupil. This may point to the insecurities of F4 as a teacher or her need to be welcomed and form part of a cohesive group rather than taking an independent stance.

There are several reasons that could explain why the participants were mulling over rather than reflecting. The participants were asking questions generated by themselves and not seeking approval of others. As mulling
over occurred predominantly in the ALS, I feel the lack of questioning and possible reflection may be a result of the design of the sets. Participants were asked not to interrupt each other, perhaps inhibiting the use of questions at the conclusion of the activity. Initially the participants may have lacked confidence to ask questions at the end of the activity in front of the peer group, but may have continued questioning each other after the formal session. In hindsight, an alteration in the design of the ALS to encourage questioning may result in reflection rather than mulling over.

Unjustified conclusion

The third category of superficial engagement was unjustified conclusions. All 13 participants gave an unjustified conclusion to an event, describing an event and providing an outcome without any reasoning or justification for it. Moon (2010) refers to ‘noticing’, but without ‘making any sense’ of the situation. It was as if the participant ‘stumbles’ on the truth or solution, is unaware of the discovery so moved on. I suggest this is a stage of pre-reflection that precedes reflection through Dewey’s stages because there was no ‘conscious weighing’ of various alternatives (Mason, 2002). This related to Mezirow’s (1983) level three of discriminant reflectivity and to Pollard (2002) who suggested that not all thinking is reflective and in some cases a solution can be found by making reference to a prior situation rather than considering a variety of different options (Parsons and Stephenson, 2005). I therefore suggest that a conclusion or evaluation arises in a situation that is solved by a reaction, based on previous experience.

My data revealed statements relating to the resolution of a situation or summarised an experience without the consideration of ‘why’ or ‘how’. In other words the event was concluded without a hypothesis or theory that could explain an issue. An example is shown when F4 states in an ALS early in the training year: ‘he’s so cheeky always gobbing off and that, at first I thought what a nightmare just shut up but the more I’ve got to know him he’s like that because he’s trying to get more attention and wants the rest of the class to like him’. Interestingly, F4 once again places a focus on acceptance and the child being liked. Acceptance appears to be a key
consideration in F4’s existence. F4 ends her statement with a conclusion but does not reveal how she reached that. F4 continues to make statements that demonstrate she has already reached a conclusion when she says in an ALS at the end of the year: ‘it was really simple I chose three areas I wanted them to work on and kind of made my LO clearer through that.’ F4 provides a summary of events rather than exploring the experience. She may feel that the event is in the past and she has already gone through a process of reflection and is now reporting back.

In the following example F5 evaluated a situation that went beyond one single lesson and she followed the suggestion made by her mentor rather than forming a hypothesis herself. F5 was demonstrating the constraints of the system by pleasing her mentor. F5 states:

‘It was just a lot of troublesome pupils at B…. I was helping with the OAA stuff. All the behaviour pupils in year 8 went to that and I actually knew two of them who were in my class. I spotted them in the first lesson I taught, being really dangerous with hockey sticks and not listening to what I was saying and being a total nightmare [possible problem]. Um so obviously at end of the lesson I spoke to J… [mentor] and she said what do you want to do about it? You should give them a detention so that is what I did. So I gave them the detention [responds to instruction – not an independent decision]. “Well we’re not coming” so it kicked off a little bit. So they didn’t turn up on the Monday but I did this OAA thing on the Tuesday after school and I didn’t think they would be there but they saw me. As I wasn’t the most popular person at the time, they sort of looked at each other [possible related problem]. We were doing caving building stuff up in the gym. S… and I got involved and actually did it with them. It was really nice so when I came out of that they saw me in a different light and I went [to the OAA club] every week with them. So the teacher I was doing the behaviour management group with took them to the side and the four of us had a conversation and the relationship with them afterwards was absolutely brilliant.
[solution – from an external source]. They would come and talk to me about things. One lesson they were kicking off [possible problem] so I went over and helped them [possible hypothesis – how?] which was good [no reasoning just an unjustified conclusion].’ (F5 – Discussion Group – January)

In this instance F5 was evaluating the suggestion of another person (advice of the mentor) rather than learning for herself. F5 had waited for the answer to be given, a situation that frequently occurs in education and perhaps helps F5 to avoid failure but prevents her from thinking for herself. F5 provided a narrative, which was relatively easy to follow. She evaluated factors outside of her control such as the detention, the behaviour management group and the four teachers, but she did not demonstrate any hypothesis or any solutions, just accepted that the situation was resolved. Her final comment suggested the outcome was ‘good’ but she failed to say why or how this was ‘good’ or better than she expected. F5 appeared to have accepted the knowledge of her mentor as being appropriate and acceptable. She has conformed to the policy of the school and adopted the decision of a person with more experience. Interestingly, F5 continued to cite the opinion of other people when much later in the training year she says:

‘I just ask them to put their hand up if they know the answer and all the hands go up. I ask who is confident enough to give me the T points. Some hands go down but most stay up because they are confident enough. I’m not picking on anyone. I will then start selecting and the teachers like this because it gives the confidence to the children’. (April – Action Learning Set)

F5 refers to the ‘teachers like this’. She is obviously conscious of how the teachers feel and wished to ‘please them’. Alternatively, F5 has moved forward in her view of teaching and now sees other teachers as ‘partners’ in her teaching experience rather than the student–mentor relationship to which she referred earlier. The time difference between the discussion group in
January and the ALS in April, with a change of placement school, may have seen F5 start to view the training process differently.

On first impression the next example shows M5 appearing to provide a set of confusing sentences but in fact he is evaluating several lessons in one story:

‘One (boy) who can’t be in any competitive games [possible problem], a lad from another group who can’t be in competitive games but he is very nice [possible additional problem] and he helps. I set him up as a coach [unjustified conclusion] and there is a few others in there as well, but there are two others as well [another problem] but they’re better than that one [unjustified conclusion]. Year 8 class I’ve got three!’ [another problem] (M5 – Discussion Group – January)

He was talking about including difficult boys within a lesson and stating how one boy acted differently from the other boys in different classes. M5 appeared to be evaluating the success of one lesson or situation against another. The data suggested that using one difficult boy as a coach within a lesson was successful but that this did not work in other similar situations. As shown earlier, M5 does not indicate how he came to this decision and from the explanation at the end of the statement it appeared that he had not decided how to solve the similar issue. In this example M5 has made an unjustified conclusion that a situation will not work. He failed to say why or explain how he came to that decision. However, he did consider several aspects of his learning from other experiences but did not fully explain his conclusion.

There may be several reasons why the participants provided unjustified conclusions rather than demonstrating the reflection process. In some cases the participant may have conformed to the policy of the school and adopted the instructions of a person with more experience and therefore the decision needs no further thought.
Another reason may be the use of lesson evaluations, which are often written as an unjustified conclusion when a student teacher explains how a problem was resolved, without exploring why the decision was made or if any further considerations were given. Student teachers are given guidance and examples of how to write a lesson evaluation and how to conform to the requirements in order to meet Ofsted criteria. It was therefore not surprising that many of the unjustified statements that I acknowledged showed similarities to an evaluation. The students had learned how to pass the school placement by completing lesson evaluations in a certain way. In hindsight the student teacher’s learning experience and practice of writing these evaluations may have been the reason why so many unjustified conclusions were found in the data.

4.3 Reflection – Dewey (second level of reflection)
The data showed that five (F1, F2, F3 [limited], M1, M3) of the original 13 students demonstrated reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning (suggestion, problem solving, hypothesis, reasoning, testing). M1 demonstrated Dewey reflection throughout the training year in all oral activities as did F1, who also showed Dewey reflection in the written journal. F2 demonstrated Dewey reflection toward the end of the training year in the April ALS and during the interview, whilst F3 and M3 only showed Dewey reflection once in the April ALS.

The participants in this category had started to make independent decisions related to their learning, in other words they had started to formalise their learning. These participants had started to solve problems and were often returning to the governing variable via the double loop (Schön and Argyris, 1987) in order to find a solution.

F1 reflected through Dewey’s stages very early in the training year and later she demonstrated the ability to raise further hypotheses and extended the level of testing. Towards the end of the training year she no longer introduced problems or suggestions, she just referred to her solutions. F1 was able to demonstrate a capacity to reflect at the beginning of the training
year, provoking the question whether the reflective learning strategy actually increased her capacity to reflect and learn or just facilitated what she could already achieve.

During one of the ALSs she demonstrated how she was using previous experience to enhance her understanding and learning without returning to the initial stage of Dewey’s learning: the problem. She says:

‘I write instructions on a board and the whole lesson is them going and exploring and then they come back at the end and seeing what they’ve done. They don’t respond very well to the authoritarian teaching (me always being on their case) [a previous problem – revisited – the way the people respond]. When I’ve tried that it has always backfired on me and I’ve had a couple of confrontations with the guys [referring back without citing the exact issue but I presume it is teaching style]. So in my last few lessons I’ve found some sort of balance with them. I don’t know if they know me more or I just seem to have more? [possible hypothesis] I don’t have to be so autonomous. [statement which suggests testing]

My target for development was the tone of my voice and to show emotion through disappointment or my voice rather than shouting automatically [reasoning]. I started going quiet and this seems to work for this type of class [testing with a conclusion of what works]. I’ll never lose my temper with this class. If I have to send someone out it’s [because] I’m really disappointed with you, rather than you’ve misbehaved and I’m angry [reasoning]. That seems to work.’ [testing] (F1 – Action Learning Set – April)

F1 demonstrated Dewey reflection relatively early in the training year and went on to show early signs of enhanced reflection. Interestingly, F1 regarded herself as a ‘thinker’ as shown in the formal interview: ‘I’m a thinker. I think things through. I think before and during and later … ‘ (F1 – Interview – June). F1 appeared to be conscious of her own reflection and the
related benefits, perhaps indicating why she progressed to show signs of enhanced reflection.

Like F1, M1 also showed reflection through Dewey’s five stages of learning in each of the reflective learning activities. It was interesting to note that M1 did test his theories but he did not demonstrate an answer. He almost reasoned, questioned or reassured himself that his statement was what he believed in. Initially I thought M1 was mulling over, but with further analysis I realised he was reflecting through Dewey’s stages. M1 reviewed his own learning during one action learning set:

‘We’ve got two Afghani children in one of the lessons. One of them can speak reasonably good English and the other one just doesn’t have a clue. So including them [is difficult] well we had a table tennis tournament and I was given the task of explaining the rules. It is so difficult to do, to someone who doesn’t speak the same language as you [suggestion – language barrier is going to cause an issue] using [practical] demonstrations of how the rules should be [hypothesis – of using visual demonstration rather than oral explanation]. Including people who don’t have the same language as you, for me it’s a massive thing, as you’ve got to be really concentrating on those two pupils and then you’ve got another 30 in the class. What do you kind of do with them? [problem – referring to the two boys] We got the others playing 2 v 2 with the Afghanistani boys playing each other and I tried to explain the rules to them whilst the rest were playing [hypothesis – to take the boys to one side and explain in a more simple way]. Once they got the idea, I then tried to put them with other pupils and included them in the tournament. The other pupils did help them out with the rules and that. It took a little bit more thinking about how to provide extra help for those pupils. Probably quite a hard thing. [reasoning – M1 is working out the best strategy] If you think about verbal instruction it is quite important but visually they were keeping up on things but you couldn’t give them the cues like you would pupils who could
M3 in a similar way to F1 demonstrated the ability to reflect through Dewey’s five stages of learning. However, unlike F1 he did not reason with himself. Instead, he appeared to tell a story to the other students. F1 talks to herself, M3 talked to the audience, perhaps seeking the approval of the peer group or simply reassuring himself. M3 had an inner city background and had requested placements in ‘city’ schools, possible to mirror his own experience and allow him to feel more at ease. He was a confident and honest individual who gained respect from his peers very quickly. For example, M3 described a teaching situation:

‘I struggled with them [the class], [suggestion – that the class may be difficult to teach] they didn’t respond to me very well [problem – the reaction from the class has caused an issue]. I think I was really negative towards them [the class]. So I sat back after the first week and thought well that wasn’t very good. I chatted it over with people in the department and I felt that to start with I’ve got to be more positive. OK otherwise I’ve got to come up with ideas to improve the learning [reasoning – M3 is acknowledging he has to find a solution]. So to start with I was more positive and with behaviour I started to praise someone who did something right [hypothesis – a positive behaviour management strategy]. Instead of shouting “that’s wrong just get out” I used examples like “look at J… she’s got her arms crossed”. [I used] a bit of praise and lots of stickers given out. If they did particularly well they got cards to take home. That’s how I started.’ [testing – M3 is satisfied with his conclusion] (M3 – Action Learning Set – April)

M3 provided an interesting insight to his own development during the interview, which occurred at the end of the training year. He related in the same paragraph learning to reflect and learning to drive a car. When an individual learns to drive a car they gain reassurance from the qualified
driver sitting next to them. M3 may be willing to reveal his personal reflections but may be seeking reassurance from his peer group, perhaps showing a lack of confidence in his ability.

M3 was a participant who demonstrated reflection through Dewey’s five stages of learning but showed little enhanced reflection. He signalled his ability to alter his lesson but it is questionable if this was an ability to adapt a lesson plan or as Pollard (2002) states ‘think on his feet’. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) suggested for successful behaviour management, pupil learning, or personal learning, it was sometimes essential to react or ‘think’ during the actual lesson. M3 suggested he was able to reflect ‘in’ action when during the interview he said:

‘I can change in the middle of a lesson [reflect ‘in’ action] …. I could see well that’s not working. I haven’t always been able to do that! You learn that …. you learn to give yourself time to reflect’. [reflect ‘on’ action] (M3 – Interview – July)

M3 referred to a period of time in which to reflect when he said ‘give yourself time’, with his earlier statement of being able to ‘change in the middle of a lesson’ implying M3 can reflect at any point. This supports his suggestion that he felt he was reflecting ‘in’ action utilising a range of strategies, which he applied to various situations. This raises an interesting area for consideration. Schön (cited in Brockbank and McGill, 2004) suggests it is possible to reflect ‘in’ as well as ‘on’ action. M3 recognised his ability to alter the lesson but also implies you need time to actually reflect. He could be coping with a classroom situation by trying an activity by chance that was effective and not necessarily learning from his actions or taking time to reconsider whilst teaching and hence reflecting ‘in’ action.

M3 considered reflection a ‘skill’ and obviously felt the skill can be learned and applied when necessary. This rather simple analysis suggests he was again confusing reflection with a pre-formed ‘bank of responses’ (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998), which enable survival in the classroom. If this was the
case the period of time between the action and the possible reflection activity may be significant. The time delay may or may not enhance the quality of the reflection for M3.

By contrast with the above students, F2 and F3 initially demonstrated very little evidence of reflection. In the early stages of the research project both participants merely described or made unjustified conclusions. F2 used the oral reflective learning strategies to criticise and blame other individuals or circumstances. She repeatedly raised a problem and gave suggestions, she would provide a hypothesis but there was little evidence of any reasoning or testing. In fact, the transcripts from F2 all have a similar pattern. She continually mulls over but rarely voices any solutions. However, towards the end of the training year (April) she did start to reflect using Dewey’s stages and appeared to gain a sense of achievement by acknowledging her own learning, stating:

‘I got a bit bogged down with it with the different ways of doing it [suggestion – how to teach badminton through the game or through skills related activities may be a concern] and that probably impacted on their learning especially in badminton. My subject knowledge is poor [problem – lack of subject knowledge]. We’re just hitting the shuttle. I’m just used to the individual skill-based feedback but not the games bit and it definitely comes across [reasoning – a justification of how F2 prefers to teach]. I think I saw a definite improvement (in learning) in volleyball but with badminton not so much... I tried to say look we’ve done these concepts in volleyball – but I don’t think they benefited as much – the concepts were OK but their skill level was not good enough!’ [testing – F2 concludes that the pupils were at fault as opposed to her teaching] (F2 – Action Learning Set – April)

F2 has shown how she has considered a situation and has identified why she had been struggling to teach a specific activity. She referred to her ‘subject
knowledge’ and acknowledges this has made teaching within a game situation difficult.

As shown earlier, F3 was extremely descriptive but did demonstrate some reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning in one ALS (April) and the individual interview. F3 may have felt it was appropriate in the early group settings to describe an event, whereas later in the training year she starts to reflect on her learning. F3’s capacity to reflect was increasing. As the data from F3 show:

‘I thought when I left [school] A that I had quite a good grasp of setting my Learning Outcomes [suggestion – setting Intended Learning Outcomes [ILO] is going to be an issue] however once I got to [school] B who are really hot on it I realised they needed developing quite a lot in several ways [problem – mentor has highlighted issue of ILO]. When I tried to make the lesson more interesting I would just forget about the objectives and I would get half way through the lesson and then I would say oh yes that was an objective and they would look at me like I was an idiot. The other thing was I wasn’t referring to them throughout the lesson so I needed to make sure I was setting them at the beginning, checking them throughout the lesson and then again at the end [hypothesis – searching for the answer to good ILO]. I needed to also put more pace into the lesson to reach them and needed to ensure that I knew if they had been achieved or not. I was getting there, but do I know if they have actually been achieved or not? [hypothesis – considering a different aspect of her teaching] so I decided it was a big target to get sorted – right from the start because they are really hot on it so it was the first thing they picked up on [reasoning – she knew the issue of ILO had to be rectified]. So the first thing I decided to do was always write them down so I would take a whiteboard in and write them down, I would always build up to it, so I would talk about them at the beginning of the lesson and then say well this has shown us how to do this which now brings us onto this with a bit more
progression. I improved my plenary just from question and answer. I tended to use that [question and answer] far too much and I tried to instigate discussion at the end to see if they have understood the ILO [testing – what F3 did to resolve the issue].’ (F3 – Action Learning Set – April)

F3 identified her problem of providing clear learning outcomes. She then provided several scenarios of the process she went through to try to solve the issue of setting these learning outcomes and then identified how she tested her own suggestions when she stated ‘I tried to instigate discussion’ at the end of the lesson.

F3’s reflection was often descriptive and she indicated a preference to write her reflections on an evaluation sheet. This statement made during the interview raised my concerns when she said:

‘Like I think it helps to have those things written down because you always forget them. Things that happen, even just writing something down and then reading it. You can then reflect and really think things through more than you would if you just remembered something.’ (F3 – Interview – August)

I would suggest that F3 does not really understand the difference between an evaluation and reflection but did feel comfortable when writing things down. She does not demonstrate a fear of writing and could easily develop the skills she already possessed. In response to the question: ‘How did you reflect then?’ she said:

‘I think I used my evaluations a lot. I always wrote them after every lesson in a way that was my reflective diary: in my evaluations. I’d always say what happened in the lesson.’ (F3 – Interview – August)

F3 implied her evaluations were a description of the lesson content. F3’s interpretation of the lesson evaluation pro-forma may have been such that
she felt she was answering the task set by her school mentor and university link tutor to comment on the lesson taught. There was no evidence to suggest that she used this description of events to reflect on her learning, but F3 could have been encouraged at the time to extend the lesson evaluations into a reflection of her learning. In other words, F3 answered the task of completing lesson evaluations but the system of advice (mentor and link tutor) could have guided her to reflect. F3 did eventually show signs of reflection, which could suggest she had started to learn how to reflect and perhaps each lesson she described in her evaluation aided this process.

This observation is important for the structure of a reflective learning strategy within ITT because student teachers often receive assurance from a mentor or experienced teacher; the student may only feel comfortable in a situation when they can receive reassurance from others. Teacher preparation for PGCE students is based on a partnership between the student teacher, the school and university-based staff. The student teachers need encouragement and guidance on how to reflect both orally and in the written context.

The lack of Dewey reflection may be a result of a lack of the students’ ability to reflect, an inappropriate reflective learning strategy, or perhaps the participants were reflecting outside of these activities or Dewey’s framework was too rigid to interpret the reflection that was occurring.

4.4 Thinking critically through enhanced reflection (third level of reflection)

I wished to provide an additional insight into the reflection process through analysing the components that enhanced the reflection process. For those participants who demonstrated Dewey reflection I was interested to see how the students enhanced their reflection by using the second research question to interpret the data:
Did the students’ ‘enhance’ their reflection by referring to all of the following at some point: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion?

I had adopted the term ‘enhanced’ reflection to identify students that placed their reflection into the context of their personal learning, were distanced from the situation, took ownership of their actions, who were aware of the relationship with others and who demonstrated an emotion and ultimately started to think critically. The participants were returning to the governing variable in the double loop theory (Schön and Argyris, 1987), but were giving consideration to ‘other’ factors.

Two participants enhanced their reflection and produced complex and interesting summaries of their experience and consequent learning providing evidence at least once of all the criteria of enhanced reflection. This occurred in the oral learning activities throughout the training year. This demonstrated these two participants had related their learning to a wider context than the training year. It was F1 and M1 who showed at least once all the criteria of my formulated concept of enhanced reflection.

Context (continuity of learning)
The first category of enhanced reflection was the student placing their current learning into context and within a time frame of their life experience. It became apparent that the student teacher often associated and integrated the new environment (school placement) (Boud et al., 1985) with the familiarity or old knowledge of being a pupil at school: a similar environment but a different context. Although many schools are similar, the functions and systems of each school are slightly different. The student teacher appeared to be adapting their knowledge of a prior experience to meet the demands of the new situation. Each student held a set of previous experiences, which were likely to have influenced their thoughts and actions during the PGCE year. The individual would have been ‘shaped’ by their previous experiences and their reaction to the new situation was likely to be a result of the integration of this old knowledge with the new experience.
How the individual viewed or valued the previous experience may have impacted on the person’s consideration of the new situation. Mezirow (1983, 2000) details perception, value, personal habits and social pressure as influential factors in the reflection process, Moon (2010) considers an individual’s emotional state and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) highlight the value the individual places on both the old and the new situation when considering the temporal context of any judgement made by the individual. The important point here is that the context is temporal and the impact of former experience and knowledge will fluctuate and change as the student progresses through their teaching career. I wished to gain a better understanding of the student reflection during this phase of their life.

I noticed the two students referred back to their own school experience at the start of the training year in the section of the journal, possibly because it was the only previous school experience they held. This was an interesting observation that I initially overlooked as a reference to a familiar setting or situation. However, it may be important for individuals to ‘frame’ their present situation to one in the past to consider the transition in their learning that has taken place. Individuals may feel more comfortable looking back to familiar experiences before embarking on a new one. F1 went one step further in framing her learning experience by placing the current situation into a continuum of experience stretching from the start of each placement to the completion of the training year. This was an important observation because in order to learn from experience an individual often revisited the effectiveness or emotional context of past or similar events. Initially the students referred back to their schooling, but once they had gained experience in their first school placement I hypothesised they would compare and contrast their two school experiences, but this did not occur as frequently as expected.

F1 was the only participant to move backwards and forwards in time, especially when she said: ‘whereas in our last school, [jewellery was] not a big deal’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – November). F1 constantly reviews her personal learning by looking back at a situation and comparing with her
current position, when she commented: ‘Whereas I feel now my mentor is on the same level so I won’t feel that I’ve got to change things’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – November). The comments do not appear to be a personal criticism of the person but rather the situation. F1 suggested that the mentor was previously advising her to change but this situation had altered and F1 felt she could continue without altering her teaching. F1 is thinking independently and feels confident to ‘share’ her views with the peer group. M1 was the only other participant who briefly referred to previous experiences in the journal, otherwise his comments were in the present and related to very recent events.

This is an interesting observation because the PGCE is a temporal situation that in light of a teaching career is a very short period of time and I expected the students to place this experience into the context of their life. Instead the majority (11) of the participants just focused on the PGCE year in isolation and did not appear to contextualise the experience.

**Distance**

Two participants (F1 and M1) demonstrated distance in their reflection. Distance was the second criterion for enhanced reflection; whether the person was encapsulated within the situation or viewing the episode from the outside. I was looking to investigate further Moon’s (2008) suggestion of viewing an experience with a 3-D effect. By removing themselves from the situation and viewing their actions in a more objective way, I would suggest the individual had started to form their teaching identity (Burke and Jackson, 2007) and were able to deconstruct any previous knowledge in order to construct new knowledge or they were starting to demonstrate a progression in their understanding or learning. The individual was no longer worrying about the format or delivery of a lesson but was paying attention to the factors that influence decisions. These factors may include the National Curriculum, the school policy, procedures, pupil or mentor expectation and the individual is starting to see how they could make a difference. I suggest the individual was at ‘ease’ with themselves and prepared to view the ‘bigger picture’ of life.
I was looking to add to the work of other authors (Moon, Fautley and Savage, Burke and Jackson) by gaining a greater perspective of how and when student teachers ‘distance’ themselves from their reflection. Moon (2008) argued that an individual has to place the reflection in an objective framework but must apply a subjective viewpoint. Once the person has achieved the ‘distance’ and the re-association, they can critically review the circumstances to enhance their learning. Fautley and Savage (2010) argued if the individual is totally immersed in the situation the person cannot progress and view issues or situations in an objective manner as they will hold a subjective view of events. Burke and Jackson (2007) refer to this as an individual constructing an identity: a person who acknowledges the influence of any feelings, cultural, governmental and social constraints on their thoughts and consequent actions. In other words the individual can view any key factors from a distance and then take control of their actions, understanding why they have formed those opinions or acted in such a way. Once an individual has accepted the situation or experience, they may or may not be able to divorce themselves from the situation and reflect objectively.

A distanced view or analysis of a previous experience offers a wider, more informed view of the current situation. The participant looks beyond personal interpretation and places the event into a wider context giving consideration to other external factors. The individual then analyses and critically reviews the situation. It was only data from the September discussion group that produced ‘distanced’ data. This was very early in the training year and may have been a result of the students having no sense of ‘belonging’ to the training school or indeed PGCE cohort. The data in the September discussion group may have been different because the students were not fully immersed in their training. The participants could have felt it was unacceptable to talk about themselves and perceived it was more appropriate to view an experience through the third person or from a distance.
F1 refers to a whole school situation and standards of behaviour management, a statement which holds a generic tone, when she said: ‘Do you have to have a framework that is whole school? ... they know it’s Mr X so they know how far they can push’ (F1 – Discussion Group – September). She asked a generic question and then answered with a statement.

Both M1 and F2 commented on lesson observations during the discussion group. The emphasis was placed on ‘them’ or the other person rather than on the individual. There appeared to be a distance between the student and the situation to which they were referring. M1 referred to a lesson observation when he said ‘How the person watching me wants it to be done! Whereas, it shouldn’t really be like that’ (M1 – Discussion Group – September).

Interestingly the data revealed only one or two objective statements, where the participants detached themselves from the situation, and these statements occurred in the September discussion group. At this point the students had only just started the PGCE year and may have found it difficult to talk about themselves, hence using the third person to distance themselves from the event.

The limited amount of distanced data may have been a product of the activities used in the reflective learning strategy and the students’ use of narrative. In the ALSs and most of the discussion groups the students told a story and predominantly used the word ‘I’, which automatically made the narrative personal. My assumption was that the term ‘I’ made the narrative subjective, however they may have been using ‘I’ because they were the author or voice during the ALS, which makes it more difficult to distance your thoughts from the experience.

It is interesting to note that the prior study had produced more distanced material but limited narrative, which was probably a result of the use of focus groups as opposed to discussion groups.
Ownership

There were two participants who took ownership and responsibility of the situation within their reflection. F1 and M1 showed the ability to reflect through a variety of perspectives and objectively view situations. If an individual is going to reflect with an element of criticality, the process has to have relevance or meaning to their current, often temporal, situation. My analysis followed the guidance of Mezirow (1983) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), who theorised that the learner moves from a position of awareness to a state of considering personal ‘positionality’ in the context of their own reflective learning.

The analytical focus on ownership revealed that the participants in this study were often retelling a situation that was personal and had occurred during their school placement with only two taking responsibility for the situation, issue or crisis. In other instances the blame or responsibility for the situation was attributed to an external figure. One example of a student’s reaction and realisation was as follows:

‘I would like to think he was good because it was something to do with me’. (F1 – Action Learning Set – November)

F1 was referring to a personal situation. She was talking about her thoughts and reactions and was trying to accept responsibility. She was considering her own actions and was the sole focus of the statement. This was evidenced through the use of the word ‘I’ and was demonstrated at some point by all the students but especially by M1 and F1. The reflection demonstrated accountability for personal learning and professional development as a teacher. F1 and M1 consistently used the word ‘I’ and did not use terms that could be referred to as ‘meta-discourse’. In other words, they did not use scenarios or relate a story to another individual. The focus of their transcripts was always a review of their personal learning. For example, during the formal interview F1 reviewed her own development:
‘I think I’m animated rather gesture orientated. I’m probably unprofessional because if they [pupils] did something well I was like “high five”! I think they [pupils] liked that! I think I’m very much me when I’m teaching I don’t think I become someone else! I am just me it’s not an act’. (F1 – Interview – June)

M1 provided a statement very early in the training year that he was focusing on his own development and learning when he stated: ‘that’s probably the best thing someone can say to you really. At the end of the day every single one of us will have a different style’ (M1 – Discussion Group – September). Throughout the PGCE year M1 took responsibility for his actions and eventually came to the conclusion: ‘I think I’ve learnt to like myself’ (M1 – Interview – July).

F1 and M1 could have provided situations or scenarios or talked about friends or colleagues but they opted to talk directly about their own experience. It seemed that they were keen to make their stories personal and relevant. It was interesting to note the subjective view started in the first section of the journal, which provided the opportunity for the student to write about a very personal experience that had occurred prior to the start of the training year. However, it was the oral reflective learning activities that were dominated by the use of the first person. F1 and M1 were the main characters of their narrative, perhaps an unsurprising observation due to the nature of the story being told. They obviously felt confident introducing a new topic and felt their stories would be valued and socially accepted by the peer group. Interestingly, no meta-discourse was evident in the data. For example, F1 made a statement in terms of teaching: ‘I think girls and boys are completely different’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – April). F1 stressed the opinion belonged to her and then provided her opinion.

My analysis was looking for an indication of trainee ‘ownership’ of the situation or event: a responsibility for their own learning; attribution of any failure or success as personal that the student did not ‘blame’ anyone else and were aware of any influencing factors. One way of doing this was to
identify if the participant placed themselves within the situation. The
following statements demonstrate how the participants appeared to take
‘ownership’ of their actions:

‘My target for development was the tone of my voice and show
emotion through disappointment or my voice rather than shouting
automatically. I started going quiet and this seems to work for this
type of class. I’m not, I’ll never lose my temper with this class – if I
have to send someone out, I’m really disappointed with you – rather
than you’ve misbehaved and I’m angry and that seems to work.’ (F1
– Action Learning Set – April)

‘I want to be a headteacher! I probably do want the glory, but I just
want to be working with people – it’s not taking the glory it’s getting
the best out of people – getting along with people.’ (M1 – Interview
– July)

The statements show how the participants made reference to themselves and
took ownership of the situation and responsibility for their actions through
the continual use of the word ‘I’ or ‘my’. Fook (2010) would regard this
ownership as taking independent decisions. F1 in particular was aware of
her personal targets and obviously initiated strategies that helped her to
improve. F1 refers to herself but also provided the opposite scenario or both
sides of the story to justify her actions. By taking ownership, I would
suggest the participants started to form new identities as teachers who are
aware of ‘other’ factors but have a focus on their own development.

M1 used the first person to talk about himself, as opposed to the teaching
environment or concerns relating to the curriculum. M1’s statements
provided an insight into the personality of these two participants but were
not directly linked to some aspect of their teaching. M1 referred to his
personal learning and overall development when he stated: ‘I’ve got lots to
learn, whereas some teachers I’ve seen think I’m the boss they are children
– but that’s not the way I like to be’ (M1 – Discussion Group – September).
M1 provided a comparison between himself and others, perhaps justifying his own character or way of teaching to himself as well as others in the room.

I feel it is important to show how, in contrast, F2 struggled to take ownership of a situation and always attributed blame to an external source such as a mentor or other teacher, as can be seen below:

‘I don’t therefore know how to integrate him into the classroom and I haven’t really been given any help with it.’ (F2 – Action Learning Set – November)

‘I went to the teacher and said what do I do to get him involved in this lesson and she said just leave him…. ’ (F2 – Discussion Group – January)

‘my own stubbornness said “no”, I will get this and it took practice but I wasn’t going to give up. It wasn’t nice but I got there.’ (F2 – Interview – July)

A child was obviously causing F2 concern. F2 involved the other teacher very early in her statement and gave the problem to the teacher. It may be that she herself had tried several strategies to ‘cope’ with the child in the lesson and if these failed it would be a last resort to ask the member of staff. However, she appeared to then criticise the response by using short, sharp words that created an abrupt-sounding sentence. She sought the answer rather than attempt to provide a strategy for herself. There was no evidence to suggest she had the ability to reflect for herself or to generate self-learning. She appeared to be constantly waiting for the answer to be provided.

However, it is interesting to note that F2 did eventually acknowledge her own progress but only later in the course. In the interview she started to admit her personal failings and her tone and language become softer and
more positive as she took responsibility for her actions and stopped blaming others, but I would be hesitant to say she took ownership of her actions. In hindsight this was predictable, especially as the students had spent 1 week based at the University evaluating their training year. The focus of the week had been totally on their personal development. Hence in the interview, F2 did not reference her progress against peer-group members, a perceived scale of success or attribute blame to others. Her focus was very much on personal growth.

**Power relationship**

Boud (2010) suggested there were many influential factors such as power in the reflection process. I acknowledged the participants were working in a school culture that held a hierarchy of power ranging from the headteacher, senior teachers, experienced teachers to include the pupils and indeed parents. The participant was entering an establishment where they would function on ‘borrowed’ authority but would not necessarily possess the power to initiate any change. Burke and Jackson (2007) suggest power is always present: organised and lived. As I read the data I became aware that the students were assigning power to a position of authority and gaining a sense of their own place and that of others. I wished to provide an additional insight into how the line of authority or perceived power in teacher preparation was acknowledged by the participant and if this recognition impacted on the students’ ability to reflect.

M1 and F1 were the two participants who exhibited enhanced reflection in all of my categories, including attributing power or a role of authority to their mentor.

This study builds on the work of Boud (2010) and Karban and Smith (2010), who acknowledge power relationships affecting reflection by identifying when these relationships occurred in the PGCE year. The participants’ recognition of the importance of the role of the mentor came at various points in the academic year and indicated how the mentor
influenced the students’ ability to learn independently. F1 and M1 demonstrate a ‘power relationship’ as shown in the following statements:

‘I wouldn’t ‘dis’ my old mentor because she helped me a lot but she was very old school – like it is her way or the highway! Whereas I feel now my mentor is on the same level so I won’t feel that I’ve got to change things.’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – April)

‘My mentor says he is here to give me advice. I’m quite looking forward to being out on my own as a teacher. It’s quite a lot of pressure, to have someone watch you teach every time like everything you do you are being scrutinised.’ (M1 – Action Learning Set – November)

The students referred to the mentor in a powerful role as opposed to themselves in a vulnerable position. As the University assigns the mentor a role of verifying a student teacher’s ability to pass or fail the Teaching Standards, it is not surprising the students acknowledge the mentor’s role. However, by referring to an external influence the students did not have to reveal their own vulnerability. This supports the theory of Fautley and Savage (2010), who suggested that a student who grasps their personal positioning within the school environment or hierarchy starts to understand the organisational context of their own learning.

The participants demonstrated a perceived hierarchical position where the pupil or pupils had more authority than the student teacher. Fautley and Savage (2010) believe individuals will develop their own identity once they grasp their personal positioning, but I would argue that if a student teacher always feels vulnerable or under pressure from someone in a position of power they will be unable to reflect or become a reflective practitioner. Two students (F2 and M3) refer to this vulnerable situation very early in the training period, but F1 was only challenged by the teacher/pupil relationship towards the conclusion of the course as shown when she was terrified of losing her confidence in front of the class: ‘Whether it’s just confidence I
don’t know. Do the pupils know more than me?’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – April)

M1 did not appear to worry about the pupils but he was conscious of his vulnerable position with regard to his mentor or school-based staff. This recognition of a hierarchical structure within the school system positioned the student at the bottom, when M1 made the following statements:

‘How the person watching me wants it to be’. (M1 – Discussion Group – October)

‘I quite like being in the background’. (M1 – Interview – July)

The schoolteacher was elevated to a position of supremacy, which in effect placed the student teacher in a vulnerable situation. M1 acknowledged a ‘power’ situation between a teacher, either past or present, and himself. The participants were prepared to reveal their helplessness throughout the research period. Their ‘emotional inheritance’ demonstrated a power situation usually between a teacher from their own school experience and themselves. The data from the ALS demonstrated different forms of vulnerability, which ranged from relationships with the mentor to difficulties with the pupils. The interview at the end of the training year also produced evidence that the now qualified novice teacher was still prepared to acknowledge their status within the education system, as shown by M1 who referred to ‘being in the background’.

M1 commented on the status of another student, in some way indicating his own weakness. M1 showed that he liked to be socially accepted, included in a group and did not want to really ‘stand out’ from the crowd. He provided signs of being vulnerable, especially when his lessons were being observed. At the very end of the training year M1 made reference to another individual on the course, when he said ‘I’d rather be part of the department, to work as a team to be the best, not like R…..[M2] ooh use this to look good’ (M1 – Interview – July). He seemed to criticise M2’s style of working. M1 may
have accepted M2’s way of working but at the end of the programme he felt confident to express his disapproval. M1 may have never felt confident enough to voice this disapproval until the end of the programme. The change of audience from the peer group to an academic tutor and a change of context may have given M1 the platform to voice a criticism of M2. Another contributing factor may have been the conclusion of the training period, which meant M1 would have no further dealings with M2. It is interesting to note the only negative reference to another student on the course is made at the very end of the course. This would indicate some form of peer pressure if not intimidation may have been experienced within the ALS or discussion groups or simply the students had a disagreement with each other.

F1 and M1 were the two participants who considered ‘power relationships’ as part of enhanced reflection but it was not unsurprising that all 13 participants attributed power or a role of authority to their mentor at some point during the research period because this was the reality of their situation. In teacher preparation there is a natural line of authority with the mentor being assigned a position of power by the training provider with the authority to ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ a student teacher. All participants in this research recognised a working relationship with another individual in a school environment. As all the participants acknowledged the role of the mentor it is interesting to consider why this was the case. The participants had been advised to ‘conform’ to the requirements of the Training Standards and the University partnership procedures in order to pass the PGCE year. The participants did not need to assign the power role, the power was assigned for them and they were merely acknowledging the line of authority. The recognition of the relationship was not an original finding but I would like to highlight the speed of this recognition (as early as the second month), and how the students openly admitted to altering their teaching to ‘please’ a mentor is a concern to tutors involved in teacher preparation. As can be shown below, M4 and F3 acknowledge the ‘power’ of the mentor within the first month of the PGCE year:
‘N is very authoritative and that and I’ve struggled with that and I spoke to S… [link tutor] and he said go along with it and see, [S… said] you’ll be teaching on your own soon.’ (M4 – Discussion Group – September)

‘I really struggle with this and get continual criticism from J…. She is so negative my subject mentor is positive but this class teacher is just so negative. I hate it.’ (F3 – Discussion Group – September)

M3 highlighted the relationship within the second month of placement:

‘Your mentor and the people watching your lessons and the feedback they give you. I feel really negative after lessons and then they say no, you’ve done this they learnt this, the second pair of eyes gives you a less biased look and they can say look and it helps with your own reflection.’ (M3 – Action Learning Set – November)

The experienced teacher/novice relationship was quickly established and demonstrated characteristics similar to those of a teacher/pupil relationship. These data add to the work of Brookfield (1995) and Karban and Smith (2010) by showing how quickly student teachers accept this power relationship. This relationship can have both positive and negative effects on the novice teacher, as highlighted by Lovell (1982).

One participant referred to a class teacher in a very different tone from the other students. M5 said during the ALS in November: ‘It was mainly K… [class teacher] as he is head of KS 3. Me and K … discussed it for quite a while’ (M5 – Action Learning Set – November). M5 appeared to regard his conversation with the member of staff as a discussion rather than being told or advised to do something. This type of statement was very different from the other comments made by the participants. M5 appeared to work more cooperatively with the class teacher than his mentor, which was a disappointing finding for tutors within teacher preparation who would prefer all student teachers to work within a ‘partnership’ formed of the student, the
ITT provider and the school. As only one participant referred to the
mentor/student relationship in a positive tone, compared to ten negative
references, I conclude that the majority of the participants in this study felt
vulnerable and insecure during their training in school. ITT providers
advocate a positive working relationship with the school-based mentors to
produce reflective teachers rather than students ‘teaching to please’ and
failing to learn from their own experience.

Other participants seemed to acknowledge that someone else or a ‘third
person’, other than the mentor, held a perceived position of power. The
student was suggesting she/he was in a vulnerable situation. Ten of the
participants revealed their perceived vulnerability in one or more of the
reflective learning activities. The position of exposure was demonstrated
through a variety of scenarios. A common theme was the relationship
between themselves and their pupils or the relationship between themselves
and an experienced teacher. In each of these relationships the other party is
elevated to a position of power that left the participant feeling inferior and
vulnerable. After consulting literature the mentor/student liaison was to be
expected, but I found the student/pupil association to be extremely
interesting because it provided an indication of one factor (pupils) that
caused concern to the participants. The lessons taught and the children
involved were a regular discussion point, but occasionally the participant
would make reference to a situation where the student felt ‘inferior’ to the
pupils in the class. Two of the students, who recognised their vulnerability,
expressed a feeling of insecurity when teaching the children in their lessons.
Each of the statements indicated a sense of ‘emotional’ responsibility for the
children. For example, F2 suggested she had no more ideas to help a certain
child learn, when she said: ‘I’ve tried my hardest to include him. I’ve
worked one on one with him to show him the steps he is doing, to the point
where I don’t know what to do’ (F2 – Action Learning Set – November).
M3 was desperate for recognition and needed the class to respond to him,
when he admitted: ‘I struggled with them [class], they didn’t respond to me
very well’ (M3 – Action Learning Set – November).
In summary, all 13 participants made reference at some point to a ‘power relationship’ within their training year, but only F1 and M1 enhanced their reflection by considering the consequences. Twelve participants revealed their susceptibility to the role of the mentor but M2 demonstrated little emotion and inflated his position within the school structure showing no vulnerability, especially when he said: ‘W... [mentor] has just rubbed off on me. Arrogant’ (M2 – Interview – July). As a practitioner I accept the role of the school-based mentor and have recognised how rapidly the student teachers acknowledge the importance of this role. Those involved in teacher preparation need to be aware of the influence of the mentor and with preparation moving toward an apprenticeship style, the role of the mentor is becoming even more important.

Emotion
Boud et al. (1985) and Moon (2008) suggest that reflection can be stimulated by emotion in general, but in the findings of the prior study a negative expression of emotion appeared to stifle the reflection process whereas a positive emotional engagement was associated with enhanced reflection. In the current project the two students who demonstrated enhanced reflection, M1 and F1, did not overly exhibit any positive emotion but they never demonstrated a negative emotion. M1 and F1 demonstrated positive emotion in their journal at the start of the training year when writing ‘Hugely inspiring’ (M1 – Journal) and ‘teachers are human and care’ (F1 – Journal). Their statements appeared to show the positive side of any situation as if it was socially unacceptable to demonstrate an emotional response. M1 referred to himself being ‘a little more measured’ and ‘definitely more confident’ (M1 – Interview – July) in his ability to teach. There was no sign of having a negative view of the training year or the teaching profession. In a similar way F1 considered the negative aspects of a situation but rapidly turned everything into a positive when she commented ‘My last lesson with him wasn’t amazing still a bit chatty and stuff but this week in OAA he was brilliant’ (F1 – Action Learning Set – November). She gave very few pauses and the sentences have a disjointed structure. It was as if she wishes to state everything at once, worried she may forget an
important piece of information. She was almost nervous in her outpouring of her self-critical opinion. She appeared to be excited, enthused by the pupil’s learning and implied her teaching affected the child’s change in character. I considered her enhanced reflection to contain a positive emotional view of personal learning.

In order to reflect and consequently learn effectively the student has to value the learning process and personal development. A positive emotion towards education appears to result in a more extensive and a more focused reflection process whereas those who appear to display a negative emotion only attribute blame or highlight issues with no development (Mantle, 2010). However, when analysing the data, I had to acknowledge my personal feelings toward school as an institution and education in general. I hold a passion and warmth for inspiring and stimulating young teachers and I would have been over-actively seeking terms and expressions that reinforced my positive attitude. I did not initially consider a feeling could be held by the participant but poorly expressed, or that a negative feeling to one individual may in fact be a positive emotion for another.

Whilst reflection requires an individual to stand outside of the situation and evaluate the contents within, in my opinion if the person has a negative emotional connection with the circumstances under review little or poor reflection may take place. There appears to be a very fine line between positive emotion that enhances reflection and negative emotion that hinders reflection. However, Moon (2005) felt the reflection process itself helps to distance the learner from a difficult situation and assist reflection despite negative emotion.

This research builds on the work of West (2010), who found in his research that a former experience may have held an emotional content and therefore influenced the current emotional state of the individual. West’s research highlighted a student teacher struggling with the strong dynamics between past and present relationships, which were influencing the student’s ability to teach. The memory of any feelings related to a specific event can be a key
factor in how an individual views or frames a present experience (Mezirow, 2000). The data contribute to the theory expressed by Wullf (2007), who considers emotion as the driving force behind any decision. Although the feelings expressed in the data are temporal for that moment in time the emotion has been influenced by a variety of other factors. Feelings are often embedded in the cultural upbringing or environment or can be influenced by the institution, such as a competitive school environment (Ehn and Löfgren, 2007). Moon (2008) confirms that emotion appears to interact or play a key role with both reflection and critical thinking in different ways. This refers to not only the current emotional state of the individual but also the feelings from a prior event.

I feel it necessary to consider the possible cultural/social background of both F1 and M1. These two individuals were the two most highly successful sportspeople in the PGCE cohort. F1 was a very talented regional gymnast and M1 was a national age group basketball player. In my experience top class ‘athletes’ are taught to control their feelings and have learnt to shape or cultivate any feeling into a positive, perhaps competitive emotion. For example disappointment, anger or fear would be ‘shaped or cultivated’ by a coach possibly into aggression or determination. F1 and M1 have probably been exposed to an environment where any emotion is collaboratively pre-shaped, usually by the coach, to gain an advantage over an opponent. It is likely this socially constructed way of dealing with different emotions has influenced their approach to teacher training and their ability to reflect.

Consideration needs to be given to how the use of a coach and a collaborative way of coping with emotion has not only influenced the expression of feelings and consequent emotion but also the way in which the emotion is expressed: oral or written. For example, a basketball player is very unlikely to use the written form to express an emotion but would be very familiar with an environment where open discussion, such as a team talk, was permitted. The written context was unfamiliar for M1. As mentioned, F1 and M1, although not overly positive in their expression, were never negative.
However, I believe the use of negative emotion from the remaining (11) participants may have prevented enhanced reflection. An example of this was when F6 uses the ALS to express a negative opinion about class size, which was an issue out of her control:

‘Lessons are too long [1 hour 50] the average class of 30 and only ten want to be there, so after 10 minutes you are fighting for the attention of 20 pupils! I’m now on athletics so I can split the lesson in two. The catchment area isn’t great but the department are spot on, but the pupils are just not interested. The learning cycle is great, the learning initiative is great but in PE they don’t do it. Not as I would like them to’. (F6 – Action Learning Set – April)

F6 had initially been placed on the reserve list for the PGCE programme and joined the course 1 day after the start of the programme. F6 struggled to become a member of the cohort and would often ‘sit’ on the fringes of the discussion group. It was as if she felt inhibited by the other students who had gained a different access on to the programme. She demonstrated negative emotion and attributed blame to an external source (catchment area and length of lessons). She failed to demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning. My perception was that she held a negative emotion towards the school, system and possibly education in general. However, in a different context, away from the pressures of her peer group she may have viewed or expressed her opinions another way.

Two further participants (F2 and M2) also demonstrated negative emotion throughout the reflective learning activities. There was no evidence in the data that F2 reflected through Dewey’s stages of learning until the end of the training period. During the interview she eventually acknowledged her own learning. This learning process appeared to be painful. The interpretation of the data identified the use of short, sharp, ‘hard’-sounding language demonstrating negative emotion. For example, F2 used a variety of negative terminology to describe situations:
‘You must protect yourself as a teacher’
‘You learn to block it out’
‘Feedback – gutted because one person says this’
‘I’ve tried my hardest’
‘I got bogged down in it’
‘I can go and rant’

F2 also used ‘hard’ or strong language, such as:

‘before I would not listen’
‘no more tolerant’
‘I’ve got a quick temper’

The tone of the language appeared to portray a perceived fault in her own character, such as her temper. F2 appeared to be admitting that she was not good at listening to advice.

The transcripts of F2 gradually move from hard abrupt statements of her temper and stubbornness to softer more caring language admitting her own faults. In fact she repeatedly used the term ‘open’ as if acknowledging the difficulties she has faced followed by a sense of achievement in completing the course. I would suggest F2 is an example of an individual ‘cultivating’ (Ahmed, 2004) her temporal negative feelings into a more positive emotion through the PGCE year. It appears she has started to take a ‘fresh look’ (Fook, 2010) at her situation, which has enabled her to gain a new meaning (Habermas, 2005) from events and has altered her initial response.

However, it was interesting to note that this change in terminology and acceptance of the struggle she encountered only appeared in the interview at the end of the training year, when she said: ‘My own stubbornness said “no” I will get this and it took practice but I wasn’t going to give up. It wasn’t nice but I got there’ (F2 – Interview – June). F2 used abrupt, short
but sharp statements within the discussion groups and ALS but did start to use a softer, less harsh terminology during the individual interview, which may have indicated a more positive emotion toward her learning. In the interview, at the conclusion of the course, she almost relaxed and allowed herself to admit to the difficulties and concerns she had experienced when she said ‘yeah, it was hard at first [to receive feedback] especially if it is something negative but it is useful and wouldn’t not want to have it, because I wanted to improve’ (F2 – Interview – June).

F2 initially felt very uncomfortable with the student-teacher experience and appeared to have a negative view of the whole experience. She mentioned a variety of sources using negative language such as: the subject link tutor, mentor, and the reward system. The softer, more intimate language that F2 used toward the end of the research study contrasted quite dramatically with that in the initial discussion group. It indicates a change in emotional value not only about herself but about the situation. It was at this point, the conclusion of the training year, that she demonstrated the first signs of reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning. Unfortunately, due to the nature of this research it was not possible to return to F2 to explore the reasons behind a perceived ‘shift’ in emotional context.

M2 also used abrupt, hard-sounding words such as ‘arrogant’. M2 always used short sharp sentences that were factual. He rarely provided a description of events. He often concluded his statement with a laugh or talked as if telling a joke. It could be argued the laugh or rhetorical ending to the sentence is a sign of insecurity or was used as an effect for the audience, such as his ‘Yeah, I’ve become more arrogant. Before Christmas I was fine but since I’ve been at A… [school] W… [mentor] has just rubbed off on me. Arrogant comments, more of a joke but I talk the talk!’ (M2 – Discussion Group – March). He may have been attempting to impress his peer group or justifying his own actions. M2’s way of communicating was very intimidating to the listener and as noted earlier M1 actually indicated feeling intimidated by M2’s comments. The reflective learning activities provided M2 with a stage on which to perform, he was an ex-independent
schoolboy and always exhibited confidence and self-assurance. M2 tended to dominate the male members of the cohort and had very little time for the female members. M2 may have ‘enjoyed’ the context and environment of the learning activities and because he felt comfortable was able to dominate proceedings. M2 may have created an ‘emotional habit’ (Ehn and Löfgren, 2007), which always resulted in elaborate display of self-importance. Given a different type of learning activity M2 may have provided a greater insight to his personal feelings and the emotion attached to his experience. I would suggest M2 has formed his identity and his lack of demonstrating any positive feelings towards his school placements or experience is a defence mechanism and a way of protecting himself against any further questioning. He wishes to be regarded as a strong, dominant character and the expression of any form of emotion may indicate a weakness.

M2’s apparent carefree, but I would suggest ‘guarded’, attitude was contrasted to F2’s self-protection. She used language to ‘close’ a situation and to prevent further questioning, to protect herself from investigation by ‘closing’ the conversation and preventing a response. She clearly states during an ALS at the start of the training year that she does not like ‘being put on the spot!’ (F2 – Action Learning Set – November). She was making a statement to her peer group. She closed the comment with a defiant exclamation to enforce her request. She appeared to use this comment as a warning to prevent any further investigation by the group. This was an indication of her negative emotion and perhaps perceived vulnerability, which was not evident during the final interview.

It is only in hindsight that perhaps using a framework of analysis to identify if an individual established an emotional scaffold (Fook, 2010) or ‘cultivated’ their emotion (Ahmed, 2004) or adjusted their emotional contexts as they started to establish an identity (Burke and Jackson, 2007) would have been a more appropriate indicator of the influence of emotion on reflection.
I also feel the context of the reflection was often altered by the change in the learning activity. The absence of others, successful completion of the course, a period of time away from the school and a one to one situation, as in the interview, provided the most appropriate context and time for F2 to demonstrate more positive emotion. F2’s negative comments shown early in the training year may therefore have been a result of the context of the learning activities rather than her expression of a negative emotion toward teaching.

Overall the number of participants demonstrating enhanced reflection was limited. F1 and M1 held the capacity to reflect and demonstrate enhanced reflection from the commencement of the training year. The reflective learning strategy may have been inappropriate for some of the learners or my selection of the criteria for enhanced reflection may have been misguided. I also feel the continual demand for students to write lesson evaluations to meet the Teaching Standards restricts a more reflective approach to learning.

4.5 Progression through the levels of reflection
As one participant (F2) demonstrated Dewey reflection at the very end of the training year I was interested to see if the levels I had created were developmental and decided to examine the data for any progression. I initially expected to see the participants progress their ability to reflect from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection as well as an increase in the data showing reflection from my first assessment (initial journal section) to the point of final assessment (combination of activities) providing an indication that the participants had increased their capacity to reflect from the initial point of analysis. At the beginning of the project all participants demonstrated superficial engagement in the initial section of the journal, with two of them also showing Dewey reflection. Each participant’s progression was followed throughout the training year and each participant was categorised in terms of any progress through the levels. In summary, all 13 participants demonstrated superficial engagement, five showed Dewey reflection and two of the five enhanced
reflection, but only three participants progressed from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superficial Engagement</th>
<th>Dewey Reflection</th>
<th>Enhanced Reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>demonstrated by all 13 participants</td>
<td>demonstrated by five of the 13 participants – with three participants showing progress from Dewey reflection – F2, F3, M3</td>
<td>two of the five participants who showed Dewey reflection at some point showed enhanced reflection – F1, M1</td>
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There was no evidence of progression overall. Eight of the participants demonstrated all three components of superficial engagement but in no particular order. They did not progress to Dewey reflection. Of the five who demonstrated Dewey reflection only three (M3, F2 and F3) moved from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection; with the two participants (F1, M1) showing Dewey and enhanced reflection throughout the year. This would indicate that F1 and M1 may have had the capacity to reflect without the intervention of the reflective learning strategy. I therefore tentatively conclude that the reflective learning strategy only increased the capacity for reflection in three of the 13 participants.

It is important at this point to highlight how I assessed the advancement from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection by showing in detail one of the participant’s progression. The data for each participant were stored as a longitudinal set of data and formed a vignette of the individual. The following table shows three sections of data from F2’s transcript identifying
the levels of reflection from superficial engagement (description and unjustified conclusions) to Dewey reflection with the stages of reflection shown in bold text, with the activity and date also acknowledged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>‘At a sports tournament, we were the only state school, because of this we were always the underdogs. A coach from another team had a go at our team saying we did not deserve to play in the tournament. So our teacher, Mr H... gave this other teacher two full barrels and stood up for us and our sporting ability. Mr H ... had faith in our ability and believed that sport is for all. Just because we went to a state school didn’t make us lesser people. We were his pupils.’</th>
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<td>(F2 – Journal – initial section – September)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Unjustified Conclusions</th>
<th>‘One particular boy that I’ve had experience with – he is in Year 7. I gleaned from (his notes from) Year 6 that he was coming up with behavioural problems but he hasn’t been diagnosed, but I think he is very close to being Asperges (suggestion). I have him in my lesson where he has strangled another boy (problem). I didn’t know what to do and I was lucky there were other teachers there that dealt with it. He was actually excluded. When he was reintroduced we were doing Dance. He gets emotional really angry if he can’t do it. I’ve spoken to him and he said I just get really, really angry if I can’t do something I lash out at someone (problem). I went to the teacher and said what do I do to get him involved in this lesson and she said just leave him. I sort of looked at him and thought how can I just leave him (hypothesis from another person), but she</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(F2 – Action Learning Set – November)</td>
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said just leave him and let him do what he wants to do. Then that’s disrupting everyone else because he just wants to speak to his friends (problem) – well – he is then disrupting learning. I don’t therefore know how to integrate him into the classroom and I haven’t really been given any help with it. I don’t know if he has been diagnosed with anything or just ignored – no one really knows he hasn’t been identified.

I’ve tried my hardest to include him. I’ve worked one on one with him to show him the (Dance moves) steps he is doing (own hypothesis) – but when he can’t do it, it is like a red mist boiling up and up on his face to the point where I don’t know if he is going to lash out again to me or another child? (problem) There doesn’t seem to be anything in place.’

Dewey Reflection
(F2 – Interview – July)

‘Yeah I must have! Ahh it is strange. It is hard to explain. I’ve become more open I think (suggestion). I’m quite a strong willed person so taking advice is um quite a new thing (problem). I’ve never really needed to have advice but obviously this is a different environment and I had to adapt to that (hypothesis). Yeah it was hard at first because especially if it is something negative. I thought yeah OK but it is useful and I wanted to improve.

I became more open and could act upon it; whereas before I would listen but not act. I do things the way I want to but I did respond. I become more stressed! no more tolerant, I’ve got
quite a quick temper outside with my family etc.
but I think I’ve become a little more calm and can actually think no chill out a bit and diffuse the situation don’t get as annoyed (reasoning).

I’ve had to develop teaching massive classes instead of my coaching groups. It has changed the way I think about things and the way things work doesn’t work for everybody (reasoning).
I’ve got to teach the way they want to learn! It is really hard coming from an individual sport to a team game. I’ve always been used to this is a skill this is what you do and that’s it. I’m very comfortable that way whereas in games I’m comfortable teaching the skills but uncomfortable with the tactics etc.’

Did that affect your confidence?

‘Yeah massively, I didn’t think I could do it. It is not how I do things. Leah got me through it, my own stubbornness said no I will get this and it took practice (testing) but I wasn’t going to give up. It wasn’t nice but I got there’.

This extract shows F2’s progression from a descriptive piece of writing in the journal at the beginning of the course in September to how she forms unjustified conclusions during the ALS in November to the Dewey reflection shown in the interview at the conclusion to the training year in July.

I was initially disappointed that only three participants (F2, F3, M3) demonstrated progression. I acknowledge that two participants (F1, M1) had
the capacity to reflect when they joined the PGCE programme and feel the remaining eight participants had insufficient time to develop their reflection beyond superficial engagement. However, as a practitioner I need to consider other alternatives such as the reflective learning activities not suiting individual learning styles, Dewey’s framework being too rigid to identify the reflection, my interpretation being misguided or perhaps the participants were reflecting but outside of the strategy.

In order to monitor any progression the data for all participants were stored as a longitudinal set of transcripts. These transcripts were developed into individual vignettes depicting each participant’s journey from the start of to the conclusion of the PGCE year. I will now provide a brief introduction to F2 in order to place some of her comments into context.

F2 ‘vignette’
F2 had joined the PGCE programme with a PE-related degree but had vast experience coaching gymnastics at a high level of performance. She had worked extensively with children on a one to one basis and the children she coached had gained success at both regional and national level.

The data showed instances of F2’s progression from Dewey reflection toward more critical reflection as she started to consider her previous experiences and frame her current thoughts, as Fook (2010) would say, blend the ‘old with the new’. F2 initially highlights that she went to a state school. She is proud of her schooling experience but implies that a state school is different, perhaps having lower educational standards than an independent school when she says: ‘Just because we went to a state school didn’t make us lesser people’. Having spent many hours as a PE teacher, at extracurricular tournaments or matches with a sports team from a state school, I had immediately highlighted this extract of F2’s journal, especially as the debate over the quality of learning and sport in a state or independent system resonated with my experience both as a pupil and as teacher.
I noticed there was an affiliation to Mr H as shown in the initial section of F2’s journal (extract above). It is interesting to consider that early in her PGCE year she chooses to refer to a member of staff whom she respects and perceives as a protector or guardian. F2 is providing an idealistic view of her school years and is perhaps remembering the scene from a distorted viewpoint. This is a male teacher who appears to have verbally protected the reputation of F2’s school. F2 demonstrates a pride and affiliation both to the teacher, school and teammates: a show of teamwork with a sense of belonging. The mention of her former school seems to remind F2 of a cultural setting where teachers and perhaps male teachers were given total respect with no direct challenge or questioning of behaviour. This is a strong sporting message that relates to working as a team is an essential part of being a ‘games’ player. F2 acknowledges Mr H as a leader and accepts her role as part of his team. The hierarchy has been created out of respect for Mr H. F2 appears to be quite happy to be part of the team rather than challenge his leadership. Age and responsibility are probably the main factors in this relationship, but the theme of protection continues when later in the discussion group she refers to having to protect oneself when she says: ‘You must protect yourself as a teacher’. F2 highlights the vulnerability she felt as teacher. I would suggest F2 has always felt under-privileged and felt the need to defend herself, or she may be using a feeling of vulnerability to her advantage with the peer group in order to gain sympathy or concern from others. F2 appears to be subject to a complex set of relations that have influenced and framed her perspective on her experiences and life. She appears to consider herself on the side of the disadvantaged and wishes to protect herself. She would rather close the doors and be ‘safe’ or ‘learn to block them out’ than open the doors and face the unexpected. I would suggest F2 likes to work in familiar situations but would hesitate to say she feels vulnerable when being observed. She appears to favour working on her own without the influence of outsiders, perhaps to avoid external judgement, as shown when she continues:

‘The more you get observed the more you get used to it. You learn just to block them out and then when you get to the point you are

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being observed formally or Ofsted – there is not a lot of pressure on you. I quite like it when I’m on my own – because the pupils are different and you have to get used to that.’ (F2 – Discussion Group – September)

F2 refers to external agencies (link tutor/mentor) as ‘them’ and suggests she feels an observation which passes a judgement makes her feel under pressure. She implies ‘they’ have more knowledge than herself and appears to accept her knowledge may be inferior when compared to the observers. It is interesting to note that she feels a lesson with no one observing creates a different atmosphere. She implies the difference in the dynamics of the group takes some adjustment. The student teacher has created her own or adopted a system imposed by the University, hierarchy of knowledge and authority with the perception that the subject link tutor is more knowledgeable. However, the student teacher knows and understands the class they are working with, the constraints and procedures of the school and the context of the lesson, hence I believe the student teacher holds the position of authority by having the most knowledge of the current situation and yet she clearly fails to recognise this or decides to act more naïve than is needed. F2 highlights the importance of the feedback from the external observation. She appears to seek an answer from the mentor or link tutor rather than reflecting on the situation herself and drawing her own conclusions. F2 appears to be dependent on the feedback, implying she is not an independent or reflective learner, as shown in the extract below:

‘My mentor actually said to me I did really well on one feedback but I should give more group feedback but when I had my subject visit he (the link tutor) said I give a lot of group feedback and should give more individual feedback – gutted because one person says this and one says that, so where should I go?’ (F2 – Discussion Group – September)

F2 appears to be confused and is attempting to mull over and consider how to re-shape her teaching. She has accepted the mentor and the link tutor are
in a position of authority because they can pass or fail her lesson, but she is confused because the two individuals are making conflicting comments. Instead of F2 forming her own conclusion she seeks reassurance or an answer from her peer group in the discussion group. F2 is seeking the answer or reassurance that her decision was the correct one, rather than reflecting on her own knowledge and forming her own judgement. F2’s reliance on the opinion of the mentor or link tutor is related to her fear of failure. She has acknowledged the mentor can pass or fail her school experience and therefore she feels she must conform to the requirements of the mentor in order to pass.

The extract from F2 (Action Learning Set – November, as shown above on page 144) continues to demonstrate F2’s dependence on opinion and guidance. She outlines a situation with a pupil and in doing so demonstrates her concern and value for the welfare of the child. However, when she explores the child’s problem she says she goes to a member of staff for the solution. F2 perceives the teacher has the knowledge and experience to resolve the situation. F2 has acknowledged the problem but does not have the confidence or perhaps the ability to solve the issue.

My interpretation of the data would lead me to suggest F2 either does not have the knowledge or experience to be able to deal with such a situation, she perceives a more experienced member of staff must have the knowledge or she is too frightened to make a mistake and be criticised for that error of judgement. In my role as a link tutor this is a common situation where student teachers are frightened of making a mistake. The student will seek advice from others before trying their own solution. F2 is still a dependent learner. F2 genuinely wishes to involve the child in the lesson and to assist with his learning. I made an immediate assumption when viewing the longitudinal data for F2 that her concern for the boy may have been stimulated by her own educational experience with the respect and perceived protection she gained from Mr H, which was demonstrated very early on in the initial section of the journal. F2 may feel it is her role as a teacher to protect the boy.
The theme of concern is echoed in the following extract. F2 employs a student-centred approach and values the pupil learning. There is a philosophical difference between coaching, which is subject oriented, and teaching, which is pupil centred. These are two distinctive contexts, environments with different social restrictions. F2 appears to have a dilemma or conflict of opinion between teaching (education) and coaching (training) as the following extract shows when F2 refers back to her previous experience as a coach:

‘I have taught a brand new Scheme of Work: teaching through the games about placement. I found it quite hard coming from my background. Obviously coming from coaching I am very skill based and I found that I wanted to teach them the skills. So volleyball is one of my sports and I’m knowledgeable about it but I kept thinking I must teach them the dig or the set and I experiment. Great. If they need to know it then I do it quickly. I struggled with that because I would prefer to teach them the skill and then how to perfect it in the game but because they are Year 7 their skill level was not great anyway and they definitely needed the skills to understand the concept of the game. I’m trying to deliver the concept of mobility and placement of the shot but if they can’t do the shot in the first place they are going to find it very hard to do and why those shots are effective. I think I did do a couple of lessons with skill teaching and then into the game.

I think I saw a definite improvement (in learning) in volleyball but with badminton not so much I tried to say look we’ve done these concepts in volleyball, but I don’t think they benefited as much, the concepts were OK but their skill level was not good enough!

I could see the point of it but there has to be some sort of line that has to be drawn where you have to teach the skill. I got a bit bogged down in it with the different ways of doing it and that probably
impacted on their learning especially in badminton. My subject knowledge is less: we’re just hitting the shuttle. I’m just used to the individual skill based feedback but not the games bit and it definitely comes across.’ (F2 – Action Learning Set – April)

F2 feels confident in a coaching situation where her subject knowledge is strong. The change of subject content and context, i.e. to badminton, has made F2 doubt her knowledge and perhaps feel more vulnerable to criticism when teaching badminton. F2’s thoughts and questions are closely linked to a national debate in PE relating to skill-based and game-based teaching. F2 would be aware of this deliberation and could be reasoning with herself in order to formulate her own opinion.

As shown earlier during the interview I tried to ascertain if F2 felt she had changed as a person. Although the answer was always likely to be positive due to the fact the individual had arrived at the start of the training year as a student teacher and was leaving the programme to enter the profession as a qualified teacher, I still wished to explore F2’s thoughts. This was a leading question fuelled by my educational philosophy that education and learning can have an impact on personal development and my concern that assessment was more important to F2 than personal learning.

My interest in the interview came in the final statement when F2 refers to ‘Leah’ (her mentor). F2 has reviewed her experience and related her learning to her personal development both as a teacher and as a person and then returns to a key person in this journey. Once again F2 has referred to an external person: someone who she regards as having more experience and perhaps knowledge than herself. F2 may have referred to her mentor because I was asking the question and the interview was held in a formal setting. She may have mentioned ‘Leah’ to gain my approval but I would suggest F2 is still a learner who is dependent on others.

The data from F2 has shown Dewey reflection but she appears to be unable to relate her learning to her individual journey of working in different
environments (schools), different context (coaching and teaching) with different people (staff, pupils) and as yet has failed to demonstrate her understanding of the value of learning beyond assessment criteria and assignment grades.

F2 demonstrated progression from a superficial engagement with the reflection process to Dewey reflection. M1 and F1 started with Dewey reflection early in the training year and showed enhanced reflection, which may indicate their capacity to reflect. It is not possible to say if the reflective learning strategy had any influence on their ability to reflect but their reflection and the RLS do coincide. I would therefore suggest that F1 and M1 had the capacity to reflect when they started the training year. However, the majority of the participants did not progress beyond the first level of reflection.

Therefore, this raises the questions of first, whether the participants should be shown how to reflect; and second, questions the effectiveness of the lesson evaluation pro-forma for encouraging reflection. The number of participants showing progression could be a result of the methods used or the University and Ofsted emphasis on the lesson evaluation. A change in the reflective learning strategy to include different activities could affect the number of participants demonstrating progression.

4.6 The impact of the reflective learning activities
In order to promote reflection I had introduced a reflective learning strategy. As a practitioner in teacher preparation it was vital to analyse the data gained from the activities, hence the next part of this chapter focuses on the findings associated with the third research question:

Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, ALSs, journals and interviews), which activity was the most successful in producing data that demonstrated reflection?
I analysed each reflective learning activity to identify levels of reflection. I followed the advice of Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) in creating a ‘toolbox’ of methods through which to reflect and wished to contribute to practice with my own suggestions. There were three reflective learning activities, discussion groups, ALSs and a journal. I divided the reflective learning strategy into two areas: the oral activities, which included the discussion groups and the ALSs, and the written activity, which was the journal. As a practitioner, my aim was to find the most appropriate reflective activity for the PGCE PE students.

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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Superficial engagement</th>
<th>Oral activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Superficial engagement</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Enhanced reflection</td>
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<td>(F1/M1)/written journal (F1)</td>
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**Oral reflective learning activities**

I feel it is important at this point to remind ourselves of the previous experience and background of the student teachers in this study. The 13 participants were all Physical Educationalists who had a background in Sport. The majority of the students were ‘team’ players and were used to working closely with others, talking and sharing tactics. It is easy to consider a ‘half time’ team talk and see the similarity of the situation to a group discussion or ALS. I would like to suggest the group setting, which I adopted for this research, would have been a more familiar context to these students than perhaps the use of a written journal or interview situation. I was exploring the use of reflective talk.

The data from all oral activities demonstrated superficial engagement and the use of narrative. The ALSs were more personal and generated topics relating to the individual and their personal experience with the interview.
data not demonstrating the narrative and highlighting the importance of relationships.

My initial analysis showed that the discussion groups produced descriptive accounts concerning whole-school issues. The ALS transcripts demonstrated that all 13 participants showed signs of superficial engagement (description, mulling over, and unjustified conclusions). It would appear that the ALSs are a more effective learning activity for demonstrating a superficial engagement with reflection than discussion groups and should be more widely used in teacher preparation to encourage the start of reflection on an experience.

The ALS provided the opportunity for students to talk at length about their own learning and personal development. The students appeared to be comfortable talking about themselves and their own progress. This extract shows a superficial engagement from F6, who described and then mulled over a classroom situation to herself in an ALS:

‘[It’s been a] huge learning curve for me for the past weeks. I was at a private school before and the learning objectives we told them [pupils] what we were doing but it wasn’t really a problem if you hit them or you didn’t. Whereas the school I’m at now, we have a cycle we have to follow and I kind of adapted that in C… and school planning. And it’s so much better when you put 3 [learning objectives] on the board and you answer it however I do have a huge problem with learning objectives where I set them too high. I’ve got much better at pitching them but I have a habit of putting my lessons and outcomes too high hoping the kids [pupils] would come up to it but they very rarely do [mulling over]. So that is like personal expectations. I’ve learnt in some lessons [but in others] I’ve had to completely adapt a lesson in a minute because of the drill. I think everyone can play sport and that’s when I’ve had mentor comments! I’m quite aware of what is working and what is not because it’s quite apparent they are not the most talented bunch but I’ve got to start
The issues F6 raised were personal and contained an emotional context. Her narrative was in chronological order and contained an introductory section that framed the event. F6, like other participants, used the term ‘I’ and was prepared to openly consider the role of school-based staff or school procedures.

The participants used the opportunity of the ALS to tell a prolonged, full and coherent narrative of their experience, which enabled the discovery of not only ‘what’ the trainees were thinking but also ‘how and why’ they had come to that decision. This supports the work of Morgan (1993), who highlighted the importance of giving students the time and space to consider how and why an action had been taken. This was not the case in the discussion groups, where the narrative was often interrupted and became disjointed with less consideration of detail.

I found it very interesting that the tape recordings of the ALSs had very few pauses. The speech was continuous with only a brief pause for breath. There were no deliberation pauses, just the occasional repetition of the sound ‘umm...’ until the story was re-joined and then completed. The story told was detailed and in chronological order. The students appeared to use the ALS to talk about an experience with the other group members. The participants used language and terminology that was familiar to the audience. There was little or no need to explain a term or phrase, the student just continued the story, almost expecting the peer group to follow the episode that was being explained. There was an expectation that everyone would fully understand, it was as if the participant took on the role of ‘storyteller’.

The uninterrupted narrative found in the ALS data suggests that the ALS provided the opportunity for the student to extend the story beyond a brief
summary. The narratives were detailed and descriptive, as shown in the following extract:

‘It is a massive thing as you’ve got to be really concentrating on those two pupils and then you’ve got another 30 in the class [suggestion]. What do you kind of do with them? [problem solving]
We got them playing 2 v 2 with the Afghanistani boys playing each other’ [continues to hypothesis]. (M1 – Action Learning Set – November)

The ALSs appeared to provide an opportunity for the student to question their own thoughts and beliefs, whereas the other oral reflective activity, the discussion group, enabled the individual to ask questions to the peer group. The discussion groups appeared to be useful for the students to ‘introduce’ a topic or concern but the discussion was often interrupted or altered by the views and opinions of others in the group. The discussion groups often produced more questions than answers. It was as if the students were seeking reassurance from the peer group. M7, F2 and F1 appeared to use the discussion group to ask a question directly to the other members of the group as shown when M7 asks: ‘were the other three girls benefiting from the lesson?’; F2 says: ‘What do you think?’ and F1 says: ‘Do you have to have a framework that is whole school?’;

‘They kept the same 3 people with her all the time, obviously the CB girl was getting involved all the time but were the other 3 girls benefiting from the lesson?[suggestion]’ (M7 – Action Learning Set – April)

‘What do you think?[suggestion] I think I do both I personally think individual feedback is better [problem solving] um I know group things are beneficial but if you say you need to do this a little bit better or this they get it after that. I think everyone should be targeted [hypothesis]. I think if you are polite to them they will be
polite to you – I think they will then do other things for you’. (F2 – Discussion Group – September)

‘Do you have to have a framework that is whole school? [suggestion] Can’t you have a personal framework [hypothesis]. They know it’s Mr X so they know how far they can push’. (F1 – Discussion Group – September)

Topics such as the rewards structure, discipline and departmental procedures were raised by the participants, usually as a whole-school concern, before relating the topic to a departmental or teaching issue and occasionally making the issue raised a personal concern. For example, F6 referred to a whole school ‘setting’ [streaming in academic ability] system, which appeared not to work for PE:

‘In R... the way PE groups are grouped together. It’s completely crazy because they come in their Math sets: sets 1 and 2 are together, 3 and 4 and then group 5 probably about 12 of them [problem]. The worst children in that year [in group 5] and they’ve all got learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties so most of them are on drugs to control their behaviour. So they are well, put into one class!’ (F6 – Discussion Group – January)

F6 had elected to ‘rant’ about the setting structure of the school. She failed to develop this situation as a problem or concern for herself or any relevant consequences. The situation was detached from her and the audience never really understood how the situation affected her directly. F2 followed a similar pattern of identifying a whole-school issue, which she did not relate directly to her own learning when she said:

‘I don’t see the point in the reward system [generic topic] Reward 1 is pointless. Go straight to reward 2. Penalty system was used which was better. PE warrants different behaviour [suggestion]. PE does
do these [rewards] differently because of the environment. It’s just different’. (F2 – Discussion Group – September)

F2 was concerned with the reward system and highlighted the difference between PE and other curriculum subjects. She did not relate the topic directly to her own personal development but suggested she could have an issue by generalising the comment. F2 frequently used this distancing tactic especially when in the company of her peer group.

However, M2 took a theme from the discussion group and then changed the tone of the story to talk about himself:

‘The rewards are pointless: extrinsic/intrinsic motivation. [Because] you have to adapt, you’re not going to be the best. The way that I teach best is when I am comfortable in my teaching style [suggestion] if you have to adapt it you’re not going to be so comfortable. A little bit more nervous and not so comfortable so you’re not going to teach so well’. (M2 – Discussion Group – September)

This strategy of highlighting a common theme from the discussion group and then relating the topic to their personal development was also adopted by M6. He said:

‘In terms of learning outcomes [generic topic] I’ve looked at differentiation in my planning [suggestion] and I’ve really focused on the higher achievers, middle and low achievers at first I’ve just pitched in the middle [hypothesis]: LAZY! [I’m] doing that now [differentiation] and I’m enjoying that [personal topic]. I like that confidence in delivery [because I’ve planned] with me it’s really obvious’. (M6 – Discussion Group – January)

F3 directly asked a question to the discussion group before she admitted her personal concerns:
'How do you get non-participants involved? [generic topic] I really struggle with this and get continual criticism’ [personal topic]. (F3 – Discussion Group – October)

F3 raised a general school issue, the engagement of all learners, but she rapidly brought the topic to focus on her own development. She asked a question, which would be a common concern to her peer group, and then instantly declared her own weakness and vulnerability.

The ALS data highlighted the two students who demonstrated enhanced reflection whereas the data from the discussion groups showed students being more factual and seeking reassurance from others in the group. However, the interviews provided the opportunity for a participant to acknowledge the influence of another student, as shown by F3 when she said:

‘I think writing the evaluations help [suggestion] but I think I can kind of do it [reflect] without writing things down [hypothesis]. Also it did help having D... there as well, because I could talk to him. We would always, always talk about what happened in a lesson and what we could do, like strategies we could think of together [testing]. That was probably the best way I reflected on lessons’’. (F3 – Interview – August)

The presence of another student in the same school is appreciated and has become an integral part of F3’s reflection process. F3 appeared to be demonstrating an alternative context for reflection by talking to a member of the peer group within the school context. She appeared to have found this experience worthwhile and immediately referred to the experience as a form of reflection, which could demonstrate some of her understanding of the process.
I acknowledged the effect of the audience in the discussion groups, ALSs and interview situation. The audience may have caused the participants to ‘act’ or tell a story for an effect or to signal an alternative or possibly controversial view. I found this ‘acting’ role was occasionally evident in the language or type of speech used. Fairclough (1992) highlighted the different ‘frames’ of speech through the discourse used, for example interview style, everyday style, family style and how the various frames of conversation can produce very different topics. In this instance the students used an interview style of conversation even in the discussion groups and ALSs because they possibly felt slightly uncomfortable or at ‘work’ rather than totally relaxed in a home situation. In other words the students appeared to modify their speech according to the audience (Potter and Wetherall, 1987).

The reflective learning activities provided an opportunity to tell a story, which gave both the listener and storyteller a visual picture of the experience. However, there was a delay between the actual event and the story being told. During this time delay the participant had time to recollect thoughts, emotions, value, and consider the language used. This elongated pause between the event and either the written or oral storytelling possibly allowed the student time to reflect and place the narrative in context. This is an important consideration in teacher preparation because the detail of the story enabled the participant to consider all events and possibilities, with five of the students moving on to show Dewey reflection through the narrative.

In the discussion groups all but one of the participants selected a common or generic theme to discuss. This may have been an attempt to satisfy the perceived interest of the cohort by considering a topic that was relevant to the whole group. It could also indicate a fear of admitting any personal issue or concern directly related to the theme. It could be suggested that the participant was raising the issue to discover the reaction or understand the interpretations of the others. If the participant perceived the discussion to be positive and gain the empathy of the audience the student may proceed to admit a level of vulnerability.
In summary the oral learning activities promoted the use of narrative, which may have hindered Dewey reflection. As a practitioner I now encourage the use of a story to initiate the reflection process through superficial engagement. However, the student teacher then needs time and preparation and in some cases guidance, to progress superficial engagement into oral reflection. The ALSs as opposed to the discussion groups or interviews provided the most effective environment for Dewey reflection and I feel a more structured approach to the ALS would equate to more reflection.

**Written reflective activity**

The journals were primarily lesson evaluations or general comments about the lesson. This may be a result of continually expecting student teachers to write lesson evaluations on the lesson pro-forma. Eight of the 13 students used their journal to review a lesson. The written descriptions within the journal were factual. This is a key finding and does contradict the research of both Walker (1985) and Fook (2010), who used reflective journals to enhance learning. In this research 12 of the participants did not use the journal to reflect and formalise their learning. It was only F1 that demonstrated reflection in the journal.

The data from the journals were factual and were similar to a lesson evaluation, for example, M2 provided a range of comments that focused on key educational issues such as learning objectives and assessment criteria but did not show how these issues impacted on his personal learning, as shown:

‘Learning objectives said and achieved as every child performed a four balanced sequence by the end of the lesson. Built up to a sequence, by first trying out various two person balances. Did this [achieved a sequence] with use of cards, given out displaying various balances.’ (M2 – Journal – 6 October)
‘Two pupils demonstrated each dance. Preparation for actual assessment. Each pupil asked to comment on Dance, only strengths. Something different from every pupil’. (M2 – Journal – 25 November)

M2 described the structure of the lesson and the mechanistic nature of the tasks, rather than tell a story or reflect on his own learning. M2 appears to be conforming to the expectations of an evaluation rather than reflection. F1 was the exception to the rule as she did provide some longer, more reflective paragraphs in the journal. This paragraph was written within the first 3 months of the training year:

‘J... [teacher] was extremely kind to M... [pupil] today and is extremely discreet about the use of M...’s hearing aid [suggestion]. It was touching to see J... being so discrete about M...'s disability. This is the first time I've seen this side of J... and my respect has grown. I can’t help but wonder if M... gets the provision she needs due to the nature of her personality and less to do with the need they require. M... is extremely quiet and timid and always tries hard in PE. I wonder if she were more aggressive or disruptive in lessons whether she would receive the attention she now gets?’ [hypothesis]
(F1 – Journal – November)

This paragraph from F1’s journal was important because F1 was one of the participants who went on to demonstrate enhanced reflection. These paragraphs provided a brief chapter of a longer series of events. She attempted to use the journal for written reflection even at an early stage in the training year. It was interesting to note that the style of writing adopted by F1 was very different from the short sharp statements of M2. F1 demonstrated some level of emotion by using the word ‘touching’. She used long sentences, added detail and used the repetition of words such as ‘extremely’ and ‘discreet’ to create an atmosphere. F1 names the child and teacher, which gave the narrative a personal touch. F1 also presented both sides to a situation. She was rarely opinionated but seemed to provide a
balanced scene or argument. This supported the theories suggested by Brookfield (1995) and Mason (2002), who felt enhanced reflection involved a ‘conscious weighing’ of different alternatives or opinions before the participant could come to a conclusion. F1 was honest and reveals some respect for the teacher, which may demonstrate F1 had little respect for the teacher before this event. By repeatedly using the term ‘extremely’ in a very short paragraph, F1 appeared to show the actions of the teacher obviously impressed her. Unfortunately F1 did not record anything in her journal after the Christmas break.

The written data found in the journals were disjointed and usually linked to facts, which could be used in an assignment rather than personal thoughts or views on experience. The written data contained concise statements, which immediately referred to the point being made. As the written activity produced very little reflection, consideration should be given to the ‘role’ or effectiveness of journals or diaries within a reflective learning strategy.

Initially the students were asked to start their written journal with a reflection or statement from their experience in education. They were asked to leave any ‘emotional inheritance’ behind them before starting the training year and the new phase of their life. The first statement was written at the front of the journal during the initial phase of the PGCE year with all students referring to the relationship between themselves and a former teacher.

The statements mainly referred to positive experiences, but one (M2) was negative. The positive comments demonstrated a high regard for a former teacher–pupil relationship and provided an insight into the influence the teacher had on the participant’s career choice. The students referred to the teacher–pupil relationship in a positive and secure manner. This was an interesting finding because it demonstrated the influence of a former teacher and also provided an insight into the individual’s school experience and an indication of any emotional value towards teaching. This supports Mezirow (1983), who stated that adults always return to their childhood in order to
‘ground’ a new experience within a familiar framework. The schoolteacher would appear to be the most influential character in a student’s memory of schooling. The subject and peer-group members are mentioned but only as a secondary consideration. I found it interesting that the students provided the initial journal entry, which had an emotional context and did reveal some vulnerability and yet after that point the written comments became factual and descriptive. This finding would certainly alter the approach to a reflective learning strategy in future as I would still encourage an initial written section but then reduce the point of input to the journal until a break in the school experience when the students return to the university setting. At this point in the calendar the students could be asked to pause, look back and refer to influential aspects of their training up to that point.

The emotional context of the initial written section of three female participants referred to ‘help’, ‘faith’ and being ‘alone’, whereas two of the male students referred to ‘inspiration’. This may be a gender issue or an indication of personal vulnerability. The following extracts from the first section of the journal demonstrated the difference between female and male attitude:

‘This made me realise that extra help is available and teachers really want to help you achieve’. (F3 – Journal)

‘The teacher had faith in our abilities’. (F2 – Journal)

‘A teacher pulled me to one side and offered me their condolence and offered me a shoulder to cry on and gave total support. This incident made me realise that 1) I was not alone and support was there if I needed it. 2) That teachers are human and care about our wellbeing as well as our education’. (F1 – Journal)

‘My tutor always gave me encouragement …. Hugely inspiring... Always wanted to try and please him ... Inspired me to be a teacher’. (M1 – Journal)
‘...Mr B... has been an inspiration to me throughout my time during PE’. (M3 – Journal)

F1 was prepared to ‘share’ a very personal experience and M1 indicated how he was anxious to ‘please’ the teacher. Both statements demonstrate emotion through the choice of words and the format. F1 listed the outcomes of her experience and M1 used the term inspirational twice in close proximity. M1 also showed an element of vulnerability within the teacher–pupil relationship. Interestingly, it was M1 and F1 that both demonstrated the early stages of enhanced reflection, and this may have indicated that both participants were more aware of the teaching context and had a better understanding of their own personal learning. M1 was trying to ‘please’ and F1 talks about having a shoulder to ‘cry on’, indicating a form of sadness and anxiety. This could indicate their openness to share and ability to reflect later in the course. F1 and M1 continued to provide a focus on their personal learning throughout the research period.

In the initial written section all the participants made reference to a previous episode in their life that may or may not influence their experience as a student teacher. They had ‘framed’ the period of their life and provided a starting point from which to reflect. McDrury and Alterio (2002) suggest that individuals naturally retell events from their own experience, hence it was not surprising that all participants returned to a childhood experience. Obviously the age difference of these participants from secondary school to current age is not vast but could prove that when asked to reflect, young teachers quite readily return to their own schooling.

It appeared the participants like to refer to moments in time when they had confidence in a situation. The majority of the participants returned to their own school experience, but F2 went back to her work as a ‘coach’ rather than a pupil or teacher and cites the tension between the two environments. It was difficult to ascertain from this situation if she felt more confident in
the former context or if she perceived the gap between the two contexts too
great to conquer.

The one negative comment found in the initial written section referred to a
former school teacher but focused on the teaching style rather than the
teacher–pupil relationship. M2 wrote:

‘The teacher dictated to us from a book for the whole lesson for
about 6 weeks. It got so mundane and boring that eventually I just
gave up. I didn’t do anything. Boring topic and didn’t understand
what was going on. I have learnt to become more inspirational with
the work that I will set pupils stimulating and challenging
assignments to keep them interested and help them learn more
effectively. I never want my pupils to be as bored as I was!’ (M2 –
Journal)

M2 continually used the word ‘I’ and often repeated words in close
proximity to emphasise a point. The terms ‘didn’t’ and ‘boring’ are written
in short, consecutive sentences. The short sentences and abrupt punctuation
made the paragraph read in a fast and furious but negative way. The length
of the sentences then extended and he provided a ‘calmer’ approach to his
future teaching. Referring to the content of the lessons suggested that M2
placed more importance on content than on the teacher–pupil relationship
created.

The transcripts from M2 went on to show description, unjustified
conclusions, some stages of Dewey’s framework, but no enhanced
reflection. It would appear that a student who initially showed a negative
attitude towards his own education and failed to refer to any teacher–pupil
relationship did not progress through Dewey’s stages. M2 only made
suggestions, created problems to solve and a justification of his own testing
without any variations or different options.
The journal completion was disappointing and raises doubts over the value of an unstructured written reflective learning activity for PGCE PE students. This was an important discovery and should be noted by those interested in teacher preparation. The journal completion was limited, suggesting the students did not value the written activity. I would like to suggest the participants may have associated ‘written’ work with an academic assignment or a piece of work that may be judged, or viewed the journal as another form of evaluation. Alternatively the students may not have had sufficient time to complete the journal and this activity may have been more effective if it was linked to an academic piece of work or the students given time to complete a section on each occasion they were at university. I also feel it is important to note that the participants in this research were PGCE PE students who due to the nature of their specialist subject may prefer oral or practical methods of learning.

These findings identified two areas of concern when using a reflective journal in teacher education. First, it would appear that students have to be taught how to use a journal in order to learn from the process and second the student’s perception of the journal needs to be identified. The journals were provided and completion was encouraged but the end product was not clearly linked to long-term learning. Student teachers appeared to find it difficult to understand the difference between evaluating a lesson and reflecting on their own learning in the journals. Overall the participants demonstrated a lack of understanding of their own learning process.

The lack of journal completion and the difference in the type of content between an emotional narrative to a factual lesson evaluation should be noted and used to influence the structure of a reflective learning strategy within teacher preparation. It is vital to consider the context of the written work and I would recommend the introduction of guidance and perhaps a framework for the participants to make sense of what is expected of them. Reflective journals could be used to provide a starting point prior to the training year. This is an exercise that could be repeated at the conclusion of the first school placement and then once again at the end of the training.
This would provide the student with the opportunity to consider influential, emotional moments in both their schooling and teaching career. The focus on key educational experiences may prevent the journal being used for brief lesson evaluations.

In hindsight the lack of journal completion was not surprising. First, the expectations of the University, school-based mentor and indeed Ofsted are to complete formal lesson evaluations. The institutional conditioning of writing to achieve high grades and a reluctance to ‘share’ personal information with a person of perceived power who may read the journal may have resulted in the student undermining the purpose of the reflective journal as a learning tool. Lesson evaluations tend to be factual and do not necessarily encourage reflection. Second, the participants and PE specialists who have a practical background may prefer to verbalise their thoughts rather than express their feelings in a written form. The use of the written journal may not have been introduced or ‘framed’ in a way to encourage completion or reflection and in hindsight I should have heeded the warning of Richardson (2000), Lillis (2001) and Burke (2008), who stated if the written reflection is poorly framed, the written work will not be accepted by the students and they will not value the reflective journal or any subsequent learning. Richardson (2000) stressed that writing is a pedagogical tool, which enables an individual to create meaning but only if the use of a reflective journal is implemented with empathy, understanding and reassurance. Although Richert (1990), Morrison (1996), Moon (2005) and Parsons and Stephenson (2005) all used reflective journals or diaries with either student nurses or student teachers to successfully encourage learning, I feel my introduction to the journal lacked purpose. I now understand that a written document usually conforms to a given situation or context: writing for a purpose and the introduction of writing for the purpose of learning from a personal experience may be unfamiliar to an individual who has spent their schooling and university years writing for an academic reward. Perhaps the students placed academic writing into a different context and did not understand the expectations I was placing on this kind of practice. I deliberately did not provide guidance or a framework and I may have
unintentionally confused the students and it may have been more beneficial for both the research and the student to introduce the journal differently.

I am now conscious that some forms of writing can actually ‘exclude’ students because they are only familiar with essay or narrative writing and a change of context to a reflective journal could have resulted in a negative response (Lillis, 2001), especially as the journal was not embedded into practice. As part of the longitudinal action research process I have since considered Burke and Jackson’s (2007) suggestion of reviewing ‘other’ ways of writing, their advantages and how writing could be used to enhance connection and involvement in the learning process (Lillis, 2001).

The written word forms a permanent record and I now wonder if the permanency may have evoked a fear of the unknown: the audience response. Burke (2008) considered the academic boundaries, which can inhibit rather than promote learning, and I suggest academic expectation and a lack of familiarity are some of the boundaries, which may have constrained or impacted on the journal completion.

4.7 The use of narrative

It was apparent that the data revealed the students’ use of the narrative to consider their experience, particularly in the oral reflective activities. The detail of the narrative was an unexpected finding. The fourth part of this chapter focuses on the findings associated with the fourth research question:

To what extent do students use narrative to reflect?

All participants at some point in the research told a story. The length and clarification within the story varied between activities. The ALSs produced detailed, informative narratives whereas the discussion groups, interviews and journals produced short episodes of a story, which appeared as chapters in the participant’s life.
I incorporated the theme of narrative as a research question for two reasons: first, all the participants use of a full and coherent narrative to construct an experience and second, the personal viewpoint expressed during the storytelling. I was conscious that through telling a story the student naturally commits to a particular view. This view was ‘noticing’ events, procedures and issues. The use of narrative supports Mason’s (2002) notion of ‘pigeon-holing’ information as the narrative may be unpolished or unfinished, which may enable more reflection than a finished, well thought-out story. By using narrative the student had a window of opportunity to share with an audience an experience or situation, but it is the participant who decided which episode of their life to share. On occasions I became more interested in ‘why’ the story was being told than the actual content of the story. It became evident that narrative was a naturally occurring mechanism in the search for meaning (Cortazzi, 1993) in the lives of these student teachers.

This study provides an additional insight into the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who stressed the ‘power’ of narrative and Elbaz (1990), who felt the use of storytelling suited the profession of teaching. In this research each reflective learning activity produced a series of narratives from the students’ experience but the stories were told in different ways. Some were straightforward descriptions and others provided detailed background material. The logical order of the story was an interesting point because it meant the participant had stopped and considered the event sufficiently to place the events in the correct order. The following example showed the participant establishing the groups (characters) and the setting (time and place). The student suggested a problem and ends the short statement with an evaluative clause, which provided a link to an emotional problem that he could reflect upon:

‘Two classes in Year 8 one is good and one is bottom set in Year 8. The whole bottom class were on the SEN register. I took my higher set out to do Football to do drills and they loved it. When I took my bottom set out the class teacher said you can’t do drills! Just let
them play a game and they can break it down – for me that was quite a struggle.’ (M3 – Interview – July)

I was interested in the work of Kohler Riessman (1993), who suggests we naturally create an order when we construct texts. The order of events may be straightforward and logical but on the other hand the student may confuse the order of events. This confusion could have an impact on their personal reflection and ultimate development or may be irrelevant. The chronicle of events contains an evaluation of each part of the sequence whereas the evaluative section of narrative analysis provides an overview of the events as a complete story. This example showed the participant providing a summary. He was concluding the previous events and closing the narrative.

‘They always used to forget their kit but now they all got changed. It was quite interesting because they started to enjoy it. They were working as part of a team and enjoying it. They all had a goal and were determined.’ (M3 – Interview – July)

This evaluative phrase contained a statement and then supporting beliefs, i.e. ‘they all had a goal’. On occasions the evaluative statements and consequent supporting beliefs were complex and numerous.

This example from F4 was interesting because of the order of the story:

‘I discovered that the only help she had been given was a Polish/English dictionary. It was just shocking, the only words she understood was “toilet” and “I don’t understand”. Every time I spoke to the teacher about it, he didn’t seem to care very much. I said to them [the teacher] she didn’t know how to use the dictionary. At the beginning I didn’t know what to do [suggestion], but by the end of the week I would look up the Polish in the dictionary and she would look up the English [problem solving/hypothesis].’ (F4 – Action Learning Set – November)
She outlined the chronological order of events from the girl being given the dictionary, the words the girl knew, how F4 became concerned and then F4’s reaction to the situation. She concluded her statement by referring back to the use of the dictionary returning the story to the starting point. F4 selected a topic of conversation which could be regarded insignificant to the general concern for the child but she prioritised and reinforced her chosen topic (the dictionary) in a clear logical way.

Another example of how the students used narrative came from F2 who told the audience about last week before moving on to the most recent events. This was important because the sequence of the story enabled the audience to understand the order of events. In other words F2 ‘frames’ the events in an historical order: ‘He was actually excluded [suspended from school], when he was reintroduced, we [the class] were doing Dance. He gets emotional really angry if he can’t do it’ (F2 – Action Learning Set – November). The audience was given a very brief summary of the child concerned, i.e. exclusion and then reintroduction, before F2 started to talk about the main issue, which was the child’s anger problems. F2 did not name the child concerned but she did provide background material, which informed the listener. F2 implied evidence hoping the peer group would realise the boy concerned had caused other members of staff problems because he was excluded. She hoped the audience would understand the implications for her as a trainee teacher when he returned to the class.

M3 also provided a logical order to the story but in a distinctive fashion by using short, sharp words: ‘I used examples like look at J…. She has got her arms crossed. [I gave] a bit of praise. [I used] lots of stickers’ (M3 – Action Learning Set – November). M3 introduced the child, the problem and how he resolved the situation in very few words and yet it was very easy to understand what happened in the classroom. M3 named a pupil but in a very different context. The use of the name ‘J….’ did not appear to resemble any particular child. M3 could have been using an example to create a visual
image that would assist the audience in understanding that he was trying to utilise a positive behaviour strategy rather than a negative one.

F1 and F2 provided specific examples of pupils who have caused concern. Each participant gave background material that assisted the audience’s understanding of forthcoming events. This supported the theory of Mezirow (1983) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), who highlighted ‘affective reflexivity’: looking back, considering and then moving forward. The examples from these data confirm the use of Tolan’s (1988) analepsis, which is a technique of summarising previous events in order to move forward. The students were placing the event into the context, i.e. providing relevant background evidence before continuing. I believe this helps the student to place their learning from any subsequent reflection into the context of their overall learning. The participants seemed to feel obliged to set the context for the story. This was a characteristic of narrative and a technique often found in storybooks, which may explain why the participant had selected to tell the story in this way.

However, F3 adopted a different strategy in the following extract:

‘I had 2 boys from the boys class with SEN come into the girls’ class every single lesson so that essentially became their class. There were 25 girls and these 2 boys. The reason the teachers decided to move them in (to my class), was because they weren’t achieving and they were getting bullied in the boys’ class.’ (F3 – Action Learning Set – November)

F3 described a class situation, highlighted two boys causing her concern and then continued to explain. The explanation of why the boys had been moved into the class could or should occur before the situation is described. However, F3 changed the natural order and provided the detail later. She referred to the pupils involved but there did not appear to be any personal connection between her and the two boys. F3 referred to the boys as ‘these boys’ as if the boys were objects that were causing her anxiety. F3 distanced
herself from the preparatory statement in her narrative by using the term
‘these’ and changes the emphasis away from the pupils and towards her own
teaching.

It soon became apparent that the participants were sharing their experiences
in the form of a story. The narratives were focused on themselves and their
classroom teaching and did not include any conceptual thinking. The
content of the account was subject based. The student always used subject-
specific language and sometimes named the pupil involved, often providing
a brief history of the child concerned. The participants often provided this
background material before starting the narrative. Kohler Riessman (1993)
says that we naturally create an order when we construct texts, but she does
not emphasise if the storyteller will provide any necessary context to the
story.

It was also interesting to note the students’ use of a ‘meta-discursive
marker’. The students would mark a point of the story, move backwards in
the narrative, before returning to the original point to continue the tale. The
technique of moving back in time before moving forward was a common
theme in all the oral reflective activities. Once the historical context had
been provided, the story continued in chronological order with descriptive
additions.

F1 used the technique of highlighting a concern when she referred to a
pupil’s behaviour and then clarifies the issues by mentioning ‘a bit chatty
and stuff’. This detail could have been omitted from the narrative but F1
obviously found it sufficiently important to mention.

F2 also provided detail of an event through a functional approach possibly
designed to ‘shock’ the audience: ‘I gleamed from Year 6 he was coming up
[to secondary school] with behavioural problems but he hasn’t been
diagnosed. But I think he is very close to being Aspergers and I have him in
my lesson where he has strangled another boy’ (F2 – Action Learning Set –
November). F2 told the audience a boy had ‘behavioural problems’, she
moved back in time to suggest the primary school did not diagnose the problem before mentioning her concern that the pupil attempted to ‘strangle another boy’. She did not make a fuss about the statement and mentioned the event almost in passing but she did attempt to excuse him or justify his actions by mentioning the medical term ‘Aspergers’. The sequence of events as portrayed by F2 could be designed to ‘shock’ the audience, build a crescendo to her story, or display the start of ‘teacher thinking’.

The narrative of both the oral reflective learning activities contained both personal and detailed information and adds to Russell and Munbys’ (1992) belief that a teacher’s ‘personal practical knowledge’ is narratively constructed. It was Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who viewed the power of narrative, in both a positive and negative way, and I feel the participants were ‘stretching’ the reality of the story because they felt comfortable. The brief verbal stories resembled episodes or chapters of the student’s life. I found the detail of the narrative very intriguing. The story always had a brief introduction when the scene was set and the issue was placed into context and the characters were usually introduced very early in the account as can be seen here: ‘The pupils know where they stand, where I stand I’m not authoritative and I’ve got that boundary just right’. The children and context of managing behaviour have been introduced in the opening sentence. This was usually followed by a description of the character or an area of concern that brought the character to life in the mind of the audience such as: ‘You have fun with them’ provided an image of a good-natured environment. The participant then ‘guided’ the listener through the tale providing detail through all the stages of development. All events were clearly expressed such as ‘I’ve developed a lot of cards with diagrams’ as the participant left nothing to the imagination of the audience. The example below shows F5 considering not only her learning style but that of the children. The narrative was easy to follow and contained detailed explanations and interestingly many cases of unjustified conclusions:

‘The pupils know where they stand, where I stand I’m not authoritative and I’ve got that boundary just right. You have fun
with them, you make a joke but you know instantly when to put that
discipline in to tell them to stop. So the feedback from the teachers
has helped me a lot because I’ve learnt about what I need to do
[what are my] areas of weakness in sports like Badminton and it got
pointed out in my first lesson. So I went back and researched
Badminton looked on the internet and in books and even had a play
around in the sports hall myself just to get used it. We talk about
teaching styles but each kid [pupil] has a different learning need and
you have Audio, Visual [and], Kinaesthetic. It has been picked up
that I am very Auditory but also very visual and I use a lot of
resources. I’ve developed a lot of cards with diagrams, tables for the
kids to fill out and I’ve picked up on that kids love that. They don’t
like to be sat around and preached to. They like to hear, “here is a
sheet its self-discovery off you go”, give them 3/4 minutes then go
around and give them the auditory bit and go through the teaching
points with them. I feel that my outcomes are right because when I
get to the end [of the lesson] in the plenary all the kids have got their
hands up. I don’t ask questions I just ask them to put their hand up if
they know the answer and all the hands go up who is confident
enough to give me the teaching points. Some hands go down but
most stay up because they are confident enough. I’m not picking on
anyone I will then start selecting and the teachers like this because it
gives the confidence to the kids and yourself! You’re not in charge
you are letting the kids have some leeway. I feel I’ve developed as a
person and in the way I teach has changed as well: from being very
auditory to very visual’. (F5 – Action Learning Set – April)

F5 appeared to be very confident in her actions and provided a summary at
the end to show how she had learnt from experience: ‘I feel I’ve developed
as a person and the way I teach has changed as well’. In the following
extract F2 used statements instead of questions, making it difficult to
ascertain if she was looking for an answer or just reassurance. She also
failed to provide a conclusion to the story.
I didn’t know what to do with it and I was lucky there were other teachers there that dealt with it. He was actually excluded. When he was reintroduced we were doing Dance. He gets emotional: really angry, if he can’t do it. I’ve spoken to him and he said “I just get really, really, angry if I can’t do something I lash out at someone”. I went to the teacher and said what do I do to get him involved in this lesson? And she said “just leave him”. I sort of looked at him and thought how can I just leave him, but she said just leave him and let him do what he wants to do. Then that’s disrupting everyone else because he just wants to speak to his friends. Well, he is then disrupting everyone’s learning. I don’t therefore know how to integrate him into the classroom and I haven’t really been given any help with it. I don’t know if he has been diagnosed with anything or just ignored. No one really knows – he hasn’t been identified’. (F2 – Action Learning Set – April)

The narrative followed a clear, logical sequence with no surprise elements. The short narrative contained many key factors: a pupil’s situation, a novice teacher’s situation, an educational dilemma of integration or diagnosis as well as student-teacher support. This variety of topics meant the narrative was not a ‘rant’ of issues or concerns but more of an interpretation where the student addressed several problems that appeared to hold equal importance.

This study contributes to the work of others relating to the use of narrative and provides further awareness of the detail student teachers gave to the narratives. The student often included detail that could be excluded without detracting from the overall picture. This level of detail showed a depth of thought and an ability to recall the finer points. This was demonstrated by the comments in bold in the following extracts:

‘when it comes to the games he doesn’t really get in involved. He stands in the corner with his hands in his pockets he doesn’t really get involved’. (M2 – Action Learning Set – November)
‘We tried to explain to him but what can you do, he shouldn’t be in school really, he is included in lessons. Thing is now since that lesson he won’t take part in anything.’ (M5 – Discussion Group – January)

‘The class themselves are mixed ability and the lads are typical lads. They like a chat and a giggle’. (F1 – Action Learning Set – April)

‘So the first thing I decided to do was always write them down so I would take a whiteboard in and write them down’. (F3 – Action Learning Set – April)

‘In basketball I find the best way to do it is to let them play as much games as possible – in my first lesson I let them play relays and stuff’. (M1 – Action Learning Set – April)

The level of detail enhanced the narrative and produced a more vivid image of the episode. The student may have felt the narrative was ‘boring’ or insignificant to an audience and therefore needed enhancement or the participant may be so engrossed in the storytelling exercise the finer details were a natural part of the account.

The least amount of narrative was found in the written work in the journals. This was brief and often summaries of events or elements of learning. The exception in terms of detail was the initial comment found at the start of the journal. The short paragraphs provided a very brief insight into a previous educational experience. These short pieces of written work were concise and to the point but included an emotional element and provided more detail than was perhaps necessary. The participants gave sufficient information to create a complete scene of events. The students provided short, additional comments that added to the complexity of the story. The reason I found this interesting was the additional time and effort it must have taken to complete the paragraph in such detail. The students appeared to have spent extra time
and given attention to providing extended sentences that enhanced the narrative. For example, M1 writes: ‘I didn’t get on with one teacher in PSRVE’ (M1 – Journal). The reference to the subject ‘PSRVE’ was an additional comment that was not really essential to the understanding of the paragraph. It was therefore interesting to question why the detail was added. There was obviously something about the PSRVE lessons that caused M1 concern. The negative relationship he had formed with the teacher may have influenced his opinion of the lesson and its content.

M3 portrayed an image of the game of rugby when he writes: ‘We thought it would just be a bit of fun rolling around in the mud’ (M3 – Journal). He could have simply stated the game being played. He provided a ‘colourful’ image of a scene from the game, providing more detail than required. It could be argued that M3 would not provide as much detail in the oral reflective learning activities because he would appreciate the peer groups’ knowledge of the game of rugby. It would appear M3 was writing the journal for a naïve audience and he was prepared to demonstrate his innocent understanding of the game when he was young.

F1 and F2 both used colloquial terms to refer to situations. F2 used the words ‘two full barrels’ when she wrote: ‘Mr Harris gave this other teacher two full barrels and stood up for us and our sporting ability’ (F2 – Journal). This detail once again provided a visual image of someone shooting another person with a gun. F2 may have selected such words to provide an effect. She may have been anticipating who was going to read the journal or simply writing her comments down to have an effect on herself. In a similar way to M3, F2 appeared to be writing for a purpose, to provide a visual image to the reader. F1 on the other hand, selected a much softer image when she wrote: ‘offered me a shoulder to cry on’ (F1 – Journal). The colloquial saying and visual image provided additional detail to the transcript.

The detail and description contained in the writing of the initial comment in the journals were surprising. F1 and M1 used the first person whereas F2 and M3 used the third person but appeared to associate themselves with
their former classmates. The detail found in these short descriptions was a common theme, which was extended in the oral learning activities. This early elaboration and extension of a sentence provided an interesting view of the student and could be used by tutors within teacher preparation to gain an emotional insight into the previous experiences of the students.

The exceptions to the norm were F3 and M2, who did not elaborate or extend the sentences in the first section of the journal. Their initial comments were factual and to the point. F3 and M2 both referred to a former teacher or teaching situation but in a formal manner. This may be because both of these students were conscious the journal was a permanent record of a previous experience or their previous experiences may have been negative. It is not surprising that the journal contained little use of narrative especially as writing is a time-consuming activity, but as narrative does encourage students to superficially engage with the reflection process, practitioners in teacher preparation are advised to give more time and encouragement to students to write a full and coherent narrative to develop the reflection of the student teachers.

In summary, the narrative was used extensively by all the participants but only in the oral activities. The detail and complexity of the story varied between the reflective learning activities. The majority of the detailed narratives only occurred in the ALS. The participant would tell one narrative during one ALS and did not continue the same story across two reflective learning activities. There was never any mention or recall to a former ALS. Each narrative was an individual chapter of the participants’ school experience. This gave the impression of a set of discontinuous units over the research period.

4.8 Summary discussion
This project was a qualitative exploration of student teacher reflection within which I set out to answer the four questions (as shown on page 95). A reflective learning strategy was introduced as a pedagogical approach and Dewey’s five stages of learning was used as a framework. The initial section
of the journal was used as a starting point of assessment with the data gained from the combination of the other learning activities providing the final assessment. I understand that it was preferable to use the same research tool at both the start and finish of the project but as the initial section formed part of the introduction to the PGCE programme it was not possible to repeat the same exercise.

The data analysis revealed only three participants who showed signs of an increased ability to reflect progressing from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection and two participants demonstrated the levels of superficial engagement, Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection. The others (8) failed to progress beyond superficial engagement.

*Superficial engagement – non-reflective dialogue*

My interpretation of the data identified a stage of pre-reflection, a level between no reflection and Dewey reflection. I do not feel Dewey or Moon provide enough explanation of the process before individuals notice or suggest an experience. Dewey provided stages called ‘suggestion’ and ‘problem’, but my findings indicate that individuals firstly start to engage with an experience through describing, mulling over and drawing unjustified conclusions before starting to learn. The identification of superficial engagement adds an additional layer to reflection and provides greater clarity and understanding of reflection.

Identifying three clear elements of superficial engagement (description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions) gives greater depth of explanation and starts to provide an awareness of how a learner could progress from being a dependent learner who applies (Bloom, 1979) information to their learning to a learner who starts to analyse and moves towards independent learning including reflection. I would argue that superficial engagement adds to the theories of Dewey and Moon and helps to explain the early development of learning through reflection. I feel this awareness could assist those who are concerned with encouraging reflection in novice professionals.
I felt superficial engagement could be a ‘tipping’ point toward reflecting through Dewey’s stages because the participants had started to engage in the reflection process. Student teachers on a PGCE training course will need to learn a great deal in a very short space of time and will also have to adjust to a new way of learning. Many students will find this transition to experiential learning very difficult and in fact some may never succeed. I feel it is important to note these pre-reflective activities because all participants showed description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions. The majority of student teachers are attempting to grasp a different style of learning and the identification of three early stages will assist lecturers in the pedagogical process. In order to personalise the learning for the student teacher I now have confidence that allowing an individual to describe an event and raise questions will provide a starting point from which lecturers can provide guidance on how to reflect. In summary, I would place a teaching value on the process of superficial engagement in order to personalise the learning for the student teacher.

*Reflection through Dewey’s stages – reflective dialogue*

Using Dewey’s stages of learning my interpretation of the data identified Dewey reflection from five of the 13 participants. The lack of Dewey reflection raises several points of interest: a concern that some student teachers are graduating not having shown the ability to reflect, the effectiveness of Dewey’s stages as an analytical tool, a consideration which will be dealt with in the conclusion, my use of Dewey as a framework, my interpretation of the data and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the reflective learning strategy with a consideration that reflection may be occurring outside of the activities.

*Enhanced reflection*

Two of the five participants who reflected through Dewey’s stages showed enhanced reflection in all five of my categories. The use of Dewey’s framework provided a simple analytic structure that was developed and extended. My category of enhanced reflection, which shows similarities to
Boud et al. (1985) and McIntyre et al. (1994), added a further dimension to the work of Dewey. My category provides an additional layer to Dewey’s stages with the combined elements of context, distance, ownership, power and emotion being a possible indicator of the individual creating their own identity and progressing to being a reflective practitioner because the individual has demonstrated the capacity to think in a conceptual way. I would suggest there is a link between my category of enhanced reflection and Moon’s (2010) term ‘critical thinking’.

The five elements were selected as a result of the prior study with the acknowledgement of others with perceived power being the most frequently cited. All participants, even those who only showed superficial engagement, made reference to a power situation or a person who they perceived held a powerful position. The topic of power may be a useful topic to develop and use as a starting point to persuade those who only superficially engage to progress to Dewey reflection. The frequency of the topic indicates the importance of power relationships for the student teacher, supporting the suggestion of Boud (2010) and Karban and Smith (2010). The student/mentor relationship in the development of student learning is a key factor in the way teachers will be trained in the future and this should be noted and used by those responsible for teacher preparation.

The data revealed only a few examples of a student providing a distance between themselves and the situation. This may be a result of the predominant use of narrative. Narrative promoted superficial engagement but appeared to hinder critical thinking, possibly because the participants used the term ‘I’, making the narrative subjective and failing to distance themselves from the topic. This is an area for future consideration.

In summary, enhanced reflection gives an additional level to reflection and provides an insight to the way the individual is thinking. With this knowledge the provider responsible for teacher preparation will be able to personalise the learning for the student teacher.
**Progression through the levels of reflection**

The longitudinal data revealed five participants progressed from superficial engagement, which was evident in the initial section of the journal, to Dewey reflection and two of those showed enhanced reflection. The results have revealed the relative success of the learning activities used in this study to increase the capacity of reflection for at least three participants.

This study was a qualitative exploration of student reflection but the work also analysed a series of reflective learning activities that could be used for reflective practice. The reflective learning strategy was designed to encourage reflection and the results gained could be relevant for CPD programmes for practising teachers as well as for those involved in teacher preparation. The reflective learning activities are a way of creating opportunity for reflective dialogue.

**Reflective learning strategy – oral ALS**

The pedagogical approach to this research was the introduction of a reflective learning strategy, which included ALSs. The ALSs provided an opportunity for the participants to verbalise their experiences. The participants were given time and space (Hunt, 2010) to stop and think critically (Brockbank and McGill, 2004) about their school placement. The ALSs empowered each participant (Faith, 1994), giving the same opportunity to speak and possibly showed a familiarity to a sporting situation, which could be related to by the PE students.

The majority of the data produced in the ALS were narrative. The stories were full and coherent and demonstrated superficial engagement but very little Dewey reflection and even less enhanced reflection. The value of the ALSs were to encourage the participant to generate a topic and talk freely and openly, however this created long and detailed stories with very little progression to a more critical way of thinking.

**Reflective learning strategy – written journal**
The journal completion was limited. However, F1 did demonstrate reflection through the journal. As a practitioner I was interested in why some students had not completed the journal, so as part of my own reflection on the project I incorporated the topic of journal writing in the interview. I felt a more considered approach to introducing the journal and integrating its written work into assignments may be required to encourage a higher rate of completion, hence I was keen to investigate the student perception of the journal.

Student perception of the journal
The students’ perception of the journal varied. For example, F3 referred to using her lesson evaluations as a form of written reflection, rather than using the journal. She appeared to understand the importance of learning through written reflection but viewed a critique of a lesson as more important than a consideration of her long-term development. In a similar way F1 acknowledged the importance of the journal but revealed how difficult it was to find the time to complete it. She made reference to a different form of reflection which could encourage further research, mentioning reflecting whilst driving to the placement. She implied that she verbalised her thoughts to herself. As she stated in the formal interview:

‘Um I think in hindsight I wish I had dedicated 5 minutes every day to doing it [journal] but when you’ve got so much to do, it does take a bit of a back seat .... so much happens in a day – I wish I had a tape recorder in the car – my journey is my reflection I’m sorting myself out on the way’. (F1 – Interview – July)

The fact she considered having a tape recorder implied F1 saw the value of her reflection but simply did not have time to formalise her thoughts into the written context. The relevance of F1’s statement was that student teachers may require more reflective learning activities within the strategy to ensure reflection occurs. The use of a taping device or a visual computer link may be more beneficial than a written document. F2 supported the use of the journal but for the purpose of writing the assignments. The content of F2’s
journal was evaluative with an analysis of lesson content and procedure but very little evidence of reflective learning. F2 indicated during the formal interview how she used the journal. She talked about writing issues down to remove them from her mind. She also mentioned a ‘rant’ or being unable to ‘rant’ at a particular person. It appeared F2’s perception of a journal is to write down situations of concern or as a device to improve anger management. She did not appear to have grasped the proposed use of the journal as a learning aid, as shown in her statement during the formal interview:

‘I’ve used my journal in both placements. I used it for my assignments and for myself because sometimes it’s nice to write down how you are feeling. I’m that sort of person it depends who you’ve got around you. Is there someone I can go and rant at or if you feel you can’t in which case it’s nice to just write it down. Then it’s actually out of your head’. (F2 – Interview – June)

F2’s response indicates she did use her journal for the purpose of learning but unfortunately all the comments were related to the assessment criteria of the assignments and not related as she suggests to her feelings. I would also question the reality from F2’s rhetoric as the journal was completed but only sparsely and yet F2 appears to believe she has utilised the journal to assist with her learning. F2 related her learning to external criteria and although she did reflect through Dewey’s framework she did not evidence Dewey reflection through the written work or go on to enhance her reflection.

F2 may have related written work to formal assessment or, as Burke (2008) says, been constrained or inhibited by academic boundaries or expectations. She possibly needed guidance on how to write or perhaps she needed reassurance that the journal would not be formally assessed. If we consider F2 as an individual who is dependent on members of staff for re-assurance and direction, writing in a journal could be seen as too independent or different from any previous expectations of written work.
The following comments made in the interview situation drew my attention because F2 appears to believe she did complete her journal whereas I found very little reflection or independent learning in the work she submitted. This raises two areas, which concerned me: was she completing an ‘unofficial journal’ that I was unaware of, or was she writing a journal just to assist with her assignments? My initial interest in F2’s comments stem from a disappointment that she related her learning to the product of gaining good grades in her assignments rather than the process of learning from her own experience. My subsequent interest in F2’s comments were heightened when her response to the question ‘Do you prefer verbal reflection?’ gave the following response:

‘It depends who you are talking to I think – because um like after my lessons they say how’s it going? I can’t think of things on the spot – it is hard I prefer to go away and think about it, write it down and then talk about it. I don’t like being put on the spot about it. I just feel that way straight after and you don’t know what they are thinking either.’

Did you think the verbal reflection was for the audience?

‘Um – yeah you are trying to say what you think they want to hear – whereas in the journal you can write down whatever you want’.

The extract showed F2 valued writing down her thoughts and she used the journal but in a different way than I expected. On reflection, perhaps I should have reviewed the participants’ perception of a journal before including it as part of the strategy. Many of the journals like F2’s contained brief comments related to the teaching situation. The comments tended to be lesson evaluations rather than reflections on events or reflective learning. In fact it would seem M2 felt the written reflection needed a purpose, which supports the work of Parsons and Stephenson (2005) and Loughran (1996) as M2 only used the journal for the purpose of completing the assignments,
as can be shown when he was asked: ‘Did you use your journal very much?’
He responded:

‘Not much …. The only reason I did use it was for the assignment but generally otherwise I would not have used it.’ (M2 – Discussion Group – March)

M2 refers to a ‘diary’ despite the ‘red book’ always being referred to as a journal. He made assumptions regarding how other students may use the journal and he demonstrated a personality that would struggle to evaluate learning unless the learning had an extrinsic purpose or reward. This was consistent with and would support the work of Parsons and Stephenson (2005), where in their research the journal was made an integral part of all academic assignments. M2 considered the reflective journal as an aid to assignment writing, shown when he stressed ‘I just don’t like using journals.’

The participants’ perception of the journal was that it was time consuming to complete, it was used to evaluate lessons or to express an opinion away from an audience. I feel the introduction of a journal or diary is a key to its usage and in hindsight I should have ‘framed’ the journal differently to encourage completion.

**Narrative**

The use of narrative was extensive; it was unexpectedly detailed and well structured. The participants used the ALS to consider an experience from their recent school placement. The student teachers relived this experience by telling a story. The stories were often detailed and extensive. Elbaz (1990), Russell and Munby (1992), Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Hunt (2010) all value the use of narrative in learning and Grumet (1990) felt that it was important for a teacher to ‘see oneself’ and this could be achieved by telling a story of an experience. The detail of the narrative was probably provided by the participant to give the audience a greater insight to the experience (Potter and Wetherall, 1987) and is unlikely to have added to
the quality of the individual’s learning. In fact the detail of each story may have detracted from and hindered the development of reflection. Mason (2002) suggests the material in a narrative may be raw and unpolished, which may explain why the data revealed so much description and so little reflection.

I propose there is a link between the use of narrative and the participants’ early learning through superficial engagement but not through Dewey reflection or enhanced reflection. The participants with little experience of this type of learning may have used narrative because they felt secure using a familiar technique of learning such as telling a story. I have already mentioned Bloom’s hierarchy of learning and now infer that the novice teacher was moving from one form of learning to another using the familiar technique of narrative to cope with the new situation. The value of using narrative should not be under-estimated but I would suggest oral Dewey reflection in the form of a story requires preparation and consideration prior to any ALS.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

As a lecturer involved in teacher preparation I had an interest in the learning of student teachers and had often considered the role of reflection in their learning. I therefore embarked on a longitudinal action learning project to identify the most effective pedagogical approach to assist student reflection of which this study forms one part. I introduced a reflective learning strategy to students studying a PGCE PE course which involved several learning activities, conclusions were drawn, evaluated and change occurred before repeating the same process with alterations and improvements. The findings have made a contribution to knowledge, to practice within teacher preparation and I have gained a greater personal understanding.

I originally set out to investigate four research questions:

- To what extent do student teachers demonstrate reflection through Dewey’s stages of learning?
- Did the students ‘enhance’ their reflection by referring to all of the following at some point: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion?
- Of the four activities used to promote reflective learning (discussion groups, ALSs, journals and interviews), which activity was the most successful in producing data that demonstrated reflection?
- To what extent do students use narrative to reflect?

The investigation found that:

- All 13 students demonstrated pre-reflection or a superficial engagement (description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions) with reflection (the first level of reflection).
- Only five of the 13 participants demonstrated Dewey reflection (the second level of reflection).
- Two of the five participants who demonstrated reflection through Dewey’s stages also enhanced their reflection (third level of
reflection) by referring to all of the following: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion.

- Considering the activities used, the ALSs were the most effective learning activity in producing data that demonstrated reflection in all three levels (superficial engagement, Dewey reflection, enhanced reflection).
- The three levels of reflection (superficial engagement, Dewey reflection, enhanced reflection) were demonstrated by the students, who consistently and extensively used a full and coherent narrative in the oral activities.

The findings have shown that the majority of the students in this project did not demonstrate reflection (Dewey) but did show a superficial engagement with the reflection process. Most literature presumes that individuals will be able to reflect and gives no consideration of the process prior to a basic level of reflection (Dewey, 1933; Moon, 2004). This project has identified three components of pre-reflection (description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions) – an important contribution to the understanding of the reflection process and a consideration to the pedagogical approach of learning. I suggest superficial engagement is a starting point, which can lead to Dewey reflection. The identification of superficial engagement influences the pedagogical design of a reflective learning strategy to encourage progression to Dewey reflection. It could not be presumed that all students naturally progress to reflect on their experience but the findings assists the teaching in teacher preparation and help to identify the students who are starting to consider their learning.

Three participants progressed from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection demonstrating notable progression in their ability to reflect and two showed the ability to enhance their reflection. Having used a starting and final assessment point I identified that some of the participants made progress throughout the PGCE training year. I therefore conclude the reflective learning strategy in this project improved the reflection of some of
the participants. Although progression was limited, a more appropriate utilisation or introduction of the learning activities, a less rigid assessment framework or improved interpretation of data may result in a higher percentage of students making progress to both Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection. I am aware the reflective learning strategy is not the only contributing factor in the students’ progression, but having altered and evaluated the strategy from the prior study, and then seen an increase in the number of students showing progression in the main study, I am confident that each time the strategy is reviewed and altered, the percentage of students demonstrating Dewey reflection will become more evident. The findings show participants progressed and added value to their learning experience. As a lecturer responsible for their learning, I find this rewarding.

The participants in this project showed very little written reflection but all did superficially engage, with some showing Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection through a full and coherent oral narrative. Journal writing did not encourage reflection for the PE student teachers at this University, which may be a result of how the journal was initially framed or perceived by the participants, but the students’ oral use of a detailed story was more evident than literature suggests. However, the use of a descriptive story made the pre-reflection and Dewey reflection more subjective, stopping the student stepping away from the topic and considering other factors, as Moon (2008) says, viewing the experience from a distance in a conceptual way, preventing the student from thinking critically.

5.1 Contribution to knowledge
At the beginning of this research project I acknowledged ‘reflection was intimately linked with the process of learning – learning from, learning that, learning to do, learning to be’ (Moon, 2010, p. 100). I also accepted that previous research had attempted to provide a theoretical hierarchy of learning (Bloom, 1979) of which reflection was placed in the top categories. After recognising reflection as a form of learning, I focused on relating
reflection to the experiences of student teachers and, like Moon (2010), wanted to apply the theory of reflection to the practice of individuals. I made the assumption that individuals learn differently and develop their ability to learn at various times in their life. If Bloom’s taxonomy of learning is accepted as a framework, it could be said that some participants in this study were developing their learning, perhaps moving from an application and analysis of information to experiential learning (evaluation) in their school placement. During the PGCE training year the student teacher was expected to assimilate old and new learning in order to be able to reflect on their new experience and create a new personal identity as a teacher. This was a very different type of learning and would have been a new experience to some of the participants. Moon (2010) highlighted the issues related to an individual’s capacity to reflect in terms of experiential learning and in this research I recognised that each participant was at a different stage of learning.

There are many theories of reflection, some have similarities, extend or add intricacies to Dewey’s stages of learning, but all theories acknowledge reflection as a complex form of learning. Through the use of Dewey’s framework, this study has identified a pre-reflective level and adds to the work of other authors such as Dewey (1933), Brookfield (1995), Habermas (2005) and Moon (2005). I identified three levels of reflection and created a continuum of reflection, which ranged from no reflection to the first level of reflection, which I termed superficial engagement, a second level of reflection following Dewey’s stages of learning to the third level, which enhanced the reflection process with additional factors. The new first level of reflection (superficial engagement) had three components, which are not necessarily sequential: description, mulling over and unjustified conclusions, which occur prior to the identification of an event that could be problematic. As all participants demonstrated superficial engagement I conclude that student teachers describe, mull over and draw unjustified conclusions from their experience before reflecting fully on an experience. As only a small number of participants progressed to Dewey reflection, I
propose an alteration in the learning strategy and give consideration to the suggestion student teachers may need to contextualise their reflections by being taught how to reflect. I therefore suggest that Dewey’s framework is a viable tool for the analysis of reflection but the framework can be too rigid as it fails to identify what occurs prior to the ‘suggestion’ stage.

I am conscious that Moon’s (2005) model of reflection as a framework for analysis could have provided similar results, but the justification for using Dewey’s framework was based on three key factors: the ‘problem’ being a problem situation or issue, the focus on one issue at a time and because the framework has a focus on the problem and not on how the person has changed since reflection occurred. As this research did not provide feedback to the participants I could not remark on how the individual had changed but could comment on the process of reflection. Student teachers tend to focus on perceived problems and due to a lack of teaching experience tend to concentrate on one issue at a time.

The concept of Dewey’s stages as a ladder of learning and individuals progressing to the next stage but then moving backwards has since proved to be a valuable teaching aid when guiding student teachers to reflect. I have subsequently used Dewey’s framework as a pedagogical model upon which to reconstruct an experience. This has been relatively productive but as Dewey failed to contextualise the reflection or give any consideration to factors such as emotion, Moon’s (2005) initial model, which makes reference to emotion as part of her second stage ‘making sense’, may be more appropriate as a pedagogical or analytical tool for young teachers, especially once the teacher has started to blend new and old experiences and can identify both the context of their learning and the emotional value of their reflection.

The results of the prior study led to the identification of five areas (context, distance, ownership, power and emotion) that student teachers prioritised when enhancing their reflection. Authors such as Moon (2008), Boud et al. (1985), McIntyre et al. (1994), Brookfield (1995) and Mezirow (2000)
consider factors that enhance the reflection process, but this project has identified the factors that are most important to student teachers. However, only two of the participants enhanced their reflection by referring to all of the following: context, distance, ownership, power and emotion; but not surprisingly all participants commented on their perception of power: the role that others play in the PGCE training year, supporting the work of Boud (2010) and Karban and Smith (2010). The power relationships within teacher preparation should be noted and are a key consideration for those working within teacher preparation.

I suggest enhanced reflection, which has similarities to Moon’s (2008) model, Brookfield’s (1995) critical reflection, Fook’s (2010) blended learning or Mezirow’s (2000) seven steps of critical reflectivity, may be a more appropriate tool for analysis with more experienced members of staff who consider other factors such as judgements and values that influence and therefore add complexity to learning. Fook and Mezirow were attempting to add complexity to learning and I believe my category of enhanced reflection highlights the most relevant factors for a student teacher. The participants who exhibited enhanced reflection had started to think critically by taking into account these additional issues. I therefore suggest the use of Moon’s (2008) model, which considers a review and recollection, refers to the emotional state, the processing of knowledge and ideas and a resolution and transformation, as an analysis framework for reflection from more experienced teachers. The terminology of this model is associated with a teacher who has gained experience and is no longer concerned with survival or passing training standards. The progression to deep learning is shown through the terms recollection and transformation, showing how an individual no longer makes a hypothesis but uses a blend of current and previous experience to create change.

However, this research involved student teachers; it is therefore important to frame this research project within one institution, with one cohort of students and note the age and experience of the participants involved. These students were relatively young and have progressed on to the PGCE training
year immediately following an undergraduate degree. Their previous teaching experience and general experience of life was limited. If the study were completed with more mature participants, Dewey reflection rather than superficial engagement may have occurred. Therefore the age and consequent experience of the student should not be under-estimated as more mature students will have more ‘emotional inheritance’ or experience to affect or influence the reflection process. As the initial reflection has been shown to include either a positive or negative prerequisite of emotion towards teaching (Mantle, 2010), the influence of previous experiences should not be overlooked. Mezirow (1983, 2000), Boud et al. (1985), Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), Habermas (2005) and Moon (2010) suggest there is a relationship between age and reflection with age creating a greater ‘bank’ of prior experiences. In some instances these former experiences may be problematic. This research has only touched on the influence that prior experience has on learning to become a teacher, but the influence of student emotion could be of greater importance if working with more mature students who naturally have more experience and hence more emotional baggage.

These participants chose to relive their experiences by using a full and coherent narrative. The story that was told primarily in the oral activities was detailed but not abstract or conceptual. The participants adopted a pragmatic approach to tell the story. The story helped the student to capture moments and experiences and some participants turned these moments into thoughtful, learning opportunities by reflecting through Dewey’s stages. Hunt (2010), Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Elbaz (1990) all value narrative in learning, but the majority of the literature on reflection focuses on the product rather than the process. McDrury and Alterio (2002) are exceptions to the rule, highlighting the importance of storytelling for reflection. However, the results have shown that although narrative is a successful way to share an experience it is not the most effective way to think critically. The oral storytelling that occurred used the term ‘I’, which automatically made the narrative personal and not objective. This shows that narrative may be effective in initiating the reflection process but does not
allow the individual to step away and view the experience from a distance. In other words narrative may hinder critical thought or enhanced reflection and perhaps should be avoided as a medium in CPD programmes. I can therefore conclude narrative, especially in the oral form, is an effective way to encourage pre-reflection but not necessary reflection.

In summary, the contribution to knowledge is the recognition of three levels of reflection, superficial engagement, Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection, the effectiveness of Dewey’s framework as an indicator of reflection and the students’ use of a full and coherent narrative to superficially engage with reflection. It could be argued (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996) that such a small-scale project cannot provide generalised statements but can show how a small number of students demonstrated something different from the norm, which highlights the need for providers of teacher preparation to reconsider their pedagogical approach to initiate the reflection process.

5.2 Contribution to practice
The identification of the three levels of reflection is a key contribution to pedagogical practice in HE, in particular the level of superficial engagement for those working in teacher preparation and enhanced reflection for those working with experienced professionals. When working with young student teachers with little or no teaching experience, providers need to focus on the development of description, mulling over and any unjustified conclusions in order to promote and encourage reflection. It is also worth noting that students initially enhance their reflection by highlighting the perceived power of the school-based mentor at a very early stage in the training year. Providers need to be aware of students feeling vulnerable or under pressure to ‘please’ a mentor and how the student/mentor relationship could be used as a stimulus to encourage Dewey reflection.

In this study Dewey’s framework was a tool for analysis and not a pedagogical aid to learning. I feel Dewey’s stages were a suitable analytical tool but the activities used could have been more effective in encouraging
reflection. The activities within the strategy need to be altered and, secondly, consideration to the use of a framework such as Dewey for teaching or making student teachers aware of reflection, rather than analysis. Since the completion of the data analysis, I have implemented a teaching approach using Dewey’s stages of learning to aid reflection. I now provide Dewey’s stages as a framework for the student teachers after the completion of a school placement and ask the students to apply their stories or experiences to the template. I have found student teachers require an outline to initiate the reflection process. By using Dewey as a pedagogical aid, student teachers have an opportunity to learn to reflect and therefore become more competent to learn from their experience. This adapted teaching approach has influenced the activities within the reflective learning strategy. My current students acknowledge Dewey’s structure as a starting point to consider their own learning.

This project has contributed to practice by showing how a reflective learning strategy can influence the quality of reflection in teacher preparation. The ability to reflect is a key component of learning (Coultas, 2008) and the term ‘reflection’ is frequently used in conjunction with good teaching. It is therefore important to the profession of teaching to provide the most appropriate opportunities to reflect for both students and practising teachers.

This research involved four different ‘tools’ (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998) or contexts (Richert, 1990) (discussion groups, ALSs, journals and interviews) to encourage reflection. The oral ALS in this project produced data that identified all three levels of reflection, but researchers such as Walker (1985), Moon (2008) and Fook (2010) have successfully used written journals. In this research the journal was not prioritised by the students, which may have been a result of the way I introduced the journal or the student’s pre-conceived attitude toward writing a journal. Moon (2005) linked journals to academic work, which may be a more effective way to encourage written reflection, but I feel academic demands could influence the topics of the reflection. This raises two areas of interest for those
involved in teacher preparation: first, if the journal only produces reflection when linked to a form of assessment then the content of the reflection is influenced by assessment criteria rather than the students’ topic of concern; second, the student’s perception of a journal is linked to assessment and not to long-term learning.

I feel it is important to remember the participants in this research may have preferred oral or practical methods of learning. The limited use of the journal may be an indication of the learning style of the individuals, a reluctance to make their reflection a permanent piece of work that could be viewed by others or simply a lack of time to complete the journal. The student teachers were young and studying the same subject area. The coherence within the group was probably ‘trusting’ and relaxed and the use of oral learning activities may not have caused anxiety for individuals, therefore the ALS suited the learning style of the cohort. However, with more mature (experienced teachers) or fragmented groups (for example, students studying different subject areas) the effectiveness of and results from the ALS may have been different.

The way the participants used the different activities is an area of interest and should be considered when constructing a learning strategy. The journal was used by the students for factual information, which may have demonstrated the students’ association of writing for an academic piece of work rather than personal learning and revealed a possible confusion between evaluating a lesson and reflecting on their own learning, whereas the students frequently used the ALS to tell a full and coherent story of their experience. The ALS empowered each participant (Faith, 1994), giving the same opportunity to speak. The change in the type of content from a detailed narrative (ALS) to a factual lesson evaluation (journal) and association with written academic work should be noted and used to influence the structure of a reflective learning strategy within teacher preparation. As the data in the journal were factual but the ALS descriptive, this illustrates that some of the reflective learning activities were more
suited to storytelling than others. The use of narrative may therefore be a result of the activity used rather than participant preference.

The value of the journal was only found in the initial few paragraphs. This provided the student with the opportunity to consider influential and emotional moments in previous school or workplace experience. The initial section of the journal gives the provider an insight to any ‘emotional inheritance’ held by the student prior to the PGCE year and provides a ‘base’ position or reference point that could be used as an indicator of the student’s previous school-based experience and ability to reflect. I used the initial section of the journal as a starting point of assessment and data from a combination of the other learning activities as an indicator of progression. Although I was initially disappointed in the findings, the activities of the learning strategy have since been altered, reviewed and following a further 2 years of implementation students are now progressing from superficial engagement to Dewey reflection and to enhanced reflection. With these alterations in mind I promote the use of ALS to encourage reflection but I suggest the individual needs time to prepare for the ALS by using a narrative that incorporates a framework such as that of Dewey.

I conclude from my project that an ALS within the university environment (away from work) and without participant preparation and group questioning was a relatively successful research tool, but I am aware the physical setting of the ALS is an area for discussion. Meyers (1986) and Hunt (2010) suggested ALS should be moved away from the workplace (school) perhaps to a university setting, however as teacher preparation moves from training institutions to training schools the context of experiential learning and reflection will change. The findings of this project are relevant to providers of teacher preparation working with PGCE students who return to the university on a regular basis. The student would be part of a cohort of other student teachers and linked directly to a member of academic staff who is responsible for their training.
The new system for training teachers places the trainee directly into the school (Assessment Only from 2012; School Direct from September 2013). The trainee will work with the school’s professional tutor and relevant staff. One school may have one trainee teacher, in which case the trainee does not have access to a peer group. In this instance, the use of an ALS or indeed discussion group is not likely to be effective and the use of a reflective journal may be the only opportunity for reflective thought. Student teachers may be given the opportunity to share experiences with newly qualified teachers but the context of NQT learning is still very different from that of the student teacher, because an NQT has more teaching experience (their training year) than a student teacher.

Experience provides the opportunity to blend learning, with an individual requiring both old and new experiences to compare and contrast. One consideration of this research is that student teachers are adults hence automatically have old (school) experiences to relate to their new (teaching) learning. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) linked their study to Mezirow (1983) when they considered the adult learner and the reflective ‘turn’ of looking back at previously formed values and practices. Student teachers in the early stages of their training have little or no teaching experience on which to base their hypothesis to solve a problem and in many instances it is easier to return to their own schooling and the way they were taught in order to overcome a problem. This is a concern for teacher preparation because all student teachers were once pupils in school, unlike other aspirant professionals, such as a trainee nurse who may or may not have been a patient. Former schooling experiences are likely to influence and perhaps affect the individual’s ability to reflect. This prior experience may contribute to the participant’s ability to learn from new experiences or may hinder the blend of old and new learning.

If teacher preparation were moved from universities directly into the school the theme of reflection in the training period and any CPD development must continue seamlessly. As the majority of the student teachers in this research showed superficial engagement rather than reflection, I support...
Donald’s (2002) statement that the PGCE training year is too intense to provide opportunity to reflect. In fact there is a danger the student could become a passive receiver of knowledge and conform to the requirements and guidance of staff in order to pass the Teaching Standards, rather than learn from their own experience. Evidence shows the reflection process can be initiated in the training year by using a reflective learning strategy but for reflection to occur, activities need to continue explicitly in professional development programmes.

It is interesting to note that the Teaching Standards of 2007 (TDA, 2007a) referred to students ‘reflecting on and improving their own practice’ and in 2012 (TA, 2012) ‘reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching’ but make no other reference to personal reflection or learning. The 2012 Standards provide a pragmatic assessment of teaching and give little consideration to the learning or development of student teachers. If reflection is undervalued in teacher training and the training is removed from HE institutions to an apprenticeship model, the priority will be to ‘tick boxes’ of assessment in order to attain the Teaching Standards rather than place value on a reflective learning strategy.

5.3 Greater personal understanding

As a former teacher and current lecturer I have spent a lifetime teaching, evaluating and reflecting on my experience: learning from my actions. The culture of teaching follows an action learning model, where teachers continually make adjustments and improvements to delivery to enhance student learning, assessment and outcome. I initially wished to make a difference to the experience of the PGCE students at the institution where I worked. This research held significance to my practice. According to Fernández-Balboa and Brubaker (2012), I was working within the ‘significance dimension’. I knew the findings would enhance future PGCE experiences and that my actions were not self-centred or there to heighten my ego. I held an interest in others and my initial purpose was based on improving the learning experience of those I teach: I wanted to make a difference.
My concern was how the students learned from their experiences. I wanted to view the experiences of the participants through their lens (Knott and Scragg, 2007) of life. I wanted to make sense and explore the students’ stories to gain an insight into the environment in which the student worked (Cohen et al., 2009) and I had a desire to investigate the extent of any learning from the experience (Tinning and Fitzpatrick, 2012). Hence this research was located in the interpretative paradigm.

My action learning approach to teaching created a natural progression to formalise my work with this project. I did consider alternative forms of research but these were quickly dismissed as I felt I had found the most appropriate methodology for the overall study. The alterations, refinements and improvements from the prior study, which I have explained, were applied to the main study and then evaluated. I noticed an improvement in the students’ ability to reflect in both studies and have since decided to continue with the action research process. The methods and procedures of the main study have been evaluated and altered once more. Through a process of qualitative analysis, I have discovered student improvement on each occasion and feel that each time I initiate change the findings become more robust.

When I first outlined this longitudinal study I knew there would be a continual review of the procedures used and consequent effect on student learning. As a teacher and lecturer I have always reviewed, evaluated and reflected on any learning strategy used, therefore an action research approach to the overall project felt appropriate and natural. I would have preferred to assess student progression by using the same research tool (initial section of the journal) at both the beginning and end of the project, but due to the nature of the PGCE training year it felt inappropriate to revisit previous school experiences. Hence I adopted a combination of the other activities on which to base my assessment of progression. I felt this was more appropriate for the professional development of the participants. I therefore conclude that action research is the most suitable approach for this
type of longitudinal educational research, with qualitative methods of analysis being applied to this section of the work. The main study may have been completed, conclusions drawn and this thesis written, but the action learning process is on-going and continuous.

Since the completion of the project the reflective learning strategy continues to be adjusted and I am currently considering different methods with the next cohort of PGCE PE students. I intend to initiate a narrative inquiry by asking the student to re-live their experiences only through narrative. However, I have learnt that written narrative does not enhance reflection in the PGCE PE students at my institution but the students do superficially engage and start to reflect using oral narrative. I am therefore currently devising a reflective learning strategy that involves an oral journal. The students will be guided through Dewey’s stages at the start of the training year and shown how to reflect on an experience. The chosen participants will then be asked to take part in the oral journals on a weekly basis during school placement. My aim is to encourage all PGCE PE students in the next cohort to reflect through Dewey’s stages and for some to progress to enhanced reflection.

In summary
This research project unlike other research has identified three levels of reflection: superficial engagement, Dewey reflection and enhanced reflection. I have established three components of superficial engagement, which occur prior to reflection, shown how Dewey’s framework is an effective analytic tool and identified the key factors that enhance student teachers’ reflection. My conclusions show that ALS are the most suitable reflective activity to encourage superficial engagement, the start of Dewey reflection and some enhanced reflection and that student teachers use a full and coherent narrative more than the literature may suggest.

The action research process continues to be used to improve the learning experience of PGCE PE student teachers at the institution where I work.
Chapter 6: Personal reflection

This study has investigated the reflection of post-graduate student teachers at one institution and has shown how a reflective learning strategy can encourage both Dewey reflection and enhanced stages of reflection. I have also identified a pre-reflective stage, which I termed superficial engagement. During the research process, I have attempted to understand the stories of young student teachers by enabling them to recount experiences of their training ‘in their own voice’. This project was significant to me as a lecturer in teacher preparation and arose from a personal interest in matching pedagogy to the learning of young teachers. Throughout the research I have sought to adopt a reflexive approach and through my own involvement I have gained an insight into the experience of the participants; an insight that has influenced and will continue to affect my teaching.

I embarked on this EdD with little conviction and a great deal of negative value. The resentment, overpowering intolerance of a course that I felt was totally inappropriate because the study was taking me away from my teaching, has faded and been eradicated by a belief not only in myself as a researcher but from the satisfaction of experiencing the development of the participants.

It is a bold statement to say I have learnt more from these years than I have from the past 25 years of teaching ... but it would be true. In previous years I have ‘experienced’ but never given myself the time to ‘learn’. I have reflected through Dewey’s framework many, many, many times in order to overcome each and every hurdle I faced but as a person I now consider other factors, find value in the thoughts, opinions and attitudes of other people and enhance my reflection. I am more confident in admitting failure ... admitting I’m learning ... not always knowing the answer ... and more importantly stopping and thinking about the difference.
Perhaps the research in itself has not changed me as a person but the critical reflection of ‘why’ I am doing everything has made me question my existence. I no longer wish to ‘jump through hoops’ (but alas I still am), I want to know why the hoops are there! Challenge, question, formulate an argument and then believe in my view of the situation.

I know the PGCE students have had a different experience since I started this study – a more enriching one – and so have I – I have come alive and have wanted to learn – not necessarily from literature but from myself – I am a different person from the one who started the EdD.

At times I have felt reluctant to finally write up the study and have believed the true value of this research is in my teaching and the experience the students have received. On other occasions I have wanted to jump up and down and shout as loudly as I can that the general consensus of literature on reflection has missed out my students! My students are young and inexperienced, they need to describe, mull over and draw unjustified conclusions – that is fine, but pre-reflection needs to be acknowledged because the students are on a journey: a journey of learning from themselves! I have found that writing journals does not suit the majority of PE students at the institution where I work: these students need to orally tell a story to their cohort! I may not be able to make sweeping generalisations but I have the evidence to provide an alternative.

The real contribution to knowledge is found in the contribution to my knowledge. As a researcher and a lecturer in teacher preparation I have moved closer to understanding how student teachers formalise their learning and how I can facilitate this process. I now understand how individuals use narrative to consider their experience firstly through describing an event, asking questions of themselves (mulling over), forming conclusions (many unjustified) and eventually reflecting. I feel the identification of these activities prior to reflection will enable the early recognition of the reflection process and assist with pedagogy in teacher preparation. The project has also shown that individuals ‘develop’ the
ability to reflect on experience but at different rates. I now know how to stimulate students in the hope they will reflect. I now know and understand the effect a reflective learning strategy can have on student learning. I am aware that the learning strategy has to provide oral storytelling groups and to highlight and nurture pre-reflection. I have also realised reflection is an on-going process, which can only be initiated in the PGCE year and that progression to enhanced reflection may take years to achieve.

I think the highlight of this study came very early in the prior study when my work was appreciated!

Extract from the PGCE PE External Examiners Report – June 2008

‘some evidence of creative “outside the box” use of reflective practice processes to challenge students to extend their thinking about their own conceptions of value orientations and teaching. Excellent practice, which is appreciated by the students and might want to be extended across the whole PGCE course’

Learning, learning, learning: it has been a long journey ... and I doubt if it will ever end. Learning is not about pleasing others, the focus is on oneself. I no longer wish to jump through hoops for the sake of others.

I just hope John and Kate realise how much I have valued their support and guidance.

Get well soon John.
REFERENCES


Publications.


Inquiry. Qualitative and Quantitative approaches (pp. 131 – 144). London: Continuum.


Appendix A

Contents Page – opening statement
PGCE Handbook 2011/12 – University of ………

‘At the end of the PGCE year, students will be equipped as reflective practitioners to continue their professional learning throughout their teaching career.’
Appendix B

Information for participants

The research is an investigation into how you reflect on your own practice as a student teacher. The information gathered will be used to complete a thesis which is part of my Educational Doctorate being studied at the University of .......... The aim is explore the impact and indeed effectiveness of the action learning sets, discussion groups and reflective journals that are part of the PGCE course by analysing the transcripts from the activities.

Reflective learning strategies were introduced into the PGCE course a few years ago as part of a research pilot study. The students involved found the reflective learning activities provided an opportunity to reflect in different ways and all three were found to be beneficial. Therefore your PGCE year will involve using a range of reflective learning activities: action learning sets, discussion groups and reflective journals. These activities are now an integral part of the course and would normally occur.

Except this year, with your permission, the action learning sets, discussion groups and any subsequent interviews will be taped and transcribed and used as data for an EdD thesis. The journals will be collected and photocopied with the material also being used for data. It is hoped that you are willing to assist with this study and allow your involvement in the learning activities to be taped and your journal to be photocopied.

The activities are

- The reflective journal – your red book.
- Discussion groups – where you will be allowed to talk in small groups about your school placement.
- Action learning sets – where you will be asked to talk to a small group undisturbed about a topic of your choice for a maximum of 5 minutes. You will be allowed to prepare the topic by using your reflective journal, if you wish.

Each discussion group and action learning set will be taped and later transcribed. You will be coded as either a Female (F) or a Male (M) and given a number from 1 to 7. I and any other researcher will only know you as F1: all names will be removed. You will be asked to check the accuracy of the interview transcript and have access to the data coded in your name at any point during or after the research.

Once the data has been scanned, 4 to 6 of you will be invited to attend an individual interview with me after the conclusion of your course. The interview will last approximately an hour and will be used to help me to explore your thoughts and reflections on your training year. I will ask you about your personal areas of interest within the training year, both positive and negative and your opinion of the effectiveness of the reflective learning activities.
All research will take place at the University of …….. during your training year. The reflective learning activities are a built in requirement of the course. You will not need to attend any extra sessions unless you are asked to have an individual interview.

If you have any questions please contact me on: [e-mail address………] or [direct telephone number ………] or pop up to my office.

If you wish to seek further advice just ask additional tutor [name deleted] on [e-mail address of additional tutor].
Appendix C

Address
Direct telephone number

Research Title:

*An investigation of student teachers’ ability to reflect, using a range of reflective learning activities*

I agree to take part in this research which is an investigation of my ability to reflect on my own practice.

My participation is entirely voluntary.

I have read the information sheet and understand the purposes and principles of the study.

Researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study and the possible risks involved.

I am aware that information I have provided during interviews, action learning sets and during discussion groups may be used in the research.

I am aware that I will be audio recorded during the discussion groups and action learning sets and my reflective journal will be photocopied.

I understand that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. I agree that if I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by Melissa Mantle for the purposes described in the information sheet, unless I tell her otherwise.

I am happy that any data, electronic, audio or hard copies collected by Melissa Mantle will be stored in a secure location at the University of ………… and may be used in her subsequent dissertation but will be in an anonymous form.

I agree that data collected may be archived and used for other articles produced by Melissa Mantle.

Name: (please print)

Signed:

Date: